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Gamer-Generated Language and the Localisation of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games

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Declaration of originality

I, Samuel Strong, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

Video game localisation has received increased academic attention over the past few years. Despite the call for user-oriented research, few researchers have chosen to focus on issues that are central to end-user experience and its relation to the localised text. With the increased connectivity of gaming in general, and certain game genres in particular, gamers' language use has become an integral aspect of the game experience. As a result, gamers have become innovative, creating and re-appropriating language, often using non-standard forms to coordinate their gameplay. This innovative and non-standard language, that I call gamer-speak, is the object of my research. In particular, the focus is on the gamer-speak generated by French gamers during group play of two localised Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs): *World of Warcraft* and *WildStar*. The main aim is to investigate the phenomenon of gamer-speak in MMORPGs and examine its significance for MMORPG localisation. I achieve this through a linguistic analysis and comparison of gamer conversations, analyses of localised texts and its original counterparts, and from survey data collected from active MMORPG gamers regarding their language use.

In this thesis I devise an interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological framework for the study of gamer-speak and its influence on MMORPGs which draws principally from Translation Studies and Games Studies. This framework is used to describe the salient features of gamer-speak generated by French gamers when playing the two MMORPGs chosen in the context of Polysystem Theory and Descriptive Translation Studies. The familiarity with and knowledge of French MMORPG players of gamer-speak is determined through surveys. I also examine localised MMORPG text, translated from English into French, paying attention to the role of gamer-speak. Finally, I address the social and cultural implications that gamer-speak has for the target audience of localised MMORPGs. This work adds to our understanding of gamer culture and has implications for game localisation and translation studies.

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I also must express my gratitude to my family for their sage advice and direction throughout my time working on this study – their experience and positive attitudes has been a driving force throughout the years, and I owe a great deal of my motivation and inspiration to them.

I am also extremely appreciative and thankful for the enthusiastic participants in my research: the guilds of gamers, industry professionals, and passionate individuals who have offered feedback, nuance, and insider information on a number of topics, as well as making much of the research design and data collection a pleasure rather than a chore.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I am eternally grateful to my wife Nicole – her enduring support of, and patience with my work on this project will never be forgotten. I wouldn't be where I am if not for her.

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Glossary of Game-Specific Terms

Agency: "The satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices" (Murray 1997, in Gomes 2005: 55).

Agg/Aggro: A mechanic in MMORPGs: a player with agg/aggro is the player with the highest threat. See also *Threat.*

Alt.: A secondary, or alternative, avatar created and controlled by the player.

Avatar: Virtual embodiment of the player's character. Also called *Toon.*

Boss: Prominent, more challenging enemy in a PvE encounter.

Bot: A player-controlled character that has been automated with a software programme.

Content: Segment or aspect of a game which supplies gamers with a game experience containing distinctive narrative and gameplay.

Ding: A gain in level – passing a significant threshold of experience points which affords the player's avatar new abilities and increased statistics.

Emote: System of communication whereby players can express virtual emotions or body language through their avatar.

Farm: To gather supplies, experience points, or other resources, by repeatedly performing a specific action (e.g., mining a mineral deposit).

Immersion: "The sensation of being surrounded by a completely other reality […] that takes over all of our attention, our whole perceptual apparatus" (Murray 1997, in Brooks 2003: 1).

Leet (l337) Speak: "A type of internet slang in which numbers and other ASCII characters are used to replace alphabetic characters" (Ensslin 2012: 171).

Loot Ninja: A player who takes items found on enemies in a group setting when these items were not fairly attributed to them by the game system.

Matchmaker:	A game system that enables players to find other party members for cooperative or competitive play.
Mob:	A computer-generated non-boss enemy.
Ninja:	*See Loot Ninja*.
Normal Server:	A server for an online game which does not specifically encourage players to role-play as their character (compare with *Role-playing, Role-playing Server)*.
Pick-up:	A player or group of players composed of members who are not familiar with one another, often found through the matchmaking system (*see Matchmaker*).
Role-playing:	The act of a player taking on the role of their avatar in the way they speak, behave, and interact with other players.
Role-playing Server:	A server for an online game which is intended to contain exclusively players who intend to role-play (compare with *Normal Server*).
Tank:	Character role whose primary duties include withstanding large amounts of damage, generating threat, and positioning enemies.
Threat:	A game metric that dictates which player an enemy will attack. Players that generate more threat are more likely to be attacked by enemies. See also *Agg/Aggro*.
Toon:	*See Avatar*.
Twink:	A low-level character that has been given higher-level equipment than is typically available at their level.
Vanilla:	The initial version or incarnation of a game – i.e., version

1.0.

List of Abbreviations

10m: Ten Man

25m: Twenty-Five Man

AFK: Away From Keyboard

AP: Attack Power

ASCII: American Standard Code for Information Interchange

BC: Burning Crusade

BOE: Bind on Equip

BOP: Bind on Pickup

BIO: Bathroom Break[1]

CC: Crowd Control

CQC: Close Quarters Combat

CD: Cooldown

DA: Discourse Analysis

D/C: Disconnect. See also *L/D*

DE: Disenchant

DMG: Damage

DOT: Damage Over Time

DPS: Damage Per Second. Used to describe the statistic on a weapon, a player's role in a party, and/or the output of an individual or a group.

DTS: Descriptive Translation Studies

ECR: Extralinguistic Cultural References

EXP: Experience. See also *XP*

F2P: Free to Play

GS: Game Studies

GUI: Graphical User Interface

HTML: Hypertext Marked-up Language

IP: Intellectual Property

LAN: Local Area Network

L/D: "Line Down" – Disconnected. See also *D/C*

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[1] The origin of this acronym is disputed: some believe this is a reference to biological factors necessitating a bathroom break, and other say that the three letters simply resemble a western toilet as seen from above.

MIES:	Multimedia Interactive Entertainment Software
mIRC:	Microsoft Internet Relay Chat
MMO(RP)G:	Massively Multiplayer Online (Role-Playing) Game
MSN:	Microsoft Network
NDA:	Non-Disclosure Agreement
NPC:	Non-Player Character
PEGI:	Pan-European Game Information
PROC:	Programmed Rate of Occurrence
PST:	Polysystem Theory
PUG:	Pick-Up Group
PvE:	Player versus Environment
PvP:	Player versus Player
QA:	Quality Assurance
RMT:	Real Money Trader
RNG:	Random Number Generator
SC:	Source Culture
SL:	Source Language
ST:	Source Text
TA:	Target Audience
TC:	Target Culture
TL:	Target Language
TS:	Translation Studies
TT:	Target Text
UI:	User Interface. See also *GUI*
WOTLK:	Wrath of the Lich King
XP:	Experience Points. See also *EXP*

Chapter 1 Introduction

The immense commercial success of video games has changed the landscape of global media consumption. The past three decades have seen such a rise in video game consumerism, that the video game industry has long generated more revenue than cinema worldwide. It was estimated that 2.2 billion gamers across the globe would have produced revenue of $108.9 billion in 2017 (McDonald 2017: online). This compares to about $50 billion projected for the global film industry in 2020 (Statista: online). With such commercial success, video game developers are motivated to target the wider global markets to increase return on investment (Bernal 2014: 1).[2]

Global expansion has required developers to localise their games, in order to make them accessible to speakers of other languages. The term 'localisation' in the context of video games has been defined by Chandler (2005: 12) as "the process of translating the game into other languages". This definition, in essence, equates localisation and translation. However, others have suggested that localisation differs from traditional translation because it involves "a comprehensive study of the target culture in order to correctly adapt the product to local needs" (Ware: 2016). In other words, translation is only part of the process of localising a game for a different linguistic and cultural group. Bernal-Merino (2006), in his discussion of the definition of key terms in game localisation, emphasises that localisation involves several non-linguistic activities (cultural, technical, legal) that transcend mere translation. In a similar vein, Fernández Costales (2012: 385) concludes: "[v]ideo games have evolved into multimodal and multidimensional products and new approaches and insights are required when studying the adaptation of games into different cultures". It is widely accepted, then, that localisation goes beyond linguistic translation, paying attention to cultural and technical aspects of gaming in the target language. Nonetheless, some translation scholars refer to 'video game translation' rather than or as well as to 'video game localisation' (Bernal 2006,

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[2] This scholar is cited differently depending on the publication (sometimes Bernal-Merino, sometimes M.A.B Merino, sometimes Bernal). For consistency, I have cited him as "Bernal" throughout.

Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006, O'Hagan & Mangiron 2013), indicating that the distinction between translation and localisation has become somewhat blurred.

The process of game localisation has brought with it a variety of new translation practices and unique approaches to the challenges of addressing the intricacies of games and the culture of the players. As such, Fernández Costales (2012) reviews different translation strategies for game localisation (as distinct from research on localisation) and emphasises the serious challenges presented by the adaptation of games for different cultures. Bernal (2011: 17) makes a similar point in his discussion of what has been described as "deep" or "enhanced" localisation, which refers to attempts to adapt more to the needs of the consumers. In so doing, it brings, as Bernal-Merino suggests, a creative role to game localisation that traditionalists would view as being beyond the normal scope of a translator's duties.

In their recent review of the field, O'Hagan and Chandler (2016: 309) suggest that game localisation has been "largely ignored" in game studies, while at the same time presenting a new area of research for translation studies. In fact, their review underscores the general absence of research on game localisation. They point to the lack of communication among game producers, translation scholars, and localisation practitioners, and suggest that industry changes such as the use of crowdsourcing and fan participation in translation, as well as gender issues and censorship, demand our attention.

It is in this context of minimal research on the process of localisation and on a definition of the practice that is directed towards the needs of the consumer, that I have undertaken the present study of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs). Specifically, I focus on one important aspect of these games that is at once both cultural and linguistic: the language generated by players during gameplay. As research into video game localisation struggles to keep up with the most recent developments in the industry, there are still significant gaps in our knowledge about new approaches to the practice, and one area in particular that still remains largely unresearched is that of gamers' language use. It is the goal of this study to collect and analyse an extensive corpus of gamer-generated language, and

to assess its relevance, indeed its importance, for the practice of localisation. In doing so, I hope to break new ground in this burgeoning area of inquiry and contribute to our understanding of the changing process of video game localisation.

Of special interest in my research is an aspect of gamers' language that has hitherto remained largely unexplored, at least in the context of localisation: their use of non-standard language. Gamers communicate while they play for multiple purposes: gameplay coordination, trade, recruitment, and social exchanges. The resulting gamer-generated language is an integral part of the playing experience, and both influences and is influenced by the game text, whether original or localised. Studies by Ensslin (2012) have highlighted the linguistic diversity of gamer discourse, specifically the use of jargon, slang, composites, shifts, shortenings, blends, neologisms, and so on. I am interested in gamer language use in localised settings. In a previous pilot study that I conducted for my MSc dissertation at Heriot-Watt University (Strong 2011), I sampled the language used by French gamers as they played the French localised version of *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) and identified various examples of non-standard language use. I called this non-standard language "gamer-speak". Based on this research, I define gamer-speak here as "gamer-generated language that has been modified or re-appropriated from standard forms to create non-standard lexical and morphological combinations in support of in-game communication" (see section 2.3.1). My previous analysis of French gamer-speak yielded insights into the language background of the users, some initial tendencies for gamer-speak formation, and hinted at some of the potential uses of gamer-speak. I concluded that gamers impose their own linguistic inclinations on to the localised text in that they accept, reject, modify, or add to the translations with which they are presented in the localised game text. They do this in ways that constitute a unique form of language using gamer-speak.

The phenomenon of gamer-speak has implications for the practice of localisation, in particular the deep or enhanced localisation referred to by Bernal (2011: 17). In order to examine this phenomenon in greater depth, I use my previous pilot study as a jumping off point. The present study expands both the scope and corpus of the original research in order to investigate the localisation of in-game text and sociolinguistic factors of gamer-speak. The main goal is to test some of the

hypotheses generated in the previous research project and determine the potential implications of gamer-speak for translation theory and localisation practice.

1.1   Research aims and questions

The principal purpose of this research is to investigate the phenomenon of gamer-speak in MMORPGs and examine its significance for MMORPG localisation. In the pursuit of this goal, I have established the following specific aims: (1) Building on existing Translation Studies (TS) and Game Studies (GS) frameworks, develop an interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological framework for the study of gamer-speak and its influence on MMORPG localisation; (2) analyse and categorise examples of French gamer-speak found in conversations among gamers during gameplay in two MMORPGs; (3) examine and describe localised MMORPG text (translated from English into French), paying particular attention to the role of gamer-speak; (4) ascertain the implications and impact of gamer-speak on MMORPG localisation and localisers and; (5) determine French MMORPG players knowledge of and familiarity with gamer-speak through surveys.

The central questions to this research are:

1) What are the salient features of French gamer-speak in MMORPGs?
2) What is the significance of gamer-speak for localisers of MMORPGs?

Below are the hypotheses related to these research questions:

Salient characteristics of gamer-speak
Based on preliminary impressions and assessments, and on my preliminary study, French gamer-speak is likely to have the following characteristics:

1) Widespread use among French gamers during gameplay
2) Generated from both practical and social motivations
3) Used in the in-game ST and rendered in the TT
4) Typically characterised by the use of English loan words

Significance for localisers of MMORPGs

Because of the impact that gamer-speak has on our notion of text consumption, and therefore on the localised text, it is an important phenomenon for localisers. In this regard, this research hypothesises the following:

1) Gamer-speak highlights end-user involvement in the generation of semiotic meaning in video games
2) The use of gamer-speak by French gamers shows that the Target Language (TL) and the localised text lack some elements and features of gamers' linguistic needs for in-game communication
3) Gamer-speak is an inherent challenge in MMORPG localisation

1.2   Thesis structure

To situate this research in the existing TS and GS literature, Chapter 2 offers a review of the existing publications that are relevant to MMORPG localisation and an examination of the key concepts to this research. In addition to providing a working definition of MMORPGs, this chapter explores the notion of gamer agency and discusses the characteristics of gamer-generated language and gamer-speak. Although there are relatively few publications on video game localisation, and even fewer on MMORPG localisation, there is a significant body of literature on the subject on which this thesis is built. This chapter shows the evolution of the relevant literature from being industry-focused to more academic in recent years. Key issues concerning MMORPG localisation as identified in the existing literature, will also be discussed in depth.

In Chapter 3 I identify the theoretical foundation on which this research is based. Since this research is interdisciplinary – borrowing from TS and GS frameworks – the theoretical framework adopted in this research on the localisation of MMORPGs has its roots in both these fields. Regarding the former, significant recent research in TS has followed the framework and principles developed within Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), which state that studies of translations should begin with the observable before moving on to the non-observable (Toury

1982: 25). This is how the present study is conceived, since it is aimed at observing and analysing translation (localised texts) and related forms of text production (gamer-generated text). In particular, the Source Text (ST) and Target Text (TT) examples from the MMORPGs in question belonging to specific text types are analysed. Namely, ability names and tooltips, quest titles and achievement texts are selected for the analysis, to include observations about the role of gamer-speak in these text types and how gamer-speak relates to their localisation. Further explanation of these text types and the reasons for their selection is provided in section 4.3. This framework also draws on Polysystem theory by relating gamer-speak to the localisation of MMORPGs by highlighting the interconnectedness of different systems that contribute to text production, and emphasising gamers' involvement in that text production. Within GS, this chapter pays attention to how the ludology vs. narratology debate has a bearing on the localisation of video games, as well as to concepts, borrowed from sociology, that are particularly relevant to this thesis (e.g., the notion of rules and hypersalient group identity).

Chapter 4 is an overview of the methodological approach to this research, including a brief overview of the two MMORPGs investigated, information on corpus design, and the reasoning behind this. In order to relate gamer-speak to the existing localised text, this section addresses three different methods for data collection. First, the collection and analysis of gamer-generated conversations (both quantitative and qualitative) is discussed, including both written and spoken samples. The discourse analysis principles guiding the qualitative analysis of this data sample are discussed, as well as the use of a gamer-speak classification, based on Algeo's (1999) categorisation, as applied by Ensslin (2012: 69-70) to gamer-generated language. Second, the collection and analysis of in-game ST and TT pairs are described, with specific attention paid to text that could influence, be influenced by, or even include gamer-speak. The reasons for focusing on specific in-game text types (ability names and tooltips, quest titles, and achievements) are also elucidated. The framework used for the analysis of the strategies implemented for the translation of instances of gamer-speak is also presented, drawing on Pedersen's (2011) classification of translation strategies for the subtitling of extralinguistic culture-bound references (ECRs). Third, the approach for survey creation and dissemination is explained, with the survey design being directed towards providing

more information on respondents' use of language, some additional background information on gamer-speak users and on their potential motivations for gamer-speak use.

Chapter 5 contains the quantitative and qualitative analyses of gamer-speak found in gamer conversations. This chapter begins with an analysis of conversations from *WoW*, first from the written data sample and then from the spoken sample. This includes an overview of the types and counts of gamer-speak terms found in each sample, based on Algeo's (1999) categorisation. Following this, each sample contains qualitative analysis of pertinent examples of gamer-speak discourse wherein I identify salient linguistic characteristics, and include sociological analyses pertaining to group identity and in-codes that relate to gamer-speak usage in a target language setting. Data from *WildStar* is subsequently studied in the same fashion.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the analysis of the in-game ST and TT. Here I divide the discussion into the three in-game text types analysed: ability names and their corresponding tooltips, quest titles, and achievements. I focus the analysis here on how gamer-speak influences the in-game text, either by its inclusion, or failing that where the in-game text displays similar features to those identified as being salient to gamer-speak. This analysis draws on Descriptive Translation Studies, Polysystem Theory, and Bernal's (2014: 110) text typology.

In Chapter 7 I present the analysis of the data collected in the survey, which was designed to assess players' recognition and recollection of, and potentially preference for gamer-speak terms. This section offers additional demographic background information of respondents that was unobtainable from those sampled in Chapter 5. In this chapter I build on the analysis from the previous chapters by including alternative explanations and additional observations based on the linguistic and sociological observations on previous chapters, as well as discussing the broader context and alternative uses of language during gameplay.

Chapter 8 contains the conclusions drawn from this study, the implications of the findings in this research, potential future action, and avenues for future research.

Finally, a list of references marks the end of this, wherein I cite all works referred to in this thesis, followed by a ludography and filmography.

In the appendices, I have included a complete compilation of all gamer-speak terms found in this study (Appendix 1) and the timetable of written data collection and the amount of words sampled (Appendix 2). Following this, I have included the complete *WoW* written chat data set redacted to remove any potentially identifying information (Appendix 3), the complete recordings of the spoken data set that has been analysed herein (Appendix 4), the entire in-game written text (source and target texts for both *WoW* and *WildStar*) that has been analysed herein (Appendix 5) and a presentation of all responses to each question from the survey (Appendix 6).

Chapter 2   Localisation and MMORPGs: key concepts and considerations

The chapter is organised as follows: section 2.1 sets forth a chronological overview of the literature that shows how the study of video game localisation has evolved, and concludes with a synopsis of some of the work remaining to be done. Section 2.2 provides a working definition of MMORPGs; and section 2.3 is an exploration of gamer agency in MMOPRPGs and how gamers affect and create meaning in video game texts. Section 2.4 discusses where MMORPGs are situated within the study of video game localisation and is further divided into 4 subsections: 2.4.1 discusses the industrial process of video game localisation and how this process impacts localisation approaches; section 2.4.2 examines skopos theory and how it informs the use of creativity in video game localisation; section 2.4.3 describes how video games in general, and MMORPGs in particular, operate across multiple channels, make use of different text types both in-game and externally, and rely on references to other cultural products to gain meaning; and section 2.4.4 discusses some of the key challenges of MMORPG localisation.

2.1   An overview of the evolving field of video game localisation

The practice of video game localisation has long concerned the gaming industry, but as an academic field, video game localisation is still developing. The literature on localisation reflects as much. The early literature appears in trade journals and is written by professional video game translators, who focus largely on industry issues, such as the training and qualifications of localisers, project management, and marketing or legal aspects. A pioneer in the field, Dietz (1999) explores professional approaches to game localisation from an industry perspective. In a similar vein, Timiani Grant (2001) discusses age restrictions and legal considerations with a focus on the German market. Although these early works recognise localisation as a discrete area, they do not view localisation within Translation Studies (TS).

As technology advanced, and as games became more complex, the boundaries of video game localisation expanded. With the attention of academics, localisation began to stake out new territory. In perhaps the first academic

publication about game localisation, Scholand (2002) frames the central features of localisation as translation practice. Further defining the specific characteristics of video game localisation, Thayer and Kolko (2004) compare it with software localisation, focusing on the challenges presented by games that have culturally-specific narratives. Vela Valido (2005) also focuses on the industry of game localisation, and also explores the management and technology of video game localisation, addressing issues such as lack of sufficient context during translation, and practical difficulties of accessing in-game text. In this same year, Chandler (2005) publishes the first monograph on localisation, which is now in a second updated edition, co-authored by Chandler and Deming (2012). In this monograph, Chandler (2005) introduces the concept of internationalisation, whereby game developers, in the early stages of video game development, anticipate the eventual need for localisation and imbed certain features that will facilitate localisation. She also discusses technical and cultural concerns that bear on the localisation process, by comparing and contrasting video game localisation to software localisation.

Following Chandler's first monograph, two key significant articles on the localisation of video games appear in a special audiovisual translation issue in the *Journal of Specialised Translation* authored by Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) and Bernal (2006). These articles discuss localisation embedded within a TS framework for the first time, marking a significant change in the study of the field. Indeed, 2006 has been referred to as "year one" for video game localisation research in TS (Mangiron 2017: 77).

Mangiron and O'Hagan's (2006) article on creativity, imagination, and the restrictions associated with video game localisation applies skopos theory to video game localisation. They articulate the ultimate goal of localising a video game: to make the end-user feel that the game was originally developed in their language and provide the same enjoyment experienced by players of the original version. To accomplish this, video game localisers are granted "*quasi* absolute freedom" to modify, omit, and even add elements to keep the "look and feel" of the original (ibid.: 20). This freedom, they acknowledge, departs from traditional notion of fidelity to the source text. In the context of games, a translator must be faithful to the "overall game experience" (ibid.) and not only to the source text. Thus, the term

'transcreation' – rather than just translation – more appropriately describes the work of the localiser.

Bernal (2006), a prolific scholar in video game localisation research, also contributes to this special issue. His article defines terms relevant to localisation, and discusses the different types of video games, which he referred to as "interactive entertainment software" (ibid.: 24). He also addresses the concept of 'transcreation' that Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) propose, but he questions its use. He finds the discussion of transcreation under-developed and the term lacking precision. In his view, the term does not constitute a meaningful addition to TS, because creativity and freedom were already inherent in the process.

Also in 'year one,' a volume on localisation edited by Dunne (2006), contains two chapters on video game localisation, one by Dietz (2006) and one by Heimburg (2006). Dietz (2006) identifies some of the major issues arising in video game localisation, including the different genres, text types, formats, and language registers. Because video games create alternate worlds, he points out that localising them is more involved than localising web content. Dietz (ibid.: 132) describes six facets of successful video game localisation: (1) frequent communication between translators and developers; (2) integrated team-members between the localisation and development teams; (3) source code tracking software to ensure version control; (4) distribution of design documents to translators in the early phases of localisation; (5) implementation of Translation Memories (TMs) in the process; and finally, and perhaps essentially, (6) the need for localisers to play the game they are working on.

Heimburg's (2006) chapter in Dunne (2006) discusses many of the localisation issues specific to the MMORPG genre, including 'linguistically homogenous' versus 'linguistically heterogeneous' servers, or, in other words, game environments with speakers of one language or those where speakers of different languages are playing together. Heimburg's work is particularly relevant to the research presented in this thesis. He also addresses the language used to create the game code (i.e., the script language that is used to programme the software that

governs game mechanics) and discussed how it interacts with localised text, among other things.

Also in 2006, Consalvo's (2006) case study of Square-Enix's localisation processes highlights the developer's mixture of Japanese and American cultures in its business model and localisation strategies. This successful hybrid of Japanese and American hardware, software, and cultures, in her view, is one of the reasons for Square-Enix's success in those markets. For the author, Square Enix's success has, in part, been because of the cultural adaptation, or "cross-culture hybridisation" (2006: 126) of their games, such that they appeal to audiences in Japan and the USA.

A second special issue in 2007 shows more consolidation in video game localisation research. The journal *Tradumàtica: traducció i tecnologies de la informació i la comunicació* dedicates an entire volume to game localisation, and features nine articles in English, Spanish, and Catalan, addressing a variety of topics and specifically recognising the technical and cultural challenges presented by video game translation. O'Hagan (2007b) argues that video games represent a new domain in TS. A localiser must translate not only text, but also 'experience,' owing to the multimodality of video games, and thus TS research need to respond and develop new approaches. Di Marco (2007) discusses some of the significant cultural adaptations specific to the localisation of Japanese video games, emphasising the work of the localiser beyond the mere linguistic transfer. Muñoz Sánchez (2007) singles out "romhacking", or illegally accessing and modifying game content, to enable fan localisation of video games, as a significant practice in video game localisation. Torres Molina (2007) discusses some of the challenges and past mistakes arising from the localisation of games designed for mobile phones. Dietz (2007) identifies industry idiosyncrasies and essential technical skills that video game localisers must have to be successful industry practitioners. Bernal (2007a) notes that a central challenge in game localisation arises from the complex and diverse text types present in video games, and he suggests that localisers need a certain set of skills that address these specific text types. O'Riada (2007) provides a chronological accounting of the evolution of the video games industry and speculates on the future of the industry's growth and the implications for video

game localisation. Loureiro Pernas (2007) discusses localisation phases, or major steps in workflow, and different characteristics of localisation, identifying examples that she deems important to achieve a satisfactory localisation. Finally, Fernández Torné (2007) analyses a case study of *Codename: Kids Next Door - Operation: V.I.D.E.O.G.A.M.E* and highlights the essential stages of the localisation process that are essential to delivering high-quality localisation in that game.

In 2008 and 2009, Bernal continues to make significant research contributions, publishing articles addressing different game text types (2008a) and focusing on localiser training (2008b). His work on creativity (2009) explores not only creativity in game localisation, but relates it to other translation practices that require creativity, such as translating children's books (2009).

In 2011, a third special issue on video game localisation is published in *TRANS. Revista de Traductología*, edited by Bernal. Significantly, both scholars and industry professionals contribute, and the issue covers a wide range of topics including video game localisation training (Vela Valido 2011), historical game translation (Serón Ordóñez 2011), the localisation of large role-playing games (Christou et al. 2011), culturalisation in game localisation (Edwards 2011), fan translation (Díaz Montón 2011), the management of game localisation (Bartelt-Krantz 2011), as well as case studies of specific games such as the *Buzz!* series (Crosignanni and Ravetto 2011). This special issue displays one of the hallmarks of current study in the field: the combination of the industrial concerns and the academic principles that bear on video game localisation research. Because of this, this special issue is significant to the body of literature on game localisation.

The second of three English monographs on video game localisation, co-authored by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013), explores in greater depth some of the essential topics in the field. They present an historical outline of video games and their translation, starting in the 1980s and citing 2005 as the beginning of the era when game translation took aim at reaching a wider audience[3]. Their work focuses

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[3] Mangiron (2017) further develops this start date as being the origin, even though she states that 2006 was the first year where academia saw its first publications on game localisation.

on practices such as culturalisation, accessibility, terminology management, translation of paratexts, and fan translations, among others

The most recent monograph on video game localisation in TS approached the topic from a different angle. When presenting the state-of-the-art of video game localisation, Bernal (2014) introduces the major stakeholders in the industry, discusses the different modes through which video games are consumed (and so he refers to video games as "multichannel texts"), and explores the challenges of translating the specific linguistic elements of video games (including the prevalence of intertextuality), among others. Not surprisingly, since the uniqueness of the games industry has ever been held as an important aspect of localisation, both this monograph and that by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) provide an overview of key aspects such as the industrial process.

Finally, two recent PhD theses on game localisation explore more specific issues. Lepre (2014) writes on the translation of humour in video games localised from English to Italian, with a focus on *The Secret of Monkey Island* (1990), *Day of the Tentacle* (1993), and *Discworld* (1995). She finds that, among other things, the retranslation of these games into Italian yielded a text that maintained more of the humorous elements from the ST that were lost in the first translation, and therefore provided a better target language (TL) experience. Zhang (2012, 2016) writes on digital game localisation and censorship in China, addressing the specific concerns that apply to the Chinese game localisation market.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that non-scholarly and more practical, industry-oriented publications continue to play an important role in the development of video game localisation (e.g., Muñoz Sánchez, 2007). However, academic research has the potential to take video game localisation to an entirely new level. Researchers have taken a fledgling concept – video game localisation – and advanced it significantly, by establishing terminology, identifying goals, defining key concepts, and constructing a framework for researching distinct localisation issues as they continue to arise.

This thesis hopes to make contributions in four significant areas that the literature suggests are in need of more development. First is the need for more precise terminology, and more agreement on the terminology, used to discuss video game localisation. Indeed, experts in the field have identified the need for a review of TS terminology in this field (Bernal 2006: 22). A prime example is the above-mentioned term 'transcreation', which some scholars use to describe the "creative license" (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 15) that video game localisers enjoy when translating. Although creativity is undoubtedly an aspect of localisation, this term has not been universally endorsed. This thesis defines and contextualises key concepts (see Chapter 2), hoping to promote better agreement in terminology.

Second is the goal of 'user satisfaction' and localising products to meet the needs of gamers in the target culture, given that a successful localisation is a pathway to increased commercial success. However, user-oriented research in video game localisation is scarce, and scholars like O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 277) have proposed moving away from traditional process- or product-oriented paradigms, into more empirical and user-centred research. This is the approach adopted in this thesis, which embraces user-oriented research for the study of gamer-generated language.

Third, the existing literature calls for future studies in game localisation to be interdisciplinary, for example, by taking into account the research in Games Studies (GS). Cross-fertilisation is critical to this thesis, especially when it comes to understanding key notions in video games and their impact on game localisation, as will be shown below. For example, GS research has extended to the notions of rules, either generated by the game or by the game players. How rules are created by and for games is an important consideration to find out how language is created and used in-game, and therefore is pertinent to this thesis.

Fourth, although research in video game localisation has increased substantially since the 2000s, the role and application of relevant theoretical principles within TS and GS to game localisation is still underexplored. This research therefore aims at contextualising and describing gamer-generated

language and the localised video game text within the frameworks of these fields (see Chapter 3).

Since this research focuses on the localisation of MMORPGs, this chapter now examines the existing literature in TS and GS with a view to 1) propose a definition of MMORPGs, 2) emphasise the importance of gamer agency in MMORPGs, and 3) relate the existing literature in TS and GS to the localisation of MMORPGs.

2.2   A working definition of MMORPGs

Video games, as a medium, and video game genres are notoriously difficult to define (Aarseth 2001, 2011; Apperley 2006; Caldwell 2004). MMORPGs, as with other genres of video games, are defined by conventions that one expects to find, such as specific game mechanics, the level of teamwork needed for the creation of certain content, the nature of the narrative, the evolution of characters, and their role regarding mechanics, narrative, and team play. The term Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game MMORPG, therefore, evokes a series of conventions among users. These conventions must be honoured when localising MMORPGs, and the localisation process must take into account the players' expectations regarding game mechanics and the video game text.

O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 8) offer the following definition of MMORPGs: "Role-playing games that can be played online simultaneously by a large number of players". Wolf and Perron (2003: 11) highlight other aspects of MMORPGs, stating they are "the first persistent (twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week) worlds, and the first instance of individualized mediated experiences within a mass audience". While these definitions contain some of the elements one expects to find in an MMORPG, some other key elements are absent. This section of the thesis makes the case for a more comprehensive and specific definition of the genre, defining MMORPGs as follows: Role-playing video games that are designed for online, simultaneous, cooperative and/or competitive play, amongst potentially large numbers of players, who interact in a persistent world via a graphic user interface, and are involved in a virtual economy.

To understand the defining characteristics of MMORPGs, it is helpful to start with a deconstruction of the genre's individual terms: Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games. The first three components are self-explanatory. Massively indicates the game will involve many users. Multiplayer indicates that many users will play together. And online indicates that the players will play the game on the internet.

It bears mention the fact that the definition of 'massively' has changed over time. When the term was introduced the late 1970s in connection with text-based role-playing titles, it described up to 100 people playing together online. Examples of such titles are *Mud* (Trubshaw & Bartle 1978) and *Island of Kesmai* (Kesmai 1985). While *Island of Kesmai* was text-based, it also imitated graphics with the ASCII characters to give players a sense of graphical representation, as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1: ASCII interface – *Island of Kesmai* **(Kesmai 1985)[4]**

With the evolution of graphical user interfaces (GUIs) and high-speed internet connections, modern titles can now support millions of players across multiple servers, playing together in groups into the thousands. Typically, however, for the sake of limiting strain on servers and PCs or consoles, gamers will play together in

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[4] Source: https://winkcreative.wordpress.com/2011/05/25/the-past-feeds-the-present/

groups from 5 to 40, with the possibility of increasing the size to over 100. On the other hand, MMORPGs have a great deal of content that a player can tackle alone. Thus the 'massively' and 'multiplayer' components are not mandatory or absolute features of the genre. However, these games tend to have content designed to encourage large numbers of players to play together.

Turning to the 'Role-Playing' component, this characteristic is what sets this genre apart from others. Typically, gameplay[5] in video game Role-Playing Games (RPGs) will be centred around the main character, achieved by depicting either a 'third-person' view from behind (Figure 2) or above (Figure 3) the player's avatar, or a 'first-person' view from the point of view of the avatar (Figure 4), that the player controls.

Figure 2: Third person view from behind – *Elder Scrolls Online* **(ZeniMax Online Studios 2014)[6]**

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[5] Gameplay, while lacking some consensus in its definition, is explained by Crawford (1984: 20) as an elusive trait "derived from the combination of pace and cognitive effort required by the game".
[6] Source: http://rpgparadise.com/games/elder-scrolls-online/elder-scrolls-online-confirmed-to-go-free-to-play-soon/

Figure 3: Third person view from above – *Dragon Age Inquisition* **(BioWare 2014)[7]**

Figure 4: First person view – *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* **(Bethesda Game Studios 2011)[8]**

Through this avatar, players embark on adventures within the game world and gain experience, learn new abilities, and obtain new equipment to further the players' adventuring throughout the course of gameplay. In addition, the main character typically follows a central storyline and one or more sub-storylines in the form of

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[7] Source: http://www.dsogaming.com/screenshot-news/dragon-age-inquisition-five-new-screenshots-released-new-gameplay-trailer-coming-this-weeks
[8] Source: http://www.playthepast.org/?p=4333

'quests' and 'side quests'. Thus the 'role' of their character is defined by the abilities they learn and develop, the choices players make when interacting with the narrative, and gamers' preferred 'play style', or the way in which they strategically overcome the challenges put forward by the game's mechanics[9]. The role of game mechanics in the shaping of gamer experience, and subsequently gamer-speak, is explored further in 3.2.

The complexity of the game is owing in part to its pen-and-paper RPG counterpart. Many modern video game RPGs draw, to some degree, from the pen-and-paper RPG *Dungeons and Dragons* (Tactical Studies Rules, Inc. 1975) (Thorhauge 2013: 374). In *Dungeons and Dragons* players create all the components of their game: detailed character sheets with statistics which would affect their abilities and strengths, adventure scenarios across imagined landscapes, enemies to vanquish, and captured allies to save. In video game versions of RPGs, elements of gameplay mechanics, character attributes, rule-based parameters (Thorhauge 2013: 375), and indeed the entire virtual world environment, are transferred from the pen-and-paper medium (or from the worlds imagined by players) to the "digital multimedia interactive entertainment software platform" (Bernal 2006: 24).

MMORPGs have defining characteristics or conventions other than those suggested by the title of the genre. Those characteristics, discussed below, include a persistent world, a virtual economy, and, importantly, a system of linguistic exchange.

Most MMORPGs take place in what is known as a 'persistent world'. Yee (2006: 310-311) offers a comprehensive and workable definition of a persistent world:

> A persistent world is a world that exists independent of the users. In stand-alone games and local network games, the world only exists when the game is started by the user, and thus is dependent on the user "activating" it. In an MMORPG, the world exists before the user logs on, and continues to exist

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[9] For the purposes of this research, and following Cook (1997: online), game mechanics are understood as "rule based systems / simulations that facilitate and encourage a user to explore and learn the properties of their possibility space through the use of feedback mechanisms".

when the user logs off. More importantly, events and interactions occur in the world (driven by other users) even when the user is not logged on to the persistent world.

In other words, even when a given user is not playing, i.e., is 'disconnected', the same universe in which the game is based will continue to exist and evolve with the users who *are* playing. This feature sets MMORPGs apart from most single-player games, where if the player stops playing, or presses 'pause', the game ceases. For this reason, there is typically no 'pause' function in MMORPGs. Instead, players simply disconnect from the online universe when they wish to opt out[10]. The experience is akin to being 'substituted out' of a football match – the game and its players carry on despite the one player ceasing play.

The persistence of the game world has a corollary which, according to Heimburg (2006: 135), has become synonymous with the genre:[11] the fact that they do not have a definite ending but are rather open-ended. Indeed, there is no way to "win" an MMORPG (ibid.), since completed content can usually be challenged repeatedly. Publishers and developers have no doubt realised the commercial advantages of an open-ended game; many MMORPGs generate revenue through monthly subscriptions, and similarly many single-player games sell downloadable content (DLC) bundles that players purchase to add side-stories and other extensions of the game narrative. However, the open-endedness of MMORPG content means that beating the game is not as clear-cut as it is in traditional single player games, since players are encouraged to repeatedly complete the game's final challenges. That being said, there are many types of MMORPG content that can be completed only once (such as achievements, or some high-level competitive MMORPG play). While the open-ended feature of the genre is still relevant, it is no longer unique, as other games in the industry have evolved to include this feature.

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[10] The 'persistent world' feature of MMORPGs is not limited to the genre; games which may be multiplayer, but do not have other MMORPG characteristics may also take place in a persistent world. Furthermore, virtual worlds such as *Second Life* (Linden Lab, 2003), which may not even be classified as games according to some definitions (Bartle, 2007) may take place in a persistent world. Thus, while this feature is intrinsic to the MMORPG, it is not exclusively so.

[11] In the early days of MMORPGs this feature was unique to the genre, but now has become common in other games and thus is no longer a defining characteristic of MMORPGs.

The cooperative and competitive aspects of multiplayer gameplay form two distinct types of game challenges. MMORPGs will typically have two broad ways of defining their content – either Player Versus Player (PvP) or Player Versus Environment (PvE), with the former pitting players against one another in in-game challenges, and the latter having players face computer-defined enemies and environments based on scripted mechanics. It is worth noting that both of these principal types of gameplay are improved by player communication, and arguably require it to be successful.

Another feature commonly appearing in MMORPGs is a virtual economy. Players create, gather, hunt, or otherwise accumulate items that are valuable to other players, and trade or sell these items for virtual currency which can then be used to purchase other goods and services within the game. Some MMORPGs, such as *Guild Wars 2* (NCsoft, 2012-Present) will also have a parallel economy in which players can buy in-game items or currency with real money, or indeed buy 'real money-equivalent' currency with the in-game currency they have earned. MMORPG monetisation of this type is becoming more prevalent; indeed, during the course of this research, the two games being studied have implemented the use of such currency. In *WoW*, this takes the form of the '*WoW* Token', which can be either bought with real money and sold for in-game currency, or bought with in-game currency and used to offset the cost of the game's monthly subscription. In *WildStar*, a system of 'Creds', an in-game currency different from the one used in the game universe, has been implemented. 'Creds' are used to buy virtual aesthetic adornments, companion pets, speed-enhancing mounts, and other visually-impressive but mechanically unimpactful in-game items.

Last, and perhaps most importantly, is the linguistic exchange that occurs in MMORPGs. For players to collaborate and commerce to take place, players must interact and communicate. An in-game economy, therefore, begets in-game linguistic exchange. Importantly, however, linguistic exchange is not restricted to commerce-related actions: many of the higher echelons of game content within MMORPGs are only accessible to groups playing together. Thus, interaction and cooperative play, which in turn demands linguistic exchange, are essential both to accessing and overcoming this content.

With the implied high degree of teamwork necessary to play MMORPGs, as well as the establishment of a virtual economy, players necessarily must communicate with one another to fully access the game's content. This communication among gamers typically takes the form of an in-game text chat system similar to that of an online messaging programme (such as MSN or mIRC). In addition, players will frequently use a separate voice chat platform to be able to speak to one another while playing. Voice chat has become such an intrinsic part of MMORPG gameplay that some games now offer voice chat integrated into the video game. While voice chat is not limited to MMORPGs, its use within what is ostensibly a 'role-playing' environment is significant, since it presents an instance which may challenge our notion of 'immersion' in the video game world.[12] This phenomenon is significant for two reasons. First, it highlights the shortcomings of text-based chat programmes within MMORPGs. During a significant portion of gameplay, players will have difficulty communicating via such a chat programme and playing the game at the same time, since the sheer number of keystrokes required to play the game limits one's ability to type simultaneously. Second, it creates another environment for communication and gamer-generated semiotic events during gameplay which were, in many cases, not part of the initial intended game design. An account of the different modes of communication within MMORPGs and its significance for their localisation is discussed further in Chapter 5.

In addition to providing a working definition of MMORPGs, this section has explored the features of this genre pertinent to this thesis, in particular regarding the communication established between MMORPG gamers, which results in the gamer-generated language analysed in this research. Following this, the next section, discussing Gamer Agency, looks into how gamers are implicated more significantly in text production than are consumers of other media.

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[12] Immersion in a video game is achieved when "the player is caught up in the world of the game's story (the diegetic level), but it also refers to the player's love of the game and the strategy that goes into it (the nondiegetic level)" (McMahan 2003: 68)

2.3   Gamer agency in MMORPGs

Due to their interactive nature, video games demand some degree of agency from the gamer. Gamers interact with (and often create) the narrative, mechanics, and sometimes content of the games they are playing. Several researchers have discussed the importance of gamer agency in the video game experience (Bernal 2014; Gee 2003, 2007; Gregersen & Grodal 2009; Grodal 2003; Rehak 2003). Bernal (2014: 16), for example, sees video games as placing "an emphasis on interactivity and the consistent feeling of commanding the game experience".

Not all video games require the same level of interactivity. Evidence of a high level of gamer agency in MMORPGs is apparent from the initial moments of gameplay. Gamers choose the race and appearance of their avatar, the role they will have within a team, and the faction to which they belong. Players create content when communicating with other players, in the form of typed text chat, spoken exchanges over a voice chat platform, emotes,[13] or simply reacting to other players' gameplay. Gamers therefore generate their own narrative and dialogue with others during their play, paralleling the narrative and mechanics of the content they are playing. The language generated by end-users is thus part-and-parcel of gamer agency as it applies to MMORPGs, since users are in command of language choices which will in turn impact their gameplay. This has particular significance for localised video game texts and how the texts influence the video game experience, particularly within the context of MMORPG gameplay.

In MMORPGs, some players opt to 'role-play', or attempt to embody or take on the personality of their avatar when communicating with other players, while others communicate with their own voice as a player rather than as the character they are playing. These two play styles are kept separate in the case of *WoW* by creating two different servers that players can populate so that they do not clash. The clear majority of players of *WoW*, 85% according to Wowpedia (2015: online), however, tend to prefer non-role-playing servers. This statistic is significant

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[13] Emotes are computer commands that players of MMORPGs can enter into the in-game chat console. These commands are typically preceded by a '/' and will announce that the player's avatar has performed a certain action in the text box, being accompanied sometimes by an appropriate animation. For example, in *WoW*, the command '/wave' will display the text 'You wave' in the sender's chat box and '[Player's Name] waves' in the chat box of other players in the vicinity.

when considering the target audience for *WoW*, and perhaps other MMORPGs (*WildStar* did not have dedicated role-playing servers available at the time of release and does not at the time of submission of this thesis). The significance of these data can be thought of as an indication of player's primary activity while playing MMORPGs. This speaks to the debate around the extent to which immersion in the storyline is an essential characteristic of MMORPGs, as discussed in section 2.2, since it could be argued that if most players prefer a server where role-playing is not the main activity, perhaps they place greater emphasis on some other aspect of gameplay, such as high-end PvE content, PvP combat, commerce, or social gaming. Agency in MMORPGs, therefore, while an intrinsic element of the gameplay and character formation, seems to stop short, at least in 85% of players of *WoW*, of the role-playing aspect of the game.[14] These reflections are pertinent to the study of gamer-generated language in MMORPGs, since they reveal that there are divergences between the type of language used within the game text itself and that used between and among players, as discussed in 8.2. The phenomenon of players preferring non-role-playing servers in MMORPGs and the implications for their language use and MMORPGs localisation is discussed further in Chapter 5.

2.3.1   Gamer-generated language and gamer-speak in MMORPGs

One important way in which gamer agency manifests itself is in gamer-generated language, whose study has received little attention from academia, with the exception of Ensslin's (2012) work. Gamers create language when they modify, re-appropriate, and repurpose language that appears in the in-game text or in standard forms, thereby creating new lexical constructions during their gameplay sessions. This non-standard lexis used during gameplay is what I refer to as 'gamer-speak,' which can be situated within Ensslin's (ibid.) conceptualisation of gamer-generated language.

Ensslin (ibid.: 12) examines gamer-generated language found in a wide range of game genres and game-related contexts: video game magazine articles, gamer forum threads, gamer chat threads, and conversations taking place during

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[14] To clarify, 'role-playing' here refers not to the adoption of a role within the team of players (such as healer, damage-dealer, support, etc.), but rather to the player's embodiment and impersonation of their avatar during gameplay.

gameplay. Her work includes a review of terms related to gamer language, including gamer slang, gamer jargon, ludolect, gamer speak, 'buddylect', and gamer lingo, among others, as well as of their characteristics (ibid.: 64-86). Based on a corpus of gamer-generated texts, she makes several important observations about gamer-generated language. One of the most significant of these is that video games, being audiovisual products and therefore multimodal in nature, convey meaning in a number of ways via their interfaces (ibid.: 159). Because of video games' multimodality, she argues that players are empowered and learn game rules quickly and "gain maximum entertainment from the gameplay experience" (ibid.). Included in this gameplay experience, particularly in communities of gamers playing simultaneously, Ensslin (ibid.) posits three dominant pragmatic uses in the language of gaming: directive (instructions or orders), representational (assigning terms to the virtual game world), and expressive (communicating emotions) speech acts. In addition to these three uses, she identifies three dominant gamer discourses: the discourse of 'cool',[15] that of fun, and that of appreciation, all of which "signal gamers' preferred social stance of detached engagement, their power relations *vis-à-vis* gameplay activities" (ibid.: 159). Pertinent here is the discourse of cool, an integral part of the subversive uses of language in gamer communities, i.e., the use of non-standard forms to appropriate language in defiance of standard linguistic forms. These uses:

> manifest themselves particularly poignantly in gamers' communicative interactions, which exhibit alternative, 'communities-of-practice' views of politeness including […] the multimodal implementation of the discourse of 'cool'. (ibid.)

The definition that I offer for gamer-speak – "gamer-generated language that has been modified or re-appropriated from standard forms to create non-standard lexical and morphological combinations in support of in-game communication" – situates it as a subcategory of Ensslin's (ibid.) multimodal implementation of the discourse of cool and is a consequence of non-standard lexis use during gameplay. While Ensslin (ibid.: 65) maintains that gamer-generated language is created in

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[15] The discourse of 'cool', according to Ensslin (2012: 109), relates to the "detached engagement" created by a discourse that, in this case, results in the development of certain relationships and the prevention of others (i.e., the in-group and the out group).

different spaces (such as on online forums, or in press journalism), on different linguistic levels (including grammatical innovation, or the use of expletives, for example), and according to different levels of lexical specificity (developer/ludological jargon, ludolects/gamer slang, general media/advertising discourse), her observations pertaining to gamer slang and the in-group code are particularly pertinent to my understanding of gamer-speak: "[g]amer slang spans all lexematic categories […] and game designers and players alike are highly creative and prolific in producing new words […] and in adding new meanings to existing words".

I define the term gamer-speak to refer specifically to gamers' lexical innovation during gameplay. Examining gamer-generated exchanges of non-standard lexis, alongside in-game localised text, will enable a systematic study of the lexical innovations that occur during gameplay, i.e., gamer-speak.

Ensslin (2012: 68) also offers examples of three types of gamer "jargon vocabulary", some of which would fall under my definition of gamer-speak. She (ibid.) suggests that terms she found in the MMORPG *FINAL FANTASY XI* (*FFXI*) can be divided between general gaming terms, MMORPG-specific terms, and *FFXI* terms. General gaming terms could include "XP" (experience points), MMORPG-specific terms could include role-related terms such as "Tank", "Damage Dealer", or "Healer", and *FFXI*-specific terms could relate to races or cultures that only exists in the *FFXI* universe, such as "Tarutaru", or "Mithra". This phenomenon may apply to terms from *WoW* and *WildStar*, or indeed any MMORPG, and can be grouped according to gaming-specific, genre-specific, or game-specific parameters (see also 7.3).

In addition to using gamer-speak to implement this discourse of 'cool', using gamer-speak or non-standard language is more practical and efficient when coordinating gameplay. For example, where a group leader needs to give instructions relating to game mechanics that occur quickly, a shorter term is clearly more practical than a longer one. As such, in the context of communication during gameplay, there is a practical dimension to gamer-speak usage that comes in addition to the social motivations posited by Ensslin (2012). In MMORPGs, for

example, in-game communication typically takes place via a typed chat or via a voice-chat platform, either of which can be integrated in the game's GUI or run on a third-party software programme. This, coupled with fast-paced mechanics, means that concise communication during gameplay is more efficient, and therefore likely to be preferred by gamers. Therefore, gamer-speak use can be motivated by the practical advantages it offers in that it enhances coordination in group play and leads to greater success in meeting in–game challenges This coordination requires efficient communication and the use of gamer-speak contributes to it. This observation is explored at length in 5.3, 7.3, and 8.2.

The use of gamer-speak also reveals information about the players themselves. Gamers who use gamer-speak are likely to possess a more in-depth knowledge of the game mechanics, which other players will detect. This is in part because gamer-speak is typically not explained in the in-game tutorials and instructions in the same way that other actions, commands, and game rules are taught to new players (O'Hagan & Mangiron 2013: 11). As a result, acquisition of gamer-speak is largely learned from more experienced players. Therefore, if a player is familiar with gamer-speak, others would assume he or she has at least a moderate knowledge of the game, as well as a minimum level of game experience. Players who use gamer-speak demonstrate to the community that they are more experienced gamers as they are in possession of the in-group code. This in-group code is essentially the manifestation of the discourse of cool: the practical implementation of a linguistic code that displays detached engagement, and simultaneously solidifies the 'in' group and excludes the 'out' group (Ensslin 2012: 109). This 'out' group exhibits an inability to understand gamer-speak on the part of the recipient, which in turn shows a lack of game experience. These players are excluded from conversations including the in-group code (Ensslin 2012: 68). For example, the word "Noob" or "N008" is used to mean a new or inexperienced player (read: newbie). If one player calls another player this, it insults on two levels: first by stating that the player's abilities correspond to that of a novice, and second by stating this in such a way that the term itself puts their inexperience on display using a code that is only available to more experienced players. It is worth mentioning, on the other hand, that if a gamer does not use gamer-speak it is not

necessarily indicative of less experience, since there may be other motivations for avoiding the use of gamer-speak.

In any case, because of the minimum level of game experience required to be able to use and understand gamer-speak, its use reinforces two important social structures in addition to the discourses of cool,[16] of fun,[17] and of appreciation,[18] as outlined by Ensslin (2012: 109-113). First, gamer-speak distinguishes gamers from non-gamers. Using gamer-speak reinforces the community of gamers with the in-group code that excludes non-gamers, who are unlikely to understand this non-standard lexis. Second, gamer-speak distinguishes more-experienced gamers from less-experienced gamers, since it signals a minimum level of game experience. In this way, gamer-speak can be thought of as a way of stratifying the community of gamers. Usually more experienced gamers have a higher status in the gaming community (see 3.2.2), and thus the community hierarchy can be, at least in part, maintained by using gamer-speak. This hierarchical stratification is also explored in more detail in the observations logged in 5.3 and 8.2.

Analysing the features of gamer-speak has implications for MMORPG localisation because the study sheds light on the needs of the target audience. A study of gamer-speak will reveal how gamers modify standard lexical forms to create gamer-speak and what types of terms are modified. Also important, this kind of study will reveal how the terms are used in gamer-communications to implement the discourse of cool, of detached engagement, and of belonging (Ensslin 2012: 109) within the community of gamers. Armed with the definition of gamer-speak I have provided above and situated within Ensslin's (ibid.) understanding of gamer-generated language, I have focused on relating French gamers' lexical innovation with the French localised game text, as well as on the social and practical significance of gamer-speak for the gaming community, which forms the target audience for MMORPG localisers.

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[16] Detached engagement relating to the in-group being distinguished from the out group (Ensslin 2012: 109).

[17] Relating to the discourse for the sake of enjoyment (Ensslin 2012: 110).

[18] Closely related to the discourse of fun: emotionalised discourse relating to appreciation or displeasure of game-related events or content (Ensslin 2012: 112).

In addition to gamer-generated language and gamer-speak, other aspects of localisation approaches, processes, and structures influence MMORPG localisation. The next section explores how MMORPGs fit in the context of the existing literature on video game localisation, before situating this research therein.

2.4 Video game localisation and MMORPGs

The existing literature on the localisation of video games discusses three important issues which set apart video games from other media and are particularly relevant for MMORPGs and this research: (1) the unique industrial process affecting video game localisation; (2) the degree of creativity required of localisers to make sure the skopos of the TT is met; and (3) the importance of paratextuality, intertextuality, and multimodality in video games, and how they influence their localisation. The present section examines each of these notions in turn and relates them to MMORPG localisation. The section then concludes with an overview of the key challenges localisers face when translating MMORPGs.

2.4.1 The industrial process of video game localisation

As discussed above, video game localisation has garnered attention in both industry and scholarly publications. Notably, Chandler and Deming (2012) and Bernal (2014) offer extensive descriptions of aspects of the industry workings that influence the localisation process and outcomes. Discussed below are the more salient of these, with attention given to those that are particularly relevant to MMORPGs.

Among the aspects described by Chandler and Deming (2012) are the internationalisation of games pre-production, determining whether a game requires partial or full localisation (i.e., "text-only" localisation (Raynard & Wood, 2009) vs. localisation that includes dubbing of audio assets, graphic adaptation of images, etc.); the importance of budgeting, scheduling, and staffing; employing internal vs. external localisers and vendors; localisation tools; and integrating localisation into the game development process. These aspects of the unique process associated with the localisation of video games shape the final product to some extent. For example, Chandler and Deming (2012: 4-8) state that, to avoid retroactively localising

aspects of the game text or code which can consequently impact user satisfaction, the internationalisation of video games should have the functional capability to include characters with diacritical marks in the game code and display, as well as flexible user interfaces to reduce space constraints, and consider the cultural context of the game. Internationalisation is thus a concept that incorporates ideas of localisation into the planning and development phases of game production. So-called "Triple A" titles, such as those that form the corpus of the present research, normally internationalise their games. Localisers of Triple A MMORPGs typically work on parts of the text while others are still being written so that the different language versions can be released simultaneously (in what is known as sim-ship) (Chandler & Deming 2012: 72). Bernal (2014) highlights the importance of this integration process as the most recent stage of the evolution of the localisation industry. When doing so, he refers to McKearney's (2007) notion of 'enhanced' or 'deep' localisation, stating that:

> any amendment that does not run counter to the game-world itself, and is capable of increasing the immersion of players through familiarity with gameplay features and specific story preferences, can be considered and accepted as the right way to approach a particular community or market. […] In this sense, localisation is part of the creative process from the beginning. (Bernal 2014: 172-173)

In essence, deep or enhanced localisation describes the additional aspects of the localisation process beyond the linguistic transfer that allow for products to cater to the target culture or target locale in a systematised way (ibid.: 173). This assertion justifies some of the amendments, or creative choices, that video game localisers can implement (see 2.4.2). However, Bernal's statement above could be discussed further and warrants additional nuance. First, amendments that run counter to the game-world can be found in many games. For example, the addition, removal, alteration of, or amendments to intertextual references, i.e., references to other games, films, literature, or popular culture, is commonplace and considered an acceptable practice in game localisation. In some cases, the original references run

counter to the game-world. In *Hitman Absolution* (Square Enix 2012) we see one such case in the achievement text below:[19]

Figure 5: *Hitman Absolution* **achievement: "The Bartender Always Knows"**

The original achievement text in Figure 5 is 'unlocked' when the player takes a moment to speak with the barman during a mission where s/he is trying to assassinate a target. As with most texts of its type, it appears when the player completes a portion of in-game content in a specific way. In addition, this text can be found in the in-game menus for player reference, and to see which achievements they have completed. Finally, achievements and players' achievement completion rates also appear in the online community spheres, such as PlayStation Network, Xbox Live, Steam, or other game-related community websites (Strong 2017: 23).

In Figure 5, in the French TT a reference to the film *Batman Begins* (Christopher Nolan, 2005) has been added, playing with the word 'barman' instead. Lepre (2014: 71) proposes that the added humour in such references is generated by the link to gameplay which is established here by the phonetic similarity between *barman* and *Batman* in French. Therefore, the text refers to the *Batman Begins* film and relates this reference to the barman in this achievement. While this film reference deliberately departs from the story and breaks the 'fourth wall' (Batman does not explicitly exist in the game world), its comedic reference is in part gained from the relation to the gameplay associated with the reference (approaching the bartender during an assassination). As a result, we can build on Bernal's statement

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[19] Achievement text, or trophy text "congratulate[s] the player for completing exceptional in-game feats or milestones" (Strong 2017: 26).

above by adding that references that are counter to the game-world may be acceptable if they retain some link to the game's narrative or gameplay.

Amendments associated with enhanced or deep localisation such as this, that run counter to the game world, also call into question our understanding of immersion. Essentially, it is difficult to ascertain how greater 'immersion' is achieved in an audience. McMahan (2003: 67) suggests that "our concept of immersion in video games […] has become an excessively vague, all-inclusive concept". She argues that for game designers, immersion can be achieved at the diegetic or nondiegetic level, and in the case of 3D games is dependent on three criteria:

> (1) the user's expectations of the game or environment must match the environment's conventions fairly closely; (2) the user's actions must have a non-trivial impact on the environment; and (3) the conventions of the world must be consistent, even if they don't match those of "meatspace". (ibid.)

These criteria, while applied here to game design, can be extended to video game localisation, particularly when we accept that deep or enhanced localisation is becoming common practice. Since developers and localisers may consider these approaches to immersion at all stages of production, matching the user's expectations with the environment's conventions and maintaining consistency of the world's conventions are two areas where localisers' decisions can impact immersion. The direct involvement of the localiser in end-user immersion brings about the issue of how localisation is integrated into the development process. Ohsan-Berthelsen (2015, personal communication) states that video game localisation should be a consideration at all stages of the development process, from planning phases through to QA, post-production, and ongoing product support. In addition, he describes the typical localisation process to have circular elements that are designed to "iron out" any potential issues that might negatively impact immersion.

Figure 6 shows an example of one typical localisation process from source text creation to source and target text publication:
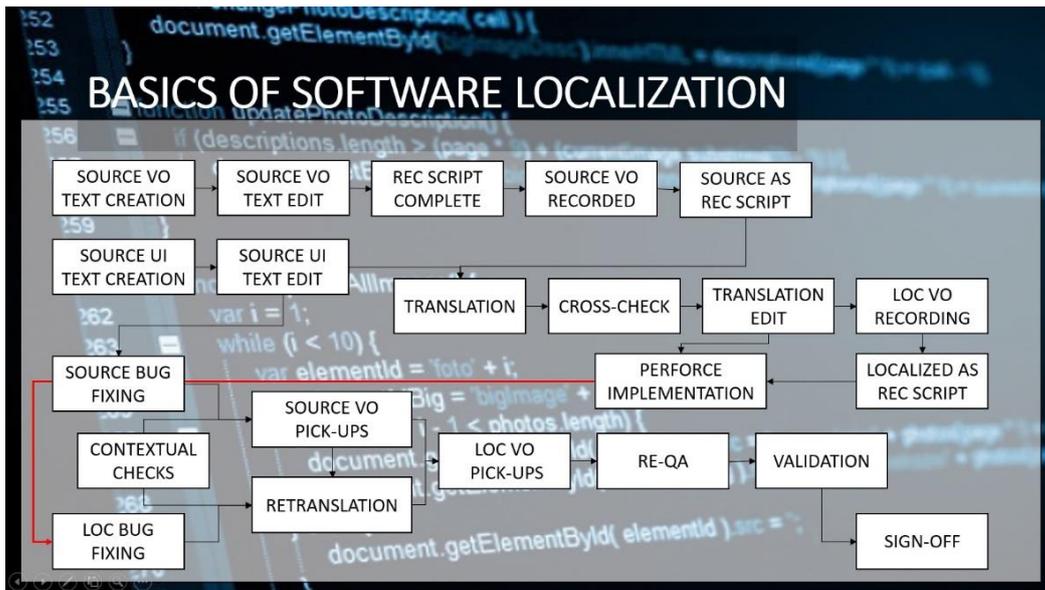
Figure 6: Typical stages of software localisation (Ohsan-Berthelsen, 2015, personal communication)[20]

Figure 7 below shows the industrial chain according to O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013):
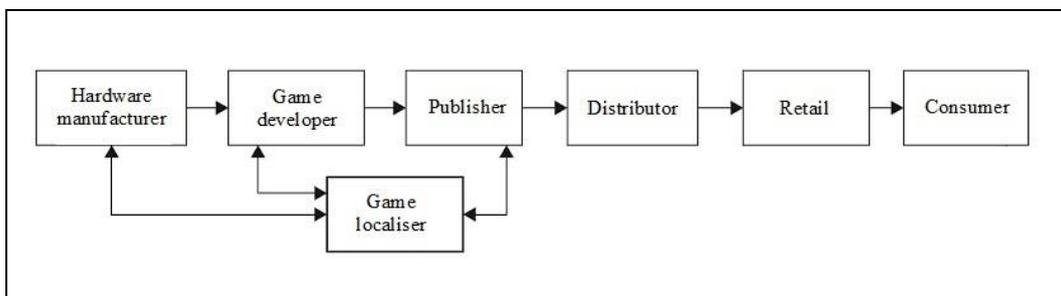
Figure 7: The game industry product chain with localisation (O'Hagan & Mangiron 2013: 78)

In both of these representations, we see that there are many stakeholders, and that translation is one stage of many. Several stages of technical and editorial checks for handling text, as well as matching translations for context and consistency, are in place. While these charts show the process up to the game's publication, it is important to note that most games have post-production feedback loops in place so that end-users can provide opinions and report errors or other localisation issues. This is frequently done via the official forums or other community-access

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[20] Although this image refers to software localisation, it has been applied here to a video game localisation process.

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platforms, and requests and issues are coordinated and communicated back to the localisation team for potential correction or implementation. An example of this can be seen in Figure 8 where a *WildStar* community manager addresses localisation requests from gamers.
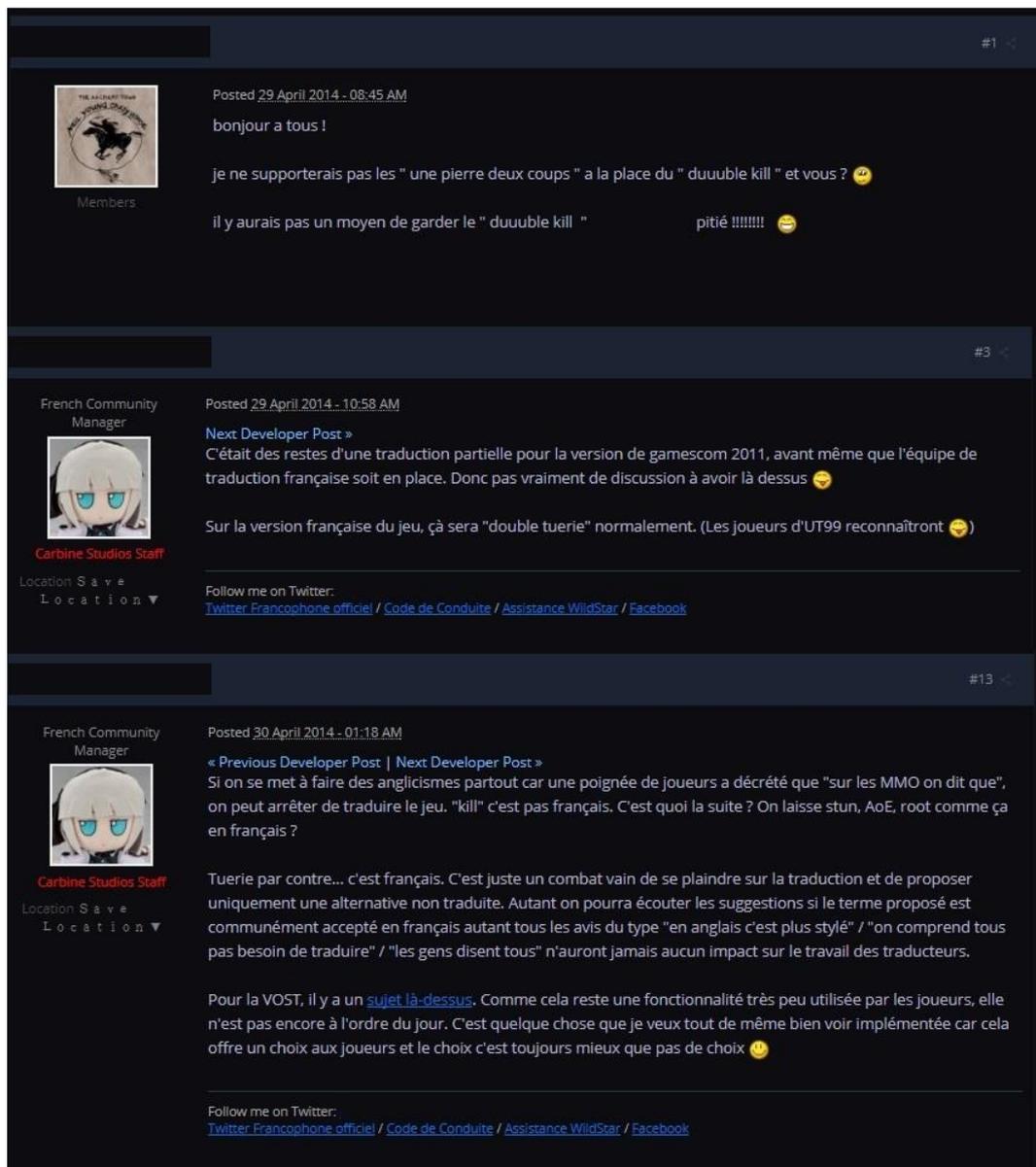
Figure 8: French forum conversation with a community manager on Anglicism

Figure 8 is the first post in a forum thread and the subsequent community manager responses. The thread starts with a request to keep an untranslated text fragment that appears when the player kills two enemies in rapid succession. This text reads "Double Kill" in the English original, and was left for some time untranslated in the French version during the public testing phase. The original poster in this thread

was a player of the beta test version, who appreciates the English text and requests that it remain in the final version. The community manager replies that this text was untranslated because the test version of the game was not the final one. The ensuing conversation, which has been left out of Figure 8, contains responses of several other players who also preferred the English text. The community manager then replies that 'kill' (like other terms such as 'stun', 'AOE', and 'Root') is not French and therefore will be localised. He goes on to say that: "any opinions such as "in English it's cooler" / "we all understand it, no need to translate it" / "everyone says it" will never have any impact on the translators' work" (my translation). While this example is rejected by the community manager for integration in the TT, the dialogue is typical of feedback on the official forum responses to localisation, and gamer feedback can be integral to beta phase and post-production updates to the localised game text. Based on the existence of this sort of interaction, I propose that the O'Hagan and Mangiron's (2013) product chain as seen in Figure 7 should be modified to look as follows:[21]
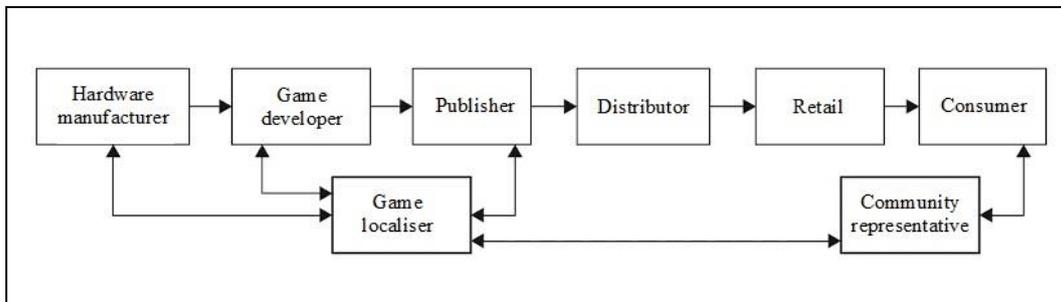
Figure 9: Mangiron & O'Hagan's (2006) industry product chain (modified)

This extra feedback loop includes an industry professional, in this case the community representative, acting as an interface for the end-user to submit criticisms, error reports, and other general feedback on localisation to be considered for integration. This aspect of the localisation process is, I believe, integral to the ongoing success of games, particularly those which have evolving and frequently-updated content, such as MMORPGs.

Ultimately, video games are commercial products and therefore their end purpose is to generate revenue for the publishers and other stakeholders. The means

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[21] A similar feedback loop could be implemented in the process outlined in Figure 6.

to this end, however, is debatable. For localised versions, the current literature suggests that successful localisation generates revenue more effectively when the target audience is provided a "convincingly personal experience […] each time they enter the game world" (Bernal 2014: 40). In this regard, two specific TS concepts help to understand and conceptualise aspects such as end-user satisfaction or successful localisation: skopos theory and video game transcreation. The following section is a discussion of how these two concepts can be applied to video game localisation.

2.4.2 Skopos theory

Skopos theory, a functional theory of translation developed in Germany in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Munday 2008: 71-72), views translation not simply as transcoding from one language to another, but as a form of human action that has a social purpose and an outcome. Its inception coincided with the initial posits by Toury in 1977 that Translation Studies would be shifting from source-orientedness towards target-orientedness (Toury 2012: 19). This theory reflects not only a shift towards the TT and TC, but also a shift from predominantly linguistic to more functional and sociocultural aspects of translation, where functionality is defined by the fulfilment of the needs and expectations of the target audience.

For Vermeer (1978), the intended purpose of the TT determines the translation methods and strategies. He proposes the following explanation of the principles underlying the skopos theory: "[T]ranslate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function" (Vermeer 1989/2004: 20). The usability of a text in 'precisely the way users or readers want it to function' is particularly important in video games, where end users are more implicated in the outcomes of their textual (and in this case audiovisual) experience.

Similar to Vermeer, Hatim (2009: 39) describes Skopos theory as an approach promoting pragmatism in translation, emphasising the importance of cohesion and

coherence of the TT rather than fidelity to the ST. Hatim (ibid.: 40) distils this theory into its two key rules as follows:

Skopos Rule 1: Interaction is determined by its purpose.

Skopos Rule 2: Purpose varies according to the text receiver.

Hatim (ibid.) expands his interpretation by incorporating the contextual feature 'audience design', which accounts for the way in which a text is intended to be received attending to different communicative needs.

Regarding the application of the first rule highlighted by Hatim (ibid.: 40) to video game localisation, the localised text potentially serves one or more of the following purposes: conveys technical information regarding the game's operation or tips to assist in gameplay; provides narrative-driven texts which will enrich the gamers' experience by fleshing out the storyline; provides achievement text, or text which is attached to a points-system reward relating to the completion of in-game challenges; and provides "extra-ludic" information (Wysocki 2013: 134), or information not directly associated with playing the game or supporting its narrative, such as customer support, in-game assistance, legal information, or sales and marketing.

MMORPGs localisers should bear in mind that gamers need not only to read, hear, and see the in-game text while playing but also to use it for gameplay coordination. Thus, when determining the purpose of the video game text, in addition to client instructions and the translation brief, localisers must consider both the passive and active consumption of video game text. Based on this, Barnabé (2014: 17-18) posits that video games generate narrative in two ways: that which comes from the passive consumption of the in-game text, or *récit enchâssé*; and that which is created during the acting out of the games virtual events during gameplay, or *récit vidéoludique*.

Enter Hatim's (2009) second rule: since purpose varies according to the text receiver, understanding the way end-users consume video games is essential to understanding how to localise for the target audience. The way gamers play the

game directly affects their consumption of the localised text. Therefore, in video game localisation the skopos must include both the passive and active consumption of video game text.

A target-oriented approach to the translation of in-game text must thus consider gamer communication as an essential element that will influence gamer experience. Both original and localised MMORPGs necessarily involve player interaction at some stage, and furthermore require a degree of cooperation for players to be successful in their navigation of the *récit vidéoludique*. Localised MMORPGs must thus enable effective communication among players if the skopos of the TT is to be met. The facilitation of this communication could be argued to be one aspect of the skopos of the localised game text.

The degree to which a TT meets this skopos determines the text ability to be consumed in a meaningful and functional way by the end-user. The concept of 'adequacy' as defined by Reiß and Vermeer (1984: 139) becomes relevant here, since it explains ST and TT relationships as the result of maintaining the skopos defined by the commission or translation brief. If this skopos has been observed, the translation will be functionally and communicatively adequate. As such, adequacy may be determined in part by the provision of appropriate language for gamers in their locale, since gameplay in MMORPGs necessarily involves linguistic exchange. One feature of the linguistic exchanges in the MMORPGs under study here is that they contain gamer-speak. Therefore, skopos theory provides for the importance of considering TL gamer-speak in MMORPG localisation.

2.4.3   Video games: paratextual, intertextual, multichannel

Linguistic examination of video games relies on the multiform and referential nature of video games as text. As such, in addition to in-game text, texts about and therefore mutually reliant on video games are of significant linguistic importance for the study of video game localisation. The present section explores the relevance of the "context" (Hatim 2009: 36) and "textual ecology" (Ensslin 2012: 52) that comprises video game texts. Context and textual ecology are related to the notions

of paratextuality (Genette 1997), or secondary texts that exist outside the central text, intertextuality (Attardo 2001: 1), or references to texts or cultural elements that exist outside the game context, and the multichannel nature of video game text, which relies on reading, listening, viewing, and playing to generate meaning (Bernal 2014: 45). Despite being shared by all video game texts, these notions seem particularly relevant to the study of MMORPGs and their localisation due to their reliance on numerous paratexts (such as websites, manuals, packaging, etc.) and frequent intertextuality (references to popular culture, to other video games, etc).

2.4.3.1 Paratextuality

Paratextuality (*paratextualité*) is a term coined by Genette (1997). He defines paratext as providing the threshold or "vestibule" in which a text is situated. In other words, this concept includes all texts that exist to contextualise and frame the central text. Paratextuality was originally applied to works of literature, but the concept is also applicable to video games in that text appears in places outside of the in-game text like game websites and official forums. This has been argued by other scholars (Méndez González, 2014) as will be shown below.

Genette (1997: 2) emphasises that the boundaries between text and paratext are blurred:

> It is an "undefined zone" between the inside and the outside without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned towards the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text).

In the case of novels these blurred boundaries are somewhat more readily identifiable. Text found within the body paragraphs of novels is typically considered "text" and text found in the titles, intertitles, footnotes, table of contents, book jacket, literary reviews, and other criticism or advertisement about the novel is considered "paratext".

Video games complicate the concept of text versus paratext for two reasons. First, if compared to other literary and audiovisual media, video game paratexts can be generated by a wider range of people: gamers, game developers, advertisers, community representatives, public relations staff, legal representatives, or any other

official or unofficial, published or unpublished, discussion about a given game. In addition, whereas paratexts pertaining to novels and other literary or audiovisual media can also be generated by the community, situating text and paratext in video games is unique because of their interactivity. This leads to the second reason: the performative nature of the video game experience challenges our notion of text when compared with reading a novel, watching a film, listening to music, or attending a theatre performance. As argued by Ensslin (2012: 25), interacting with games is different from novels or films since video games are played rather than listened to, read or watched:

> They have to be interacted with in ways that include interface design, verbal and multimodal communication as well as, importantly, the cybernetic feedback loop which integrates the gamer into a perpetual and mutual cause-and-effect, stimulus-response relationship with the gaming technology. What this means is that during gameplay gamers are spatio-temporally embodied in the actual world, and re-embodied in the game world, though avatars.

Therefore, while novels require a sort of performance in their reading, the cause-and-effect relationship is more prevalent in video games. The lack of causality in the reader's interpretation of the text in a novel creates distance between the performance (reading) and the text (novel). However, in the case of video games, and MMORPGs in particular, the virtual embodiment of the avatar that extends beyond the imagined characters of a novel reading puts a greater value on the gameplay itself. Admittedly, without reading the novel text does not exist, but neither does the novel reader have a causal relationship with the outcomes of their protagonist.

This status of text or paratext becomes an important consideration in video game localisation. The texts that are localised include not only in-game assets but also other text such as manuals, gaming magazines, advertisements (Ensslin 2012: 58), promotional materials, legal text, online help documents, online community-oriented publications, patch notes, updates, etc., and other objects and artefacts such as console controllers, action figures, and trading cards (Méndez González 2014: 220). Because of this, localisation of paratext becomes an important part of the localiser's task, thus making them both translator, and "paratranslator" (ibid.: 305), because they "not only know well the sector in which they are working, but they

also know the symbolic, iconic, and cultural particularities of both cultures they are working with and mediating between" (ibid., my translation). As such, it could be argued that video game localisers are localising text that serves two, simultaneously-existing narratives, since both the *récit enchâssé* and the *récit vidéoludique* are influenced by the localised text. The text created by the *récit vidéoludique*, however, is not localised, but it is rather the performative interpretation and virtual events that take place in the context of the *récit enchâssé*. The strong relationship and interdependency between these *récits* (created by gameplay and the consumption of in-game text) and the texts and paratexts in video games highlights the relevance of the study of gamer-generated language in MMORPGs, as it could thus be considered another paratext which heavily influences and is influenced by the rest of the texts and paratexts in MMORPGs.

2.4.3.2 *Intertextuality*

Attardo (2001: 71) defines intertextuality as linguistic devices that create referential links between two texts in which one is reliant on the other to gain meaning. Intertextuality is a common device in video games, and can be a complicating factor for localisers. Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 14) state that, in addition to rendering a similar game experience in the target locale, video game localisers "also need to be able to recognise allusions and intertextual references to other genres of global popular culture, such as comics and films". Indeed, these references are often used as comedic devices in video games, and frequently break the "fourth wall" of separation between the game universe and the real world (Lepre 2014: 70). The importance of recognising intertextual references can be seen in Figure 10:

Figure 10: Fallout 2: intertextual reference to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*[22]

This screenshot is taken from the third-person post-nuclear apocalyptic role-playing game *Fallout 2* (Bethesda, 1998). This game is particularly saturated with intertextual references, and the encounter featured in Figure 10 takes place randomly, as an event that the player can stumble across when travelling the wastelands. The dialogue is based on the feature film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, with aspects of the dialogue mapped onto the game universe, as is the case with the mention of the Brotherhood of Steel. This intertextual reference can be challenging for localisers who, despite having a significant degree of freedom to transcreate references like this into the target language, must make sure the reference retains the link to the game mechanics (Strong 2017: 27). Therefore, the localiser is limited in his or her creativity to references that do not clash with what is taking place during gameplay: the party of knights, the mention of the Brotherhood of Steel, and the subsequent mechanics of the dialogue and any gameplay that ensues as a result. Without this reference, or at least some equivalent reference, the encounter loses some of its meaning, since the comedic incongruity (Lepre 2014: 17) of medieval knights in a futuristic setting or reference to a film

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[22] Source : http://archive.nma-fallout.com/fallout2/eggs

comedy, would be lost.[23] Likewise, since video game localisation is primarily concerned with providing a similar look and feel for the target locale, and a gameplay experience that feels as though it is an original (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 14), keeping this intertextual reference in the localised version where players are not familiar with this cultural reference could have a negative impact on their gameplay experience.

The concept of intertextuality is relevant to this research since gamer-generated language, if and when it appears in the in-game text, could be deemed a form of intertextuality. This language is created and used outside the game universe, yet it creates links between other video game texts and paratexts, and may rely on those to gain meaning. In addition, as shown in section 6.3, gamer-generated language contains references to popular culture, and it is included in in-game text, thus being one type of intertextuality that also warrants attention from video game localisers.

Intertextual references, as with all video game text, are not limited to the verbal and written form; video games rely on the interaction of multiple codes, transmitted through multiple channels, to generate meaning. The following section examines the current discussion on multichannel text as it relates to video game localisation.

2.4.3.3 Video games as multichannel texts

Bernal (2014: 46) refers to video games as multichannel texts and states that they are:

> multichannel in nature because they combine a linguistic system with a pictographic or an audio and visual one, and these different semiotic systems are creatively interwoven to achieve a somehow more life-like, illuminating or even cathartic communication experience with the receivers of the product.

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[23] For example, if Monty Python is not well-known in the TC, since the Arthurian legends have generated many different comedic spin-offs in different languages, the localiser could choose a reference in the TL that refers to one of these, so that the target audience could access an intertextual reference with a similar incongruity as the ST.

Bernal (ibid.) notes that there is a harmonious combination of the different channels of semiotic communication in video games. In fact, video games rely on the combined effect of multichannel communication to engage the receivers (gamers) with the gaming experience. Naturally, as with other types of audiovisual translation (Chaume 2012: 100-117), video game localisation must take the multichannel nature of video game texts into account. This means that not only must the written text assets of a video game be localised, but also the sound, images, videos, and 3D environment assets. Likewise, when translating in-game text, localisers should always bear in mind its interaction with the rest of the elements conforming the multichannel text. In turn, since localisers do not usually have the skills to work with 3D graphics or voice acting, working with other teams within a localisation company or the localisation department of a video game publisher may be an integral aspect of their work.

In MMORPGs, gamer communication adds further complexity when considering the multichannel nature of these texts. As has been discussed in 2.2, MMORPG gamers can communicate with each other typing via an in-game text chat platform, speaking over voice-chat programmes (either integrated in-game, or via a third-party platform), using simple in-game commands to cause their avatar to replicate body language via the emote system, and triggering in-game system messages. Examples of these can be seen in Figure 11, which shows a screenshot of *WoW* including the exchanges of the in-game chat platform (bottom left-hand corner), and Figure 12, showing an enlarged text window from Figure 11. For example, a player can type "goodbye" (see point 1. in Figure 12), say "goodbye" over the voice chat, type "/goodbye" and their avatar will wave goodbye (see point 2. in Figure 12, and Figure 11), and type "/afk" (away from keyboard) which alerts people that the gamer is currently not at their computer via an in-game emote (see point 3. in Figure 12).

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Figure 11: *WoW*: **waving goodbye**
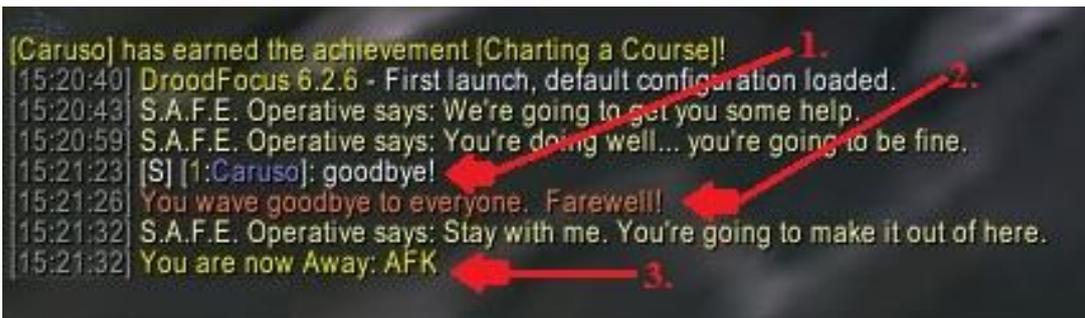
Figure 12: *WoW*: **Type goodbye, wave goodbye, /afk**

Gamer communication, much like other multichannel texts, makes use of these different channels to generate meaning and increase its effect. For example, both English and French gamers may say "slash wisp", a vocal reproduction of the in-game command (akin to an emote) "/wisp" or "/w", indicating that they are initiating a personal communication with another player. In this way, the written commands that cause players' avatars to perform virtual body language through the visual channel have been transposed to the acoustic channel in such a way that only gamers familiar with the in-game commands will understand. This overlapping use of multichannel texts reflects the creativity and resourcefulness of gamer-generated language.

When analysing both in-game text and gamer communication, which is at the core of this thesis, it is essential to take into account the multichannel nature of these texts. The analysis should therefore consider that these different channels work together to generate meaning, as well as that the verbal and non-verbal information communicated in the in-game text or in gamer communications rely on one another during gameplay. While this research does not examine some information transmitted through the acoustic channel such as tone of voice, or the virtual body-language that takes place during gameplay, the borrowing of some of these forms of expression when players communicate in writing forms part of the non-standard language created by gamers.

2.4.4 Key challenges in MMORPG localisation

As can be gathered from the aspects and notions which have so far been discussed throughout this chapter, the localisation of MMORPGs presents many challenges. The discussion below draws on the challenges in video game localisation outlined by Bernal (2007), as well as on those MMORPG-specific challenges explored by Heimburg (2006). These challenges are the unique and varied narratives and mechanics in MMORPGs, the reliance on intertextuality, and the influence of gamer communication resulting from cooperative and competitive play.

Bernal (2007: 2) identifies the variety of stories and gameplay that can be found in video games as a localisation challenge, which clearly applies to MMORPG localisation. He further states that this variety means that localisers have added challenges regarding the research and creativity they must practice when localising video games. Despite belonging to the same genre, the stories of the two MMORPGs analysed in the present thesis, *WoW* and *WildStar* are radically different, as can be seen in sections 5.1 and 5.2. While the gameplay mechanics of these two MMORPGs are similar, other MMORPGs such as *The Elder Scrolls Online* (TESO) and *Blade and Soul* (B&S) have decidedly different gameplay, with the former encouraging the use of the first-person view and the mouse buttons for primary attacks, and the latter making use of powerful combination attacks that become available based on chaining together attacks. Bernal (ibid.: 3) also argues that some challenges might be more pronounced in some titles than others, and that

"effectively, some games require more research than creativity, and others require more creativity than research". Thus, games based on historical events, sports, or other 'real-life' happenings may require more research to verify that the renderings in the TL are in line with the reality of the TC, whereas more fantasy-based games require creativity to render original creations innovatively in the TL. However, both extensive research and creativity seem equally important to address localisation challenges within MMORPGs, or at least in those analysed in this thesis. Both in the case of *WoW* and *WildStar*, because the storyline takes place in a fantasy setting, a high degree of creativity is required. For example, fictional faction names in *WoW* like 'the Steamwheedle cartel' require creative translations in the TL (e.g., *le cartel Gentepression* in the French version), and research is required for commonly-used terms in the genre, such as 'Quest' (*Quête*), 'Spells' (*Sorts*), or 'Mounts' (*Montures*). In addition, in-game text contains frequent intertextual references to real-world culture, events, or literature, often requiring research and creativity for their localisation.

These intertextual references and other in-game text can also be found in video game paratexts, i.e., on official websites and other contexts beyond the game setting, adding a further complication in MMORPG localisation. Since any given text segment may appear simultaneously in the in-game text and other paratexts, localisers should consider their translation might appear in a different setting and thus have a different function. For instance, when translating in-game text in MMORPGs, localisers should bear in mind that many of their terms will be used later on by players during gameplay.

In MMORPGs, more so than in many other video game genres, gamer communication is an integral part of gameplay, and therefore one function of the game text (both original and localised) should be to enable fluid and successful communication during gameplay. As a result, MMORPG text localisation is particularly challenging, because the ways gamers communicate and make use of localised material is unpredictable, and localised text that is adapted to one setting may be less fitting in another. While localisers cannot be expected to account for all possible functions of video game texts and paratexts, their creativity is required

to produce solutions that can potentially be functional in multiple settings. This is discussed further in sections 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.1, and Chapter 6.

Bernal (2007) describes other challenges such as the use of variables, or computer code that is replaced in the in-game text by varying words depending on user-defined actions (Mangiron et al. 2014: 11), and text fragmentation, since video game text is rarely localised as one long sequence of text, but rather by fragments of text that can be re-ordered depending on user-defined actions, known as 'strings' (Heimburg 2006: 139). While these challenges are present in MMORPGs, the industrial process includes pre-release testing phases, quality assurance controls, and other mechanisms (see 2.4.1) that limit their adverse impact. Since these challenges are not the subject of this study, they are not discussed in detail in this thesis.

This section has dealt with the key considerations and concepts to MMORPG localisation. The existing literature identifies several complexities and other features that situate video game localisation within TS. To contextualise these features given the aims of this research, I have provided a set of defining characteristics of MMORPGs to serve as a working definition of the genre. Following this, I have discussed the importance of gamer agency to the gaming experience, and how that agency leads to gamer-generated language when players need to communicate in-game, such as in MMORPGs. I have also considered some of the key concepts that situate MMORPGs within the study of video game localisation. Included in this are the unique industrial process followed in MMORPG development, how skopos theory provides a basis for the additional creativity afforded to localisers, and what makes video games in general, and MMORPGs specifically, complex and unique cultural products. Based on the existing literature and these concepts and considerations, I have distilled the key challenges in MMORPG localisation and identified those that are pertinent to this research.

With a view to analyse gamer-speak and MMORPG localisation and identify their place in the existing TS literature, as well as finding synergies within

GS, the theoretical framework for this research is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Theoretical framework

This research adopts a descriptive approach in line with DTS. However, the nature and object of study invite us to discuss other approaches regarded by some scholars as prescriptive, such as Skopos theory (see 2.4.2). The latter posits that translations should focus on their function in the target language (TL) rather than on their form (Reiß & Vermeer 1984: 101), an argument that has often been raised in video game localisation when justifying the implementation of translation solutions that depart from the ST form, aimed at recreating a similar effect in the TL. For this reason, skopos theory is integrated into this research only to the extent that it can be used to explain some of the observable phenomena, and subsequently to hypothesise some of the potential avenues of future study.

In addition to DTS, the complex nature of MMORPGs also invites us to look for relevant models and frameworks within Polysystem Theory (PST), which also has strong links to DTS. PST maintains that works of literature, and by extension their translations, can be described as comprising systems of systems rather than representing an agglomeration of unrelated components (Even-Zohar 1979: 288). As will be contended below, this view can be extrapolated to the analysis of video games in general, and MMORPGs in particular.

In GS, the debate of whether games should be analysed according to their gameplay (Ludology) or their storyline (Narratology) highlights a tension between game mechanics and narrative that is pertinent to this thesis. As such, this chapter also includes a reflection on how the Ludology vs. Narratology debate has bearing on the localisation of video games (in particular regarding the notions of the *récit enchâssé*, the *récit vidéoludique*, and of video game transcreation).

To conclude, GS also borrows concepts from sociology that are particularly relevant to this research, such as the notion of 'rules', 'pluralistic ignorance', and later 'social stratification' and 'belonging'. These and other concepts are explored below to develop the theoretical and methodological framework of this research, which is by necessity interdisciplinary, and thus attempts to combine theoretical principles from both TS and GS.

3.1 Situating MMORPG localisation within Translation Studies

3.1.1 Descriptive Translation Studies

DTS is a concept originally put forward by Holmes in 1972 as an integral part of his Translation Studies map, and therefore of the kind of research taking place in this field. Since then, other scholars have explored and characterised this sub-branch of TS. Among others, Toury (1982, 2012), Van den Broeck (2014), Bassnett (2002), Even-Zohar (1978), Hermans (1999/2014), and Lambert (1994) have supported and subsequently based research and publications on DTS within TS (Díaz-Cintas 2004: 22). Toury (1982: 25) has been one of the main scholars to advocate for DTS as a starting point and an essential research framework in Translation Studies:

> it is only reasonable to claim that research into translation should start with the observational facts, the translated texts themselves (and their constitutive elements), and proceed towards the reconstruction of non-observational facts, and not the other way around.

Drawing on Holmes's TS map, Toury (2012) identifies the following three broad approaches within DTS: Product-oriented DTS, Function-oriented DTS, and Process-oriented DTS. Product-oriented DTS concerns itself with the comparison of source and target texts (ST-TT), or multiple TTs of the same ST, or larger-scale diachronic or synchronic examinations of such texts (ibid.: 3). Function-oriented DTS allows us to examine the context in which translations find themselves, working towards a description of how these texts figure in their sociocultural setting, whereas process-oriented DTS covers what goes on in the mind of the translator during the translation process (ibid.). The present research adopts a DTS framework, leveraging the analysis of the observable facts present in the source and target texts (original in-game text in English and its localisation into French) as a starting point. The type of study undertaken could be considered to be primarily product-oriented. This product-oriented point of departure allows for subsequent function-oriented analysis, since I propose that function and the context in which the localised text finds itself are of central importance in MMORPG localisation.

To this end, in this research the corpus of in-game texts is analysed based on the following central terms put forward by Toury (2012: 38): PROBLEM$_2$, SOLUTION$_2$, ACT$_2$, and TRANSLATABILITY.

3.1.1.1 *The notion of problem*

When applying descriptive analysis to a given translation, Toury (ibid.: 35) proposes that scrutiny of the term "translation problem" is needed for a more rigorous and consistent use of this term within TS. In his expansion of the notion of "translation problem" Toury (ibid*.:* 38) offers PROBLEM$_1$, PROBLEM$_2$ and PROBLEM$_3$ as further subdivisions. PROBLEM$_1$ is seen as an ideal, utopian, hypothetical situation which serves to describe source texts and the way they may impact or restrict their hypothetical translation. PROBLEM$_2$ deals with discourse retrospectively, examining existing translations, giving way to their analysis. To further distinguish between PROBLEM$_1$ and PROBLEM$_2$, Toury (ibid.: 42) offers the following explanation:

> Unlike PROBLEM$_1$, PROBLEM$_2$ features in discourses which are **retrospective** (i.e., they refer to acts which have already been performed) and where the basic issue is one of **factual** replacement in concrete acts of translation.

PROBLEM$_3$ is described as similarly concrete or factual, like PROBLEM$_2$. However, PROBLEM$_3$ is regarded as occurring continuously and in synchrony with its SOLUTION$_3$ and is therefore concerned with the continual process of the translation act (ibid.: 38-45).

Logically, the most applicable term to the analysis of the complexities in translation discussed in this research is PROBLEM$_2$, since examination of source and target texts will consider elements within as PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$: they are existing, concrete facts of a translation which has taken place at a fixed point in time. Therefore, this is a retrospective analysis of challenges arising in a ST and the ways these challenges were rendered in the TT. The analysis of MMORPGs STs and TTs in the present research follows precisely this approach of retrospective discourse which considers the PROBLEM$_2$ arising during the translation of these texts. Thus, excerpts of ST and TT are analysed retrospectively

with a view to describe how the text has been rendered in the TL (see 3.1.1.2 below), and to gain insight around some of the issues arising within the ST which are conceptualised as PROBLEM$_2$ as defined by Toury (2012).

3.1.1.2   The notion of solution

SOLUTION is Toury's (ibid.: 45) complementary partner to PROBLEM. SOLUTION$_2$ in this instance can be assigned to the TT under examination. The SOLUTION$_2$ is an essential part of the descriptive analysis process, since it is a fact, as Toury (ibid.: 42) describes it, of the target system. SOLUTION$_2$ refers to the way in which the text has been produced by the TRANSLATOR$_2$[24] and is consumed by the TA. The presence or absence of TL gamer-speak within the SOLUTION$_2$, or the presence of SL gamer-speak in the PROBLEM$_2$ offers an opportunity to conceptualise how gamer-speak is involved in the localisation of these texts, and therefore what bearing it has on the TRANSLATION ACT.

I have adopted the terms PROBLEM and SOLUTION rather than ST and TT for the purposes of descriptive analysis. While these terms might be thought of as interchangeable, I believe it preferable in this instance to refer to PROBLEM and SOLUTION, since these terms let us address the underlying, conceptualised issues at stake in the ST and TT. As such, since the object of study is gamer-speak and its impact on the localised text, the use of these terms would not only allow us to refer to specific instances of gamer-speak in the ST and/or its presence in the TT, but also to extrapolate them as generalisable issues with the underlying PROBLEM and SOLUTION. For example, with this approach, instead of limiting the analysis to the description of the quest title 'A Bird in Hand' and its rendering in French, we can also speak about and investigate the rendering of a 'culturally-specific saying incorporating game themes'. This example and the potential of the approach adopted are shown below in Table 1:

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[24] It should be noted that TRANSLATOR$_2$ in this case may not be a single individual, but is more likely a group of translators, localisers, and/or other members of teams within the corporate structure of the company publishing the video game in question.

ST	PROBLEM$_2$	SOLUTION$_2$	TT
A Bird in Hand	Quest title relating to capturing an avian enemy (Harpy) and interrogating them incorporating a bird-related culturally-specific saying.	Quest title relating to capturing an avian enemy (Harpy) and interrogating them referring to the quest narrative	*Piégage de harpie*

Table 1: PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ example – A Bird in Hand

Furthermore, video game texts rely on user action to generate meaning, and therefore text is produced not only by the consumption of the written and audiovisual text, but also by the virtual events that take place during gameplay. Therefore, because our traditional notions of text production and producer are challenged by this relationship, the use of terminology like PROBLEM and SOLUTION allows us to include these semiotic transfers that take place beyond the traditional notions of ST and TT. In this way, using Toury's (2012) terminology, descriptive analysis can transcend ST and TT description by further describing the concepts from the paratextual ecosystem which influence the localisation of in-game text.

When focusing on localisation as a process, a related term in Toury's (ibid.) framework becomes relevant: the TRANSLATION ACT. The following section builds on the importance of the TRANSLATION ACT as it pertains to the present research in the form of the ACT$_2$ as discussed below.

3.1.1.3 The notion of act

The ACT$_2$ is of interest since its consideration is paramount to one of the aims of the present research. Following Toury's (ibid.: 42) logic, ACT$_2$ is understood as follows:

> any ACT$_2$, despite its disappearance, is still capable of being **reconstructed**, at least tentatively and in part. This provides ample background material for carrying out the analysis, and especially for the descriptive and tentative explanation of its findings.

Toury (ibid.) describes ACT$_2$ as having 'disappeared' because the analysis is being done retrospectively, and therefore the ACT$_2$ is completed and has ended. In this research, the analysis of PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ as they manifest in the MMORPGs under examination provide insight into the ACT$_2$. The purpose of analysing the ST and TT and the inherent PROBLEMS$_2$ and SOLUTIONS$_2$ is thus to allow for a broader speculation on how 'translation problems' related to the use of gamer-speak in MMORPGs are approached and how they are rendered in the TL by TRANSLATOR$_2$. By analysing the PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ we can analyse how translation issues relating to gamer-speak and linguistic features that are influenced by gamer-speak or relate to gamer-speak are handled in the French version of the MMORPGs under study. Since these issues can vary (i.e., non-standard linguistic forms, game-specific neologisms, intertextuality, etc.), basing an analysis on the PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ enables a more broad-reaching analysis. Studying instances of gamer-speak in the ST and how they are handled as translation PROBLEMS$_2$ is of primary importance to achieve a further understanding of the relevance of gamer-speak in MMORPG localisation. It is by hypothesising about the ACT$_2$ having taken place at the time of the localisation of MMORPGs text that we may obtain a more profound understanding of the strategies implemented by the TRANSLATOR$_2$, and the influences and extrapolated translation strategies applied to ACT$_2$.

3.1.1.4 *The notion of translatability*

While TRANSLATABILITY is posited to only exist within the context of PROBLEM$_1$ and SOLUTION$_1$ (Toury 2012: 44), it is nonetheless a useful concept for the examination of the localisation of MMORPGs.[25] Toury (ibid.: 38) defines TRANSLATABILITY$_1$ as: "the initial potential of establishing optimal correspondence between a TL text (or textual-linguistic phenomenon) and a corresponding SL text (or phenomenon)".

In the broader context of the localisation of MMORPG text, the concept of TRANSLATABILITY$_1$ has some bearing on how this text may be hypothetically

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[25] Since this concept applies only to the theorised PROBLEM$_1$ and SOLUTION$_1$, it will not be considered in direct relationship with the descriptive analysis of the localisation of MMORPG text in Chapter 6.

handled by the translator. Since there will be no value judgement on the translations analysed in the present research, and since this study focuses on the observable facts from PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$, the notions of TRANSLATABILITY and optimal correspondence are not considered in the data analysis. Despite being beyond the scope of this research, they are reflected upon in the closing chapter of this thesis.

I must emphasise at this stage that Toury (2012: XII-XIII) also criticises approaches whose methodologies rely on a series of supporting examples, and subsequently claim representativeness. For this reason, this research handles claims made about Translatability and 'optimal correspondence' with caution; these assertions are based on examples relating to specific elements of the text and their context, and are presented in an attempt to validate the outlined arguments within the specific framing of the data in this study. Because these examples are not representative, brief statistical overviews of the linguistic data (including numbers of gamer-speak terms found, frequency with which gamer-speak terms were used and categorisations of gamer-speak terms) have been presented and analysed throughout Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 to contextualise these examples within the remaining data set. Furthermore, while the data presented in this research are too limited to allow for generalisations about translation approaches, it is meant to serve, as argued in Strong (2017: 35-36), as a pivot point between the descriptive and initial motions towards the prescriptive. That is to say that while these examples of PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ *cannot* indicate how localisers should approach these texts, it *can* provide insight into the inherent challenges of these texts, and therefore their hypothetical TRANSLATABILITY. By extension, referring to a hypothetical SOLUTION$_1$ that addresses all of the observable translation challenges, this research can identify some of the potentially useful approaches to conceptualising examples of PROBLEM$_2$ as they appear in MMORPG text. This is explained further in section 4.4.

Based on these concepts, DTS serves here to outline the overall theoretical and methodological approach to this research. The following section 3.1.2 explores the TS theory that I consider to be particularly applicable to the descriptive study of MMORPG text and gamer-speak: Polysystem theory (PST).

3.1.2 Polysystem Theory

The present section explores the central concepts of Polysystem Theory (PST), developed by Even-Zohar in the 1960s and 1970s, and their applicability to the study of MMORPG localisation and gamer-speak. Even-Zohar (1979: 288) posits that: "semiotic phenomena, i.e., sign-governed human patterns of communication (e.g., culture, language, literature, society) should be regarded as systems rather than conglomerates of disparate elements".

While initially intended to refer to a given culture's literature (or literary Polysystem) Polysystem Theory allows for enough flexibility in its application to be extended to video game localisation. Indeed, Even-Zohar (ibid.: 287) sets out expressly to provide an open field for scholars to avoid the tendency for "hasty dogmatic petrification" in comparative literary analysis.

PST evolved from the principles of Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism to yield what Even-Zohar has labelled as *Dynamic Structuralism* or *Dynamic Functionalism* (Codde 2003: 92). Other scholars who have elaborated upon and discussed PST in Translation Studies include Baker (1996), Gentzler (2001), Hermans (1999/2014), Sheffy (1990) and Toury (2012), among many others. The theory relies on the principle that semiotic phenomena should be regarded as a system of systems, or polysystem. These different systems influence one another, and amount to the heterogeneous system of systems, or polysystem, which makes up the cultural Polysystem.

Video games and other audiovisual texts are indeed semiotic phenomena that could be understood to comprise a system of systems. In fact, the polysystem concept has already been applied to studies in audiovisual translation (Karamitroglou 2000; Díaz-Cintas 2004; Baños 2015). Díaz-Cintas (2004: 23) suggests that the concept "is sufficiently flexible to allow us to talk of a film polysystem in Spain or in any other country. The film polysystem is made up of the national products and the translated ones". In a similar vein, the principles introduced by Even-Zohar could be extrapolated to video games and referred to as a video game polysystem. This research focuses on the French video game

polysystem. PST provides a framework for analysing MMORPGs and gamer-generated language, including the motivating factors that influence text production and the links between different forms of text production (localised text and gamer-generated language). In fact, the number of systems and factors which can influence the French MMORPG system (or MMORPG systems of any language) are arguably present and perhaps identifiable to a greater degree than with texts which engender less interactivity and cross-user interaction such as literary texts or even films.

Drawing on Jakobson's (1960) scheme of factors for verbal acts, Even-Zohar elaborates a scheme that reflects the factors involved in the literary polysystem as represented in Figure 13:

	INSTITUTION	
	REPERTOIRE	
PRODUCER		CONSUMER
	MARKET	
	PRODUCT	
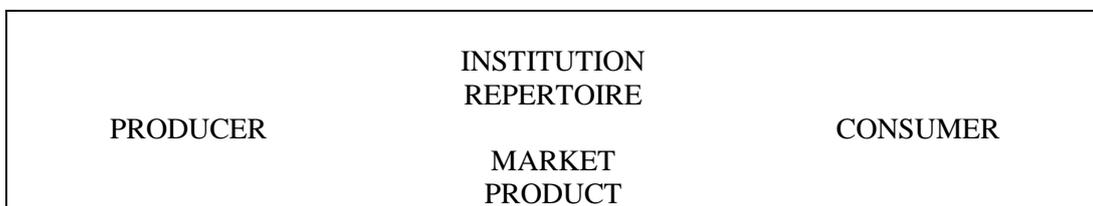
Figure 13: Even-Zohar's (1997: 19) elaboration of Jakobson's (1960) scheme of factors for verbal acts

This scheme, which Even-Zohar (1997:19) states can be applied to any socio-semiotic cultural event, is explained as follows:

> a CONSUMER may "consume" a PRODUCT produced by a PRODUCER, but in order for the "product" to be generated, then properly consumed, a common REPERTOIRE must exist, whose usability is constrained, determined, or controlled by some INSTITUTION on the one hand, and a MARKET where such a good can be transmitted, on the other.

Each of these elements is expanded upon in the sections that follow, and applied to the context of video game localisation in general and MMORPG in particular.

3.1.2.1 Product

Even-Zohar (1997: 27) defines product as follows:

> By "product" I mean any performed set of signs and/or materials, i.e., including a given behavior. Thus, any outcome of any action, or activity, can be considered "a product," whatever its ontological manifestation may be, be

it a semiotic or a physical "object:" an utterance, a text, an artifact, an edifice, an "image," or an "event".

What is important about this definition is the active qualities assigned to a product, which makes this a rather suitable term to be applied to video games. In the same way that products within the literary polysystem can have several different manifestations (an utterance, a text, an artefact, etc.), within the French video game polysystem, MMORPGs can be considered a product, as a virtual "object" or "event", but can also be divided into sub-products (storyline dialogue, instructional text, advertising texts, video 'cutscenes', sounds, etc.).

When thinking about the sub-products found in a localised MMORPG, the different text types found therein must be considered. Bernal (2014: 109) offers the following classification of text types that can be found in video games: narrative, oral/dialogic, technical, functional, didactic, promotional, and legal. In addition, he refers to the products found in localised games as assets, and shows their relationship with the above-mentioned text-types, as shown in Table 2 below:

Text type		Narrative	Oral/dialogic	Technical	Functional	Didactic	Promotional	Legal
Game asset	In-game text: UI, system messages, game installers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Voice-over and Cinematics: audio and video scripts	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	-	-
	Art: game logo, in-game texture embedded words	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	-
	Glossaries and TMs	-	-	Y	-	-	-	Y
	Packaging and promotion: box, manual, EULA, guarantee, 'Readme', official website	-	-	Y	-	-	Y	Y

Table 2: Game assets related to their text type (Bernal 2014: 110)

This classification helps differentiate sub-products within video games, as well as the different translation norms at play in their localisation. For example, 'legal' text types will have a different function within the game in contrast to 'promotional' text types and these differences will impact on translation decisions and conventions. This will also have bearing on how the end-users interact with these different sub-products, since their expectations will differ depending on the text being consumed.

In addition to game assets, the high degree of communication and interaction between players, which is an essential part of MMORPG gameplay, results in another sub-product generated by the gamers during communication: gamer-speak. Players will generate utterances and performances of virtual actions which serve to communicate amongst one another,[26] resulting in a host of semiotic exchanges during gameplay. These exchanges will be an intrinsic aspect of the game experience for players, and are therefore a constituent part of the MMORPG system.

Therefore, for the purposes of this research, in-game text and gamer-speak are the two sub-products of primary concern. Although gamer-speak is not originally a sub-product included within the translated/localised text of a French MMORPG, it is a semiotic event which occurs during gameplay within the TC, and is generated by the end-users. In other words, since gamer-speak figures in the *récit vidéoludique*, it can therefore be defined as forming part of the game narrative.

The nature of these two products (in-game text and gamer-speak) within the French MMORPG system differs considerably. Nevertheless, the present research argues that they are closely interrelated: gamer-speak is a product that influences the purpose or skopos of the TT, and elements of this product infiltrate the textual elements which are localised in an MMORPG.

It must be noted that products are not created in a vacuum, however, and the influences of pre-existing contexts, conditions and cultural backgrounds will have a bearing on how they are formed. To further explain this, the concept of the repertoire is essential.

3.1.2.2 *Repertoire*

Even-Zohar (1997: 20) defines repertoire as "the aggregate of rules and materials which govern both the *making* and *handling*, or production and consumption, of any given product". The repertoire can thus be conceptualised as the existing tools, skills, tendencies, and materials common to both the producer and consumer of

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[26]These actions are the virtual equivalent of body language or the manipulation of the player's avatar which will be perceived and interpreted by other members of the MMORPG community.

semiotic phenomena. Within the literary polysystem, the repertoire can be thought of as a development of the 'code' as described by Jakobson (1960) to include 'materials' as well as 'rules' which influence and comprise the generation and consumption of products (Even-Zohar 1997: 20). Included in a repertoire could be a common language, dialect, social norms, or traditions, which influence the production and consumption of semiotic events. The repertoire is subsequently divided into two distinct groups: the individual disparate elements, or 'repertoremes', which make up the repertoire; and 'models', or the combination of elements, rules, and syntagmatic relations imposable on each product (ibid.: 22).

The concept of repertoire applies in a unique way when considering localised French MMORPGs and French gamer-speak. First, considerations concerning the MMORPG genre and text types within MMORPGs come into play. When considering the text types outlined by Bernal (see Table 2), it may be more appropriate to think of the repertoire as engendering 'norms' rather than 'rules', since different norms may apply to didactic texts than to narrative texts, and therefore gamers may apply different repertoremes to different sub-products within an MMORPG. The advantage of thinking of these as norms rather than rules is that there may be overlap across the text types in terms of the repertoremes employed, and these norms may not apply in every instance. As such, referring to these as norms allows for more flexibility, since rules could be thought to be uniform and strict in their application. This flexibility is useful for localised MMORPGs, since the different associated sub-products behave much like other text types such as literary, technical, promotional, or instructive; it is precisely the combination of these text types which sets video games apart:

> This combination of texts within the same product is one of the characteristics that sets the translation of video games apart from other audiovisual products. It seems to be the first time that one single product (or translation commission) may require so many types of language transfer specialisations (Bernal 2014: 84)

MMORPG gamers have expectations of these different text types in terms of how they appear visually, what implications they have for gameplay, how they serve to shape the game's narrative, and how they are used during gameplay. In this way, the conventions associated to elements of in-game text such as quests, tooltips,

labelling of items/monsters, etc. determine the way a gamer reads these texts. For example, in the context of *WoW*, the item label "Crafted Dreadful Gladiator's Mail Helm" (Figure 14) which can be purchased by players with in-game currency accrued during PvP gameplay, contains a set of information that will be pertinent to gamers. Deconstructing this particular label and its constituent repertoremes sheds light on the information:

Figure 14: *WoW* Inventory Repertoire: Crafted Dreadful Gladiator's Mail Helm[27]

This label contains a series of affixes which denote the attributes which define what this text may mean to a player.[28] The following is a breakdown of the affixes found in Figure 14:

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[27] Source: http://www.wowhead.com/item=93592

[28] In the context of video games, and frequently in RPGs, affixes are commonly used to describe the additional properties assigned to a given item.

Crafted – This affix signifies that the item in question can be obtained either by creating (or 'crafting') it via one of the game's professions (in this case the 'leatherworking' profession), or bought from another player who has 'crafted' this item.

Dreadful Gladiator's – This segment holds several pieces of information. PvP combat works on a ladder system whereby competitors receive points for their successful bouts over the course of a 'season' of PvP combat. The equipment that becomes available will be of better quality with each passing season, creating continuity and ongoing interest for players involved in PvP combat. The affix 'dreadful', in this instance, does not indicate that it is of poor quality as the adjective might imply, but rather serves to distinguish the season to which this piece of equipment belongs, and therefore the overall strength of the statistics found on the item.[29] The affix 'gladiator' signifies that the item is designed for PvP combat, and likely has some statistics which are useful only in PvP combat (in this case, the +394 PvP Power seen in Figure 14).

Mail – This affix contains two pieces of information. First, it indicates the material this item is made of (mail), and therefore the character class for which it is intended (shaman). In addition, variations on this affix will serve to further define the speciality within the designated class for which this item is intended.[30]

Helm – This indicates that the item in question fills the character equipment slot associated with the player's avatar's head.

In addition, the colour of the text in which the label is displayed indicates the rarity of the item and its overall quality, with grey text signifying 'poor' quality, white text signifying 'common' quality, green text signifying 'uncommon' quality, blue text signifying 'rare' quality, purple text signifying 'epic' quality, orange text

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[29] The first season had items referred to simply as 'Gladiator's xx'. Subsequent seasons were labelled with the additional affixes 'Merciless', 'Vengeful', 'Brutal', 'Deadly', 'Hateful', 'Savage', 'Furious', 'Relentless', 'Wrathful', and so on to distinguish the season to which they belonged.

[30] In the case of the shaman, the three affixes are 'Mail', 'Ringmail' and 'Linked', which are attributed to the specialisations 'Elemental Shaman', 'Restoration Shaman', and 'Enhancement Shaman', respectively.

signifying 'legendary' quality, and gold text signifying 'artifact' or 'heirloom' quality.[31] The figures below show examples of colour systems in the two games being studied in the present research as they are explained unofficially on fansites (Figure 15 and Figure 16):

Figure 15: *WoW* **colour system: item quality[32]**

Figure 16: *WildStar* **colour system: item rarity[33]**

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[31] This tradition of having items' quality/rarity being indicated by the colour of the label text is a widely accepted tradition in MMORPGs, although the colours associated to the different levels of rarity may differ depending on the game. Some games will have 'Game Guide' pages containing explanations of this colour system, while others will explain via tool-tips in-game, and user-generated fansites will often catalogue colour distinctions to guide other users.

[32] Source: http://wow.gamepedia.com/Quality?cookieSetup=true

[33] Source: http://WildStar.gamepedia.com/Rarity

This system of affix-based nomenclature allows for items to be quickly identifiable, so players can assess their quality and appropriateness for their avatar. Variations of single affixes will indicate new or different information about the item. For instance, players understand the 'Crafted Dreadful Gladiator's *Linked* Helm' can be obtained via the crafting system, is designed for PvP Combat, comes from a specific season of the PvP competition timeline, is intended for the 'Enhancement' specialisation of shaman, and is worn in the 'head' equipment slot. In this way, the common repertoire between the producers and consumers of the video game text is an intrinsic part of such a nomenclature system. Players may use this information to assess the relative value of a given item, or potentially that of the player who possesses that item.

This specific repertoreme from the MMORPG text may be used in the same way by gamers in their communications between one another, or it may have a competing version in their own repertoire. That is to say, players may refer to this object with the name appearing as seen in Figure 14, or they may create their own name for this item which is understood by other players. In this way, repertoremes may be generated in this alternative, gamer-generated repertoire. This is where gamer-speak comes into play: a repertoreme may be used in the same way it is presented by the MMORPG text, or it may be altered or appropriated by the users, forming a different repertoreme. Even-Zohar (1997: 21) accounts for these competing possibilities across repertoires, stating that the heterogeneity of socio-semiotic systems allows for different repertoires within a society to compete and conflict. Some aspects of the repertoire establish themselves as dominant, while others are deemed less convenient or ill-adapted to a given situation within a social cluster (ibid.). An established repertoire within a cultural group can limit the generation of new elements. In this case, when there are insufficiencies within an established repertoire, elements can be borrowed from other repertoires to generate more effective new options:

> even when a culture is working with a large and multiform repertoire, a deadlock may occur by blockage of all alternative options. It is then that adjacent, or otherwise accessible repertoires, may be used for replacing the ones people wish to reject. This is how *interference* becomes a strategy of a culture to adapt itself to changing circumstances. (ibid.: 23)

This concept of interference is central to understanding gamer-speak, especially in the case of localised MMORPGs. According to previous research carried out (Strong 2011), many examples of the language generated by French gamers can be explained by the interference from repertoires other than that of the localised MMORPG text, whether this comes from English, repertoremes or models taken from other games', internet jargon, or SMS-style exchanges.

Also central to the idea of repertoire, and paralleling the dichotomy of *primary* v. *secondary* repertoire models, is that of dynamic stratification hierarchies within the polysystem. Even-Zohar (1979: 293) refers to these as "center-and-periphery relations, or dynamic stratification" and maintains that "[i]t is the permanent struggle between the various strata […] which constitutes the synchronic state of the system".

Even-Zohar (ibid.: 298) argues that central systems are frequently *secondary* and the peripheral systems *primary,* insomuch as the central systems are more static and evolve at a slower rate, and the peripheral systems engender more frequent and rapid evolutions. If we think of an MMORPG as one system of systems, then the semiotic exchange between the game text and the player can be considered one system within, and the semiotic exchanges between players another. While the former maintains a central hierarchical position, the latter is decidedly peripheral. This discrepancy between the statuses of the two semiotic events at a given point in time describes the phenomenon of gamer-speak in the context of MMORPGs. The rules and norms operating within these two systems are distinct, and the requirements involved in the semiotic exchange fulfil different purposes: what is considered acceptable by an end-user to read within a game text may vary significantly from what the end-user will consider acceptable in his/her communications with other end-users. These two systems are still inextricably linked in that they both amount to semiotic exchanges which are taking place around the same product and within the same polysystem. One aim of the present research is to examine the similarities and discrepancies between these two systems, as well as their mutual influence, and investigate their impact on the localisation of MMORPG text, always bearing in mind their decidedly different statuses.

In this study, I query that non-standard and non-conventional uses of French are prevalent in gamers' exchanges alongside standard French. Following this hypothesis, I describe French gamer-speak as a product within the MMORPG communication system. If gamer-speak is to be considered a product, it therefore follows that this product is influenced by a repertoire or repertoires. To further describe this repertoire or these repertoires, it is important to consider the distinction made between primary and secondary repertoires.

> The latter refers to conservative repertoires; these are made up of models that result in highly predictable end products. If the repertoire is regularly restructured through the insertion of new, unpredictable elements, the repertoire is innovative or "primary". (Codde 2003: 99)

This description parallels the two repertoires in question: one which governs communication between French gamers during MMORPG gameplay (primary), and a second that can be observed within the localised MMORPG text (secondary). MMORPGs might be comprised essentially of more conservative models, with texts containing predictable end products. Communication among gamers is more unpredictable, since it can be continuously repurposed to suit the needs of gamers when communicating to allow them to overcome the challenges set forth by the game mechanics.

3.1.2.3 Producer

The producer is the active agent of the repertoire who generates a given product within the polysystem (Even-Zohar 1979: 30). In the case of MMORPGs, there are many producers who exert their influence on different sub-products: the author(s) of the MMORPG text, the developers who create the game mechanics, the public relations team who will create additional material which will reach gamers, the community team who will publish news and updates on the external forums in which players communicate, and the players themselves when they communicate in-game or elsewhere, among others. The situation is further compounded when considering localised MMORPGs, since professionals involved in the localisation process (e.g., translators, reviewers, QA testers, etc.) become producers of the localised MMORPG text. This research focuses on the authors of the English MMORPG text, the translators working into French, and the players of the original

and localised versions, since they are the producers of the specific content under examination here,[34] i.e., the ST and TT in the case of Chapter 6, and examples of gamer communication in Chapter 5. Other producers may be mentioned in passing for the purposes of illustration, such as producers of game-related texts or promotional materials which are not part-and-parcel of actual gameplay.

3.1.2.4 Consumer

Even-Zohar (1997: 31) defines the consumer as "an individual who handles an already made product by passively operating a repertoire". 'Passively operating' refers to the connections between product and repertoire. Consumers are the agents who identify a product and unpack or understand what is intended by virtue of the commonalities between the producer's repertoire and their own. The clearest examples of consumers for the purposes of this study are gamers, since they are the recipients of the localised MMORPG text and the agents responsible for deciphering its narrative, mechanics, and instructions. However, as already claimed in 2.1.3. and in 2.3, when discussing the interactive nature of video games and gamer agency, the role of gamers is not passive. As such, their agency and implication in the production of meaning and indeed text has also identified them as *prosumers* (Lin 2010: 311).

3.1.2.5 Institution

The institution is defined here as the individuals and/or groups who seek to regulate or control the making of a given repertoire (Even-Zohar 1997: 27). The institution may have a conservative influence, or a tendency to maintain the *status quo* of repertoires, or it can support the creation or modification of repertoires (Codde 2003 101). One example of an institution that has relevance for texts localised in French is the *Académie Française* (AF). The AF has guidelines and, in some cases, instructions on how the French language ought to be used. In addition to these guidelines, the *Loi Toubon* [Toubon Law] enshrines the practice of avoiding Anglicism in French (particularly in legal texts, advertisements, contracts, and government texts), preferring new adaptations based on French constructions (*Loi*

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[34] While this research deals primarily with French-speaking players, due to the omnipresence of English throughout the repertoires of both in-game text and gamer-speak, English-speaking gamers will also be mentioned. Their influence intrudes into the French polysystem via paratexts such as online forums, "theorycrafting" sites, and social media.

n° 94-665 du 4 août 1994 relative à l'emploi de la langue française: 2016). This cultural context that results from these protectionist policies of the institution shapes how text is created and consumed. Since localised MMORPG texts and French gamer-speak operate within the context of the French cultural polysystem, their repertoires are necessarily influenced to some degree by the precepts set out by the AF and the *Loi Toubon*. This in turn means that non-standard language usage defies the regulations set out by this governing body, something that does not exist in the English system.

Creators of internal company regulations may also influence the localisation of MMORPGs, to the extent that they may mandate the use of certain terms or translation strategies for MMORPG localisation. Indeed, past translations of texts within the same narrative of an MMORPG in whichever form (e.g., included in a glossary or in a translation memory used in the past) may be considered part of the institution, in that the translator might have to follow translation decisions made by their predecessors in pre-existing translations to avoid a departure from the existing game universe. Past translations can be relevant, for example, when a game is one of a series, as is the case with *FINAL FANTASY*. While the lexical field and signs associated with the *FINAL FANTASY* series do form a specific repertoire, their recurring use is also a result of the institution, since the game's producers require localisers to maintain original terminology throughout. This official requirement affects text production by the rigid rules or guidelines that are imposed on the text production in *FINAL FANTASY*. As a result, the serial nature of *FINAL FANTASY* titles brings about the need for the institution to establish guidelines to maintain coherent usage of the frequently-used key terminology across titles. Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 17) state, for example, that:

> Names used for weapons, items and abilities form essential key terminology in video games, and are the result of considerable inventiveness by the game creators and, in turn, the translators, […] Furthermore, these translations are likely to be re-used for subsequent serialised games.

There are over 15 mainstream games under the *FINAL FANTASY* Intellectual Property (IP), and many more spinoffs. Despite each having distinct narratives, characters, universes, etc., certain terms are common across these games, such as

weapon, item, and ability names, and consistency must be maintained throughout in their localisation to a specific locale. In the case of MMORPGs like *WoW* and *WildStar*, each release of new content brings extended storylines and new in-game challenges based on the existing game universe. As such, the text produced for new content is guided by the institution to maintain consistency in game expansions.

3.1.2.6 Market

The market, as defined by Even-Zohar, has close ties with the institution (Codde 2003: 101), and can be defined as "the aggregate of factors involved with the selling and buying of the repertoire of culture" (Even-Zohar 1997: 33). The market can be thought of as the enabling force that allows products to reach their consumers. These factors will provide for the effective transfer and the subsequent proliferation of a repertoire. Issues regarding the market (including, but not limited to, professional factors such as the time given to translators to complete a job, the status of video game translators, and their involvement throughout the development and localisation process) may impact the localisation of MMORPGs. While the market is not a focal point of this research, it nonetheless has significant bearing on the potential findings. The professional factors mentioned above might influence how localisers approach gamer-speak and therefore the presence or lack of gamer-speak in localised MMORPGs.

3.1.2.7   PST and its suitability for the study of MMORPG localisation

These ideas provide a relevant framework for describing the complex reality of gamer-generated language and MMORPG localisation. This thesis supports PST despite criticism from TS scholars. One prominent critic among these scholars is Gentzler (2001), whose objections are fourfold. First, he states that Even-Zohar is too quick to refer to the universality of some of his assertions (ibid.: 120). Second, Gentzler (ibid.: 121) states that, as a related issue, PST readily incorporates the hierarchical relationships taken from the Formalist framework, which may not be appropriate considering the diachronic context in which PST was formulated. Third, he criticises the lack of practical elements cited in PST, which relies too much on "abstract generalizations" (ibid.). Finally, he states that it is impossible to be fully objective and eliminate all bias, which Even-Zohar purportedly does in PST (ibid.: 122).

Gentzler's criticisms notwithstanding, PST concepts contribute a robust and flexible cornerstone to the theoretical framework for this research. Furthermore, there is scope to apply the core concepts of PST to MMORPG localisation without relying on controversial or definitive assertions. In this respect, I make mine the words of Even-Zohar from his interview with Pym (2008: online): my aim in this study is to add to and build upon the tenets of PST by applying them to video game localisation in general, and to MMORPG localisation specifically.

> When I was initiating the work on Polysystem theory […] I considered it only initial steps towards something larger. And then I tried, over the years, to carry out particular concrete studies on a variety of cases that could either illustrate, exemplify, modify, enlarge and sometimes nuance the generalisations I put forward as hypothesis. All this should have been taken by the community as suggestions, not dogmas for analysing various parameters, for example translation and translation context. […] What I wanted to do was to draw to people's attention to the necessity to study culture – heterogeneity in culture.

I concur with Gentzler (2001: 121) that the lack of relation of texts to "'real conditions' of their production" can be problematic. However, such a relation can be established drawing on a framework relying on PST principles. In the context being discussed here, the observation of the localised MMORPG process and the collection of official information from game producers and institutions have the potential for providing useful insights into practical elements. Yet, such information is difficult to access. Until video game companies allow access to researchers, adding more practical insight into MMORPG localisation will remain difficult. However, by describing MMORPG localised text and how gamers use language and by establishing some key factors of gamer-speak I identify some practical 'real-life' examples that describe and explain some of the constraints placed on texts and translators. The focus is thus on analysing the data to which we have access, with a view to describing objectively MMORPG localisation and gamer-speak in the context of their (poly)systemic relationship.

3.2   Situating MMORPG localisation within Game Studies

This section is an explanation of some of the key concepts from GS that relate to MMORPG localisation. The theoretical framework for this research relies in part on how gamer experience is created through play, and how this affects and is

affected by the localisation of MMORPGs. Specifically, the interaction between game narrative and game mechanics is explained (3.2.1), as is the creation of rules and social constructs that influence gamer experience (3.2.2).

3.2.1 The Ludology vs. Narratology question, and video game transcreation

The debate between Ludology and Narratology has received significant attention among GS scholars in recent years. According to Frasca (1999, 2003), the conflicting views are whether video games should be analysed according to their storyline (and therefore according to the Narratology school of literary studies), or rather according to the gameplay experience (and therefore according to the Ludology school of GS). Scholars have made the case for both positions (Aarseth 2001; Eskelinen 2001a, 2001b; Juul 1999). Subsequent publications attempt to nuance the debate and move away from the polarisation, or "false binarism" (Warnes 2005: 2), that has arisen from this discussion. Frasca's (2003) assessment of the debate has been met with some criticism:

> Many interesting arguments can be made from a number of different perspectives about what makes games more or less "story-like." […] While these sorts of analyses may seem silly at first, they merely serve to point out that there are many more levels to the interplay between story and game if we resist the temptation to move to binary categorization, and begin to discuss the real meat of the matter. (Pearce 2005: 2-3)

Pearce's response to Frasca's article and the Ludology v. Narratology debate is relevant to this study. As such, when analysing video games (in particular in-game text and gamer-generated language), in line with Pearce's argument, it is useful to consider them as simultaneously containing a variety of textual elements, some favouring gameplay more than narrative and vice-versa. These elements may conflict, or they may be complementary. Extremes on this imagined spectrum are relatively easy to identify. Frasca (2003: 5) uses the example of abstract games such as *Tetris* or *Reversi* to illustrate that some games can be practically devoid of narrative elements. On the other extreme, text-based games such as *Zork* (Infocom, 1977) or *Grandpa* (Jim Swift, 2015) function similarly to the "Chose Your Own Adventure" fiction genre, and have very simplified mechanics and gameplay, but rely on a richly-developed narrative.

With this in mind, I argue that these two approaches can co-exist in a video game and do coexist in MMORPGs. The virtual world is constructed so that it can simultaneously deliver a narrative experience and a gameplay experience. The overarching narrative of *WildStar*, for example, is twofold. First, we are presented with a battle between two factions: The Dominion and the Exiles, and their vying for power over one another. Second, there is a combined (albeit separate) effort across the two factions to explore what caused the disappearance of Eldan, a powerful and advanced race, by investigating their abandoned science facilities. This narrative is supported by the mechanics and gameplay of the virtual world: members of one faction cannot interact with members of the opposing faction, except to fight; science facilities which are designated as those left behind by the Eldan present difficult challenges and powerful enemies which have abilities and skills (and therefore associated gameplay challenges) relevant to their position within the narrative, etc. As such, the narrative and the mechanics of *WildStar* operate as complimentary systems. They do not always do so seamlessly, however, since occasionally the mechanics will break away from the narrative, and the gameplay experience does not always totally immerse gamers in the narrative. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

When the Ludology vs. Narratology debate is demonstrated by its defining elements (i.e., game mechanics and storyline) as happens with MMORPGs, it becomes clear that the interaction of these two approaches and the tension they generate is an important element that localisers must consider. Awareness of the influences of gameplay and narrative are fundamentally important for localisers of MMORPGs, and should therefore be studied for their effects on MMORPG localisation. If the skopos of localised video games is to provide the 'look and feel' of the original game (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 20) and also "to convey a game play experience that is as close as possible to the equivalent of the original" (O'Hagan & Mangiron 2013: 4), then the importance of the tension between narratology and ludology lies in how we determine the essential elements which contribute to the look, feel, and player experience of a video game text. Bernal (2006: 32) states that "entertainment software [...] calls for a creative translation, facilitating gamers' immersion in order to enhance the player's experience". How games achieve higher levels of immersion, however, is unclear. Since some games

may rely more on an engaging story and universe, and others more on compelling gameplay, how we approach these texts 'creatively' to deliver such content to differing groups of end-users is not clear.

Furthermore, considering game narrative, some games intentionally break immersion to provide humour or intertextual references which also contributes to player experience. Lepre (2014, 39) considers this an important aspect of games, since it helps to remove the player from the tension that games create and make the game more enjoyable. The popular game *Borderlands 2* (Gearbox Software: 2012) provides one such example.[35] In an exchange with a non-pater character (NPC), the character named Claptrap (Figure 17), says the following: "Even though you didn't bring me what I asked for, I've decided to let you use that stash to share weapons between my minions! Specifically the ones that, uh, that you control. Look, it's for twinking items between your characters".

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[35] While Borderlands 2 is not an MMORPG, but rather an Action Role-Playing First-Person Shooter, it does allow for players to play together online, and as such employs some narrative devices and gameplay mechanics common to MMORPGs.

Figure 17: Dialogue with the NPC 'Claptrap' in *Borderlands 2*

Here we can see a clear nod to the conflict between gameplay mechanics and narrative. Claptrap, a jovial and somewhat maladroit robot who figures heavily in *Borderlands 2*, offers players a 'stash' which can allow to pass items between the different characters they have created, thus enabling their weaker characters to use more advanced equipment than that to which they would usually have access. The term commonly used amongst gamers for this practice is 'twinking', and Claptrap makes use of this term following his failed attempt at explaining this process using the repertoire of the game's narrative. The effect of this dialogue delivery is comic, and the nod to the 'fourth wall' separating the gamer from the game universe is a device which is intended to enhance player experience by intentionally subverting the game's narrative and acknowledging this gamer-speak term which exists outside of *Borderlands 2*.

This example provides several insights into how meaning is constructed through video games. By deliberately bringing mechanical features of the game (the 'stash' and 'twinking') into the foreground and pointing out the difficulty of rendering these within the game universe, the original text uses intertextuality to acknowledge the occasional inability to unite the game's mechanical constructs and its narrative. Therefore, there are elements found in this dialogue which drive the game's narrative, elements which contribute to the gameplay experience, and elements which subvert the game's narrative to provide a comedic departure from the overarching storyline. This departure from the game's narrative is an indication that immersion may not always apply to immersion in the game's story, or at least that immersion as it has been described by Bernal (2014) may not always be a desirable feature of a given video game text as discussed in 2.4.1. A player's gameplay experience, for example, may be immersive in terms of the gameplay mechanics but be independent of the game's narrative. Likewise, players may be immersed in rich story-driven worlds that offer minimal interest through gameplay. In any case, the subversion of the game narrative and nod to the difficulty inherent in reconciling game mechanics and storyline shows a potential conflict of aesthetic conventions that contribute to immersion (McMahan 2003: 68). Where intertextuality appears to both depart from the game narrative and increases immersion in the game experience, a nuanced conceptualisation of immersion is needed. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, gamer-speak contributes to

this example of intertextuality, and underlines the text's subversion of the game narrative to provide a gratifying gameplay experience.

If immersion is meant to enhance player experience in this way, then players need a practical way of departing from their immersion. In the most basic form, this opportunity is provided by the pause function, which serves the dual purpose of providing a departure from game immersion and enhancing player experience. In this way, there can be examples of experience-enhancing game functions that intentionally break from game immersion. These functions can be mechanics-based (as is the case with the pause button) or language-based (as is the case with 'twinking") and may involve the use of gamer-speak.

However, the localisation of these functions does not necessarily allow for the level of creativity or freedom that is frequently cited. Building on the notion that localisers are given license to *transcreate* video game texts (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 20), we could expect localisers would be allowed a certain level of freedom to render the text cited in Figure 14 and to convey the feel that this text offers gamers in the SL. As a result, the comedic effect of this subversion of the narrative and the incongruity created between the video game universe and the 'real world' could be used to this effect in the TL. But some difficulty may arise with how we attribute what Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 20) refer to as the "original feel of gameplay". Indeed, the authors are mindful of certain factors which may contribute to or impede the implementation of this notion of video game transcreation:

> a number of aspects can be raised, including the variables in the localisation process, the priorities and constraints inherent to this type of translation, the translator's competence, the use of language in games, and the strategies and techniques used to preserve the gameplay experience. (ibid.)

This raises two notions of prime importance to this research: that of preserving the gameplay experience, and of the use of language in games. Within the context of the tension between Ludology and Narratology, we can see these two notions at work. Figure 17 exemplifies this: the gameplay experience generated by the highlighted tension between gameplay and narrative; and the way in which

language is used to create this tension. If we maintain that translators have license to transcreate in order to produce an experience which is comparable to that generated by the ST, then we could suggest that these devices are fundamental in the transfer of meaning in the TT.

Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) maintain that with the degree of freedom afforded to the localiser, there may also be certain restrictions imposed. While the primary restriction of note in their article is that of space limitations, it could be argued that other restrictions may affect localisers' choices. Such constraints could create some friction between the frequently-associated notions of creativity and freedom of the video game localiser, since reconciling the numerous restrictions that may be present with the idea of transcreation might be fraught. Concepts relating to PST as outlined in 3.1.2 such as the institution, market, and repertoire may assist in describing some of the relevant restrictions. This is discussed further in Chapter 6 for each of the video games under analysis.

Relating this discussion to gamer-speak we may see a further evolution of the Ludology v. Narratology debate regarding the localised text. If we think of gameplay experience being dictated not only by elements found within an MMORPG but also by experiences generated amongst TC gamers during play, then gamer-speak may offer insight into how gamers experience the narrative and gameplay interaction. While gamers may be invested in the narrative – and therefore in the language used in the game text – there may be reasons linked with gameplay mechanics which encourage them to use or create terms which are not present in a localised MMORPG. This applies to both original and localised MMORPGs. Since the in-game text must support both passive consumption and active use in gamer communication, it follows that the skopos of in-game text localisation should consider how gamers re-use, alter, or appropriate the in-game text to coordinate gameplay, in the same way this is envisioned by the original developers.

This is further supported by the previously discussed duality of video game narrative proposed by Barnabé (2014: 17-18). In response to the ludology vs. narratology debate, she states that video games simultaneously generate two

narrative threads: the *récit enchâssé*, or the fixed, pre-determined narrative that is driven by the game text, and the *récit vidéoludique*, which is determined through the variable and often multiform outcomes of gameplay (ibid.). Therefore, while immersion as described by Bernal (2006: 32) may contribute to game experience, elements of the MMORPG game experience are improved by a departure from immersion. This is demonstrated by the presence of gamer-speak (since most gamer-speak is, by definition, not part of the game universe) and the use of other non-standard language which enriches gamers' experience of the *récit vidéoludique*.

While this research does not set out to prescribe the extent to which MMORPGs should be analysed favouring Narratology or Ludology, pointing to this discussion raises some compelling questions regarding their localisation. Since gameplay and narrative elements are both found within MMORPGs, localisation decisions may be affected by the hypothesised conflict between these two elements. Furthermore, these tensions may explain some of the instances eliciting localiser creativity or pointing to examples where localisers may choose to be 'freer'. Therefore, the hypothesised tensions between gameplay and narrative are significant for the video game localiser and they raise questions that relate to the present research. Chiefly among these questions are: to what extent do MMORPGs gameplay and narrative conflict or complement one another? Can different text types within an MMORPG be placed in different places along this continuum with narratology on one end and ludology on the other? Are these tensions reflected in the language of original and localised MMORPGs? If so, how? And how are these tensions related to gamer-speak? The intention is that the analysis of data presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 sheds light on some of these issues.

3.2.2 Sociological observations: 'game rules', 'gamer rules', and 'pluralistic ignorance'

GS is a multidisciplinary field and as such, a body of its literature borrows frameworks from sociology. Of interest to this research are two specific concepts which have been applied to GS: the concept of 'rules', and the concept of 'pluralistic ignorance'. The former is useful for the discussion and analysis of gamer-speak, since game rules provide for further application of ideas from the

Ludology v. Narratology debate beyond video game texts and onto player experiences. As for pluralistic ignorance, this notion may explain some of the motivations behind the use of gamer-speak. The present section is an exploration of how these concepts relate to gamer-speak and, in turn, how they are relevant to the localiser of MMORPGs.

3.2.2.1 Game rules and gamer rules

Rules have been identified as a primary characteristic of a game. Games Studies scholars define the rules created by the programmed game system as paramount to the shaping of the game universe and player experience. Games, however, bring with them a certain duality between their rules and fictions. This distinction is reminiscent of the ludology v. narratology debate; however, it offers a nuanced view on how the rules systems operate in a video game:

> video games are two different things at the same time: video games are *real* in that they consist of real rules with which players actually interact, and in that winning or losing a game is a real event. However, when winning a game by slaying a dragon, the dragon is not a real dragon but a fictional one. To play a video game is therefore to interact with the real rules while imagining a fictional world, and a video game is a set of rules as well as a fictional world. (Juul 2011: 1)

This brings up a compelling notion regarding video games: that the way in which gamers interpret their gaming experience involves a preference for either the real events offered in the rule-based gameplay experience, or to the fictional experience of the world offered by the video game narrative. While these inclinations may not be mutually exclusive, they offer an insight into how players may create their game experience. This is illustrated by Thorhauge (2013: 383), who posits that gameplay in *WoW* can be experienced in different ways and claims the existence of different playing styles or types of player:

> For instance, the power gamer tends to focus more or less solely on the game as a programmed system to be mastered, whereas the more sociable type tends to interpret the game as a fictional world to be explored and inhabited. In this way, the distinction between fiction and context is not a prerequisite for playing WoW but rather an aspect of particular playing styles.

This statement on playing styles is not definitive nor is it complete, but it does highlight an essential aspect of online gaming and virtual worlds: that player choice is a primary determining factor in player experience. This statement aligns with and builds upon the ludology v. narratology debate, in that we can think of play styles as finding themselves on several points along a continuum with narratology on one end and ludology on the other. In addition to discussing the two different playing styles mentioned above, Thorhauge (ibid: 386) and Yee (2006: 312) also consider the social element of MMORPGs and argue that some players might simply enjoy having a virtual space where they can socialise. Allowing for these heterogeneous play styles in video games complicates the discussion around how to deliver a positive player experience. Since some players will prefer the fictional world to be the primary aspect of their experience, others will rather prefer to master the game's systems, and still others may prefer simply a virtual space in which they can socialise with like-minded gamers, content in games must attempt to fulfil the needs of different play styles.

Furthermore, the existence of different play styles exemplifies gamer agency, and explains some of the different functions of communication among players of MMORPGs. For example, *WildStar* players who prefer to role-play have different needs from players who are more interested in raiding and will use language accordingly when communicating with each other. These needs could result in changes in the community attitude towards role-playing and even in changes in game design to support their play style, which in turn could lead to the creation of new in-game text that would need localising. For instance, one player's request for role-play functionality can be seen in Figure 18:

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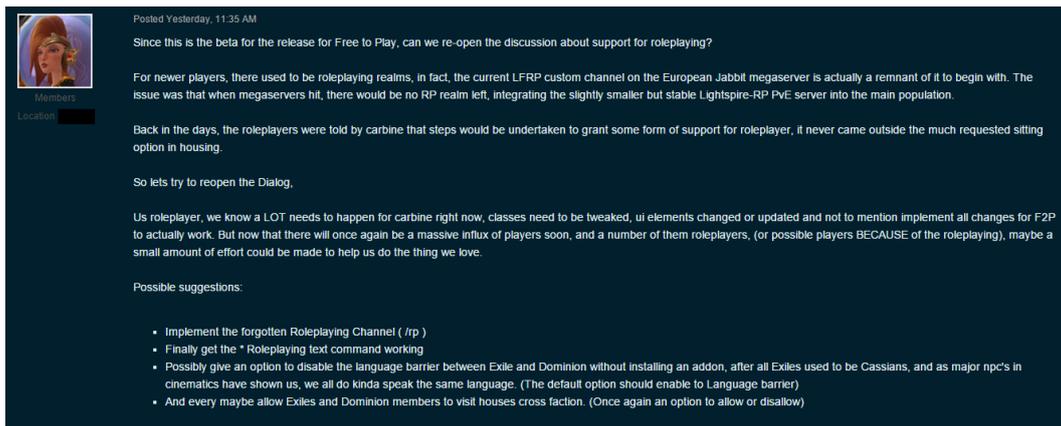
Figure 18: Role-playing and *WildStar*[36]

This player, posting on the official *WildStar* forums, identifies some game features that would need to be implemented so that players could role-play if they wished. Functionally, changes to game rules and gamer rules around the mechanics and communication practices would be required. Since player communication is an integral part of the game experience, the language that players use differs according to whether or not they are role-playing.

These differences in play styles and rules systems are integral to observations of player language. In MMORPGs, there is a dichotomy of rules defined by the coding of the game itself (i.e., game rules), and rules which are born of player preferences (i.e., gamer rules).[37] The former are rules which reveal intentions of the designers in how they wish to guide their players and provide a specific gameplay experience. The latter indicate how players interact with games as well as with one another when playing.

To illustrate these two concepts and how they interact, we could examine an example of how treasure, or 'loot' is distributed between players in *WoW*. In Figure 19 below we can see how loot is explained on the official *WoW* website. This explanation shows how the game rules will determine the way in which players will receive their loot, with several different settings depending on the group's

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[36] Source: https://forums.wildstar-online.com/forums/index.php?/topic/129822-roleplaying-support

[37] Thorhauge (2013: 389) refers to this distinction as "the rules of the game" and "the rules of the player". Here I refer to these as "game rules" and "gamer rules" for concision, and to align with the notion of gamer-speak. Otherwise, these terms are interchangeable.

composition. One very common setting (point 1 in Figure 19) is the 'group loot' setting, which when activated will display a window on players' screens showing the item, and an option to select 'need' if the player needs the item, 'greed' if the player simply would like to have the item, 'disenchant' if the item is to be broken down into its base materials and attributed to a group member at random, or 'pass' if the player has no interest in the item (point 2 in Figure 19):
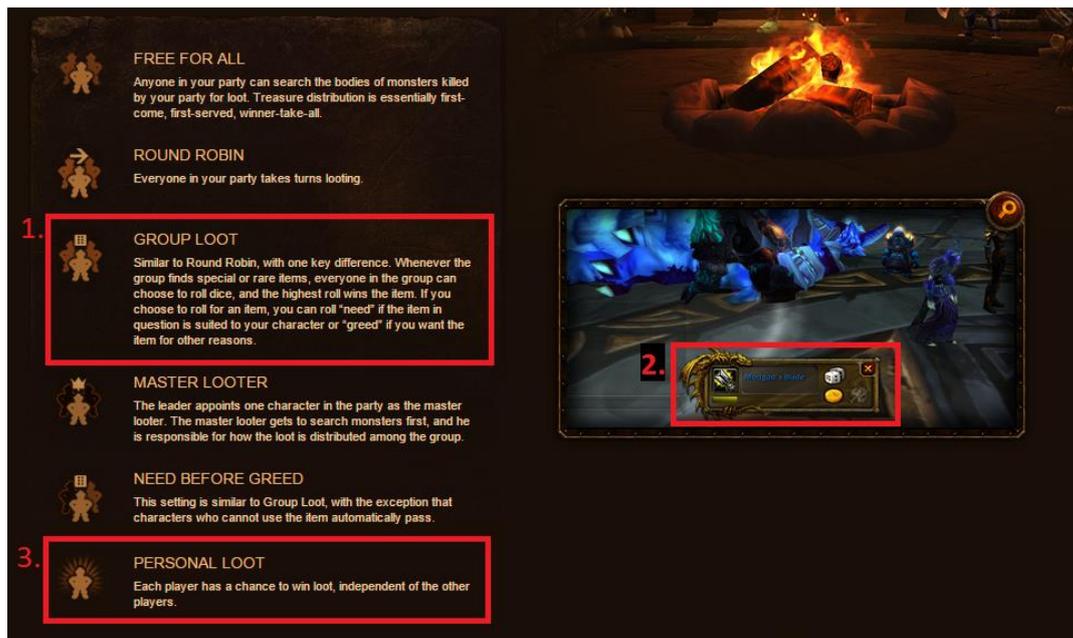
Figure 19: Game rules in *WoW* - loot distribution[38]

While this game rule for loot attribution seems relatively straightforward, a series of gamer rules dictate politeness and best practice approaches to this function's application in-game. For example, one should not select 'need' if one is not going to use the item and is only intending to sell it or break it down into base materials. In addition, some players may adopt multiple roles with one of their characters (i.e., dealing damage and healing) at different times. Since items are frequently intended for a certain role within the team dynamic, players may make use of items intended for roles other than their current one. Therefore, it is considered polite to select 'need' if the item is intended for their main specialisation, and 'greed' if it is to be used for their secondary specialisation. One common cause of friction between

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[38] Source: http://eu.battle.net/wow/en/game/guide/playing-together

players is the misuse or overuse of the 'need' function. Figure 20 is a screenshot from *WoW* posted on an unofficial player forum following a looting dispute:

Figure 20: Gamer rules in *WoW* - 'Need' before 'Greed' and loot ninjas[39]

This exchange typifies the sort of controversy that can come from the clash between game rules and gamer rules. Player 1 claims that, out of politeness, they did not select 'need' on an item looted earlier for their secondary specialisation. Player 2, who received this first item, subsequently selected 'need' for an item that Player 1 wanted for his/her secondary specialisation. Player 1, feeling incensed at the unfairness resulting from his/her politeness and the lack thereof from their teammate, voices his/her displeasure to the group and is subsequently kicked out of the group for speaking up. Players who misuse this function to 'need' items that other players believe they should not are dubbed 'ninjas' or 'loot ninjas'. Player 1 claims that he/she was the victim of a loot ninja in this instance.

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[39] Source: http://stormspire.net/off-topic/2464-wall-shame-ninja-looters.html

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In Figure 19 and Figure 20 we can see how game rules and gamer rules intersect. It is also worth noting that gamer rules can affect game rules. Because of countless issues arising from loot ninjas and other disputes around the looting system, the 'personal loot' setting (point 3 in Figure 19) was introduced many years after the initial release of *WoW*. This system allows players to simply receive loot or not, and eliminates the player influence in loot attribution, rendering the process entirely governed by game rules.

The state of game rules and gamer rules is constantly in flux and to understand their interaction it is worth considering the origins of these phenomena. In Thorhauge's (2013) comparison of the pen-and-paper RPG *Dungeons and Dragons* with *WoW*, she highlights the assimilation of the role of the 'Game Master' from *Dungeons and Dragons* into the programmed game system. The Game Master in *Dungeons and Dragons* traditionally was the person who organised and created the imagined space in which other participants would play. Thorhauge (ibid.) identifies some of the rules and systems which have been transferred from the players' and Game Master's mutually accepted systems into the programmed systems of the video game. She states that "in online role-playing games, a programmed system simulates the rule system […] while the rest of the activity is up to the players to define" (ibid.: 371).

Since it has been established that player communication is an essential component of MMORPG activity, we may logically conclude that these systems of rules, both game rules and gamer rules, also apply to player communication. Player communication is indeed simultaneously affected by the rules of the programmed game system and the system of rules created by players. Drawing on PST principles again, these 'game' and 'gamer' rules systems could be considered part of the repertoire and are thus integral to the description of gamer-speak and its potential influences. This is because the shared knowledge of these systems of rules influence gamers' language use. As an example, gamers who are familiar with the game rules will know that if another gamer advises them to use "Alt+F4" to perform any game function, they are being made the butt of an in-joke, since that keystroke closes the game. Furthermore, game mechanics, which are one type of game rules, impact the practicality of certain types of language during gamer communication. One simple

example is, where a gamer needs to communicate an instruction to a party member and the event to which that communication relates lasts two seconds, it is likely that a shorter utterance will be preferred over a longer one. In this way, the system of game mechanics can have a direct influence on gamer language use and the formation of gamer-speak. Gamer rules also impact both repertoire and practical language use. One example of the former is the types of politeness that can be found during gameplay. It is typically well-seen if players greet other players when they join a party, thank players when certain actions are performed (such as resurrection after a death), or to announce to others when they go away from their keyboard (AFK). Abbreviations and economy of language can also be resorted to when gamers communicate this understood repertoire of politeness, such as when they use 'ty rez' as an utterance replacing 'thank you for casting the resurrect spell on me'.

Game and gamer rules are not the only factors influencing player communication in MMORPGs (and therefore their localisation), and it is necessary at this stage to consider some of the discussion around other sociological factors, as is the case with 'pluralistic ignorance', where assembled peers exhibit different behaviour than they would in individual or one-on-one situations, 'ignoring' their own attitudes or opinions.

3.2.2.2 *Pluralistic ignorance and hypersalience of gamer identity*

Pluralistic ignorance is a concept dating from the 1920s with Allport's (1924) *Social Psychology*. This concept has recently been applied to virtual worlds, and in particular to *WoW* (de Larios & Lang 2013: 102). Scholars have defined pluralistic ignorance as "a mistaken perception of social norms that overwhelms personal attitudes and leads to behaviour contrary to an actor's attitude" (ibid.). With this term comes the caveat that ignorance is not to be understood as a knowledge gap, but rather as an inferred knowledge of the positions and opinions of others and the assumption that this knowledge is accurate (Grant et al. 2009, in de Larios & Lang 2013: 104). Pluralistic ignorance is discussed in de Larios and Lang (ibid.) as it applies to players in *WoW*. Since this concept had previously only been applied to communities in physical proximity and not mapped onto virtual worlds, this publication represents a meaningful progression in the acknowledgment of virtual

communities and their social dynamics. Furthermore, differences are highlighted between social interaction in virtual and real spaces.

The study addresses some of the social constructs present in *WoW*, namely the strong identity of the 'gamer' as a distinct social circle, the 'guild' as a sub-group of gamers, and 'raiding guild members' as a further sub-division. A gamer, here, is anyone who partakes in video games as a leisure activity and identifies him/herself with other gamers. A guild can be defined as a social collective through an integrated structure within the game with the aim of collectively improving its members' game experience.[40] Finally, a raiding guild member is a participant in the guild whose focus in the game is 'raid' content, or PvE content which requires groups of 10 or more players to play together. The understanding is that raiding guild members will display a significant amount of effort and discipline, described as "professionalism" (Miller & McFarland 1991, in de Larios & Lang 2013: 109). These groups are stated to have several of the defining characteristics of a group fostering a high degree of pluralistic ignorance, since "the conditions of high visibility, salient group identity, and a group need to maintain professionalism are, according to previous research, optimal for producing pluralistic ignorance" (de Larios & Lang 2013: 109).

Although de Larios and Lang (ibid.) focus on what is acceptable to discuss in-game, such as spirituality or politics, and do not discuss the use of language, these constructs are significant to the contextualisation and analysis of gamer-speak since a unifying identification of gamers as well as further subdivisions within a particular identity can explain not only play style behaviours but also language use. I hypothesise that these subdivisions of the social groups within an MMORPG, as well as the distinction of gamers from social groups beyond the gaming sphere, may give way to socially accepted and common language use which may not be understood or relevant in other contexts. This is augmented by the 'hypersalience' of gamer identity, or the strong connection that video game players feel when they identify themselves as 'gamers', and which in turn allows gamers to feel more at

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[40] In the case of *WoW* the player's guild name will be displayed in many places for other players to see, including but not limited to above the player's avatar, on the player's character sheet, on a guild interface within the GUI, and on leader boards both in-game and on official and fan-created websites.

ease and able to communicate freely with each other (ibid.: 115). Pluralistic ignorance and hypersalience are therefore significant in the social motivations for using gamer-speak and will have an impact on language use. Some players may prefer using terms and constructions which they believe identify them with a certain sub-set of the gaming population. Essentially, players may believe that the use of gamer-speak will make other players regard them as experienced, or more professional gamers, and that it will thus increase their status in the virtual world.

Identifying these attitudes can be difficult, and de Larios and Lang (ibid.) research has relied on surveys of players' impressions of acceptable topics during gameplay. For the present study, however, the survey instrument which addresses some of these concerns is contrasted with data collected from in-game communication to provide examples of how gamers use language, and how they perceive such use. These sociolinguistic considerations are essential when working towards establishing the defining traits and salient characteristics of gamer-speak.

In this chapter I have discussed the conceptual basis for this research. This chapter began by identifying relevant notions from TS. The first of these is DTS, which provides a systematic approach to analyse some of the observable facts investigated in this research, i.e., the in-game text. Next, the discussion turned to the central notions of PST, which are useful for defining how video games and the language associated with these texts operate in relation to the systems of systems, and the different elements involved in the generation of meaning in the semiotic exchange. The chapter then moved to a discussion of useful concepts from GS. Here, the discussion began with a frequently-cited discussion of how to analyse video games by prioritising the description of the game experience, either relating to its gameplay (ludology) or its storyline (narratology). The chapter concluded with two sociological observations relevant to GS, and therefore the study of gamer-speak. These notions of pluralistic ignorance and the hypersalient group identity are essential to frame our interpretation of gamer-speak regarding its formation, the motivations for its use, and its importance for MMORPG localisers as an integral aspect of the TC.

In the following section, I discuss the interdisciplinary methodological approach that I have followed for gathering and analysing the data for this study, as well as include some observations about the complexity of researching a rapidly-evolving product such as an MMORPG (see 4.3).

Chapter 4 Methodology

The methods for data collection and analysis are explained in this chapter. The research methodology relies on three sets of data, whose analysis is targeted at meeting the research aims: in-game written and spoken conversations among gamers playing the two chosen MMORPGs, the original and localised in-game text of these two titles, and MMORPG gamers' reported language use and demographic backgrounds. Figure 21 shows the sequence followed for data collection:
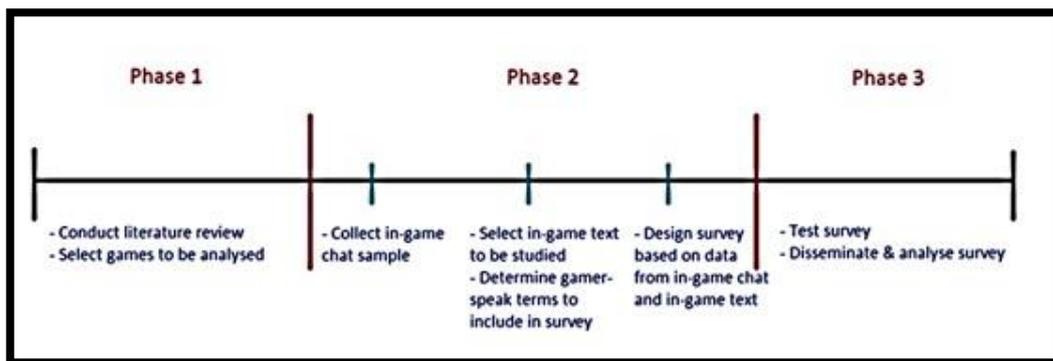
Figure 21: Research timeline: data collection

The order shown in this timeline is integral to the research design, since each element builds on the previous one: the games selected determine how the in-game chat sample is collected and analysed; the decisions of which in-game text is studied are based on the literature review and the findings from the in-game chat sample; the gamer-speak terms that are found in the in-game text and in-game chat determine the terms targeted in the survey design. In this way, the findings of the initial phases of the study shape the design of the later phases. Since game selection forms the foundation of the research design, the chapter starts with an overview of the games selected for study: *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) and *WildStar*. Subsequently, I explain the approach followed to collect and analyse the three sets of data.

4.1 *World of Warcraft*: an overview

WoW is the benchmark MMORPG. Having been launched in November 2004, it is not, however, the first MMORPG. While it is debatable what may be considered the first MMORPG, titles such as *Ultima Online* were already gaining popularity

as early as 1998 (Kolo & Baur 2004: online). Nevertheless, *WoW* is commonly cited as the most commercially successful MMORPG, having had over 12 million active subscriptions at its peak in 2011 (Knight 2015: online), and maintaining over 5 million subscriptions for most of its lifetime (ibid.).

WoW Narrative

The game's narrative consists of two warring factions, the Horde and the Alliance, who fight each other as they vie for power, and alongside one another against greater evils that threaten to destroy their home world of Azeroth. This storyline continues from the previous Real-Time Strategy (RTS) games under the "Warcraft" IP. This fantasy is based on a quasi-medieval setting, with swords, magic and dragons, as we might expect from a dungeons-and-dragons-type RPG. *WoW* also borrows from other genres, such as steampunk, horror, and science fiction; however, the core narrative is centred around the Warcraft fantasy. The content is constantly evolving, with new patches and additional story and gameplay being released at regular intervals, and one major expansion released yearly or bi-yearly.

WoW Mechanics

The mechanics of *WoW* are based on RPG mechanics – players create a 'level 1' character, explore the world completing quests and killing monsters to gain experience points (XP) until they reach the maximum level, or 'level cap'. As players level up, different abilities, narrative threads, and content types become available. Once players reach the level cap, they begin the 'endgame' content, or the most rewarding and difficult PvE or PvP challenges. It is at this stage that the game places a particular emphasis on raid content. The endgame stage is also typically where long-term players spend the most time, and most new content released within a single expansion takes place at this stage. Endgame content design is not unique to *WoW*, but it is an important aspect of how the narrative and mechanics are delivered.

WoW in academia

The combination of the commercial success and the coming of age of the MMORPG genre has caused *WoW* to gain significant attention from the academic community. Studies include mention of its social setting (Linderoth & Bennerstedt

2007), game design (Ducheneaut et al. 2006), narrative (Corneliussen & Rettberg 2008), social landscape (Schiano et al. 2011),[41] and language used by the community (Ensslin 2012), to name a few. The amount of in-game text, the rich and diverse language communities playing *WoW*, and the long-lasting popularity of the game, make it an excellent object of study and a fertile source of data.

4.2 *WildStar*: an overview

WildStar is a relatively new MMORPG. Released in 2014, it was originally modelled on a "pay-per-month" subscription plan. Following the commercial failure of this model, in 2015 it was changed to a "free-to-play" model, wherein players could join in without a subscription, and pay an optional monthly fee for 'signature' member benefits. This is a common progression for MMORPGs whose subscription models are not initially successful (*Rift* and *Star Wars: The Old Republic* also followed this trajectory). Although current membership numbers are difficult to obtain, the Steam platform's online connectivity statistics state that the highest recorded number of simultaneously logged-in players was 5,040 (Steamcharts: n.d., online).

WildStar: Narrative

WildStar takes place on the fictional planet Nexus, where, a race of aliens called the Eldan left behind technology and other mysteries for the planet's denizens to explore, discover, and conquer. Players are divided into two factions: The Exiles and The Dominion, who are vying for power and control of the alien technology on Nexus. The fantasy is based on space opera and science fiction themes, with space technology, psychic energy and robotics contributing to the narrative. Like *WoW*, *WildStar*'s content is updated frequently, with new challenges regularly bringing new extensions to the narrative.

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[41] Schiano et al. (2011: 5) also mention localisation in passing, stating that: "Outside of language localization and some very small visual adjustments, World of Warcraft is identical across regions. The broad questions raised here about culture, mediation, and affordances of virtual worlds may not be answered in this paper, but this data establish their importance, and suggest critical paths for future research".

WildStar: Mechanics

The mechanics of *WildStar* are very similar to those in *WoW*. The system of XP and levelling is the same, the game is set in a persistent world, and most gameplay takes place once the player has reached the maximum level. One central mechanic that sets *WildStar* apart from *WoW* is the targeting system. Most abilities by default in *WoW* are either 'targeted' or 'area of affect (AOE)'. AOE abilities will affect all enemies, allies, or both, in a designated zone and are typically targeted either by selecting a space on the ground with a targeting reticule, or by striking targets automatically in a space around the player's avatar. In *WildStar*, however, abilities tend to use a system of 'Freeform' targeting. With this system, player abilities occupy a designated space in front of the avatar, typically in a cone-shape or similar, and any enemies, allies, or both, that are in this space, are affected by the ability. The difference between AOE abilities in *WoW* and Freeform abilities in *WildStar* is discussed further in 6.1 and illustrated in Figure 22:
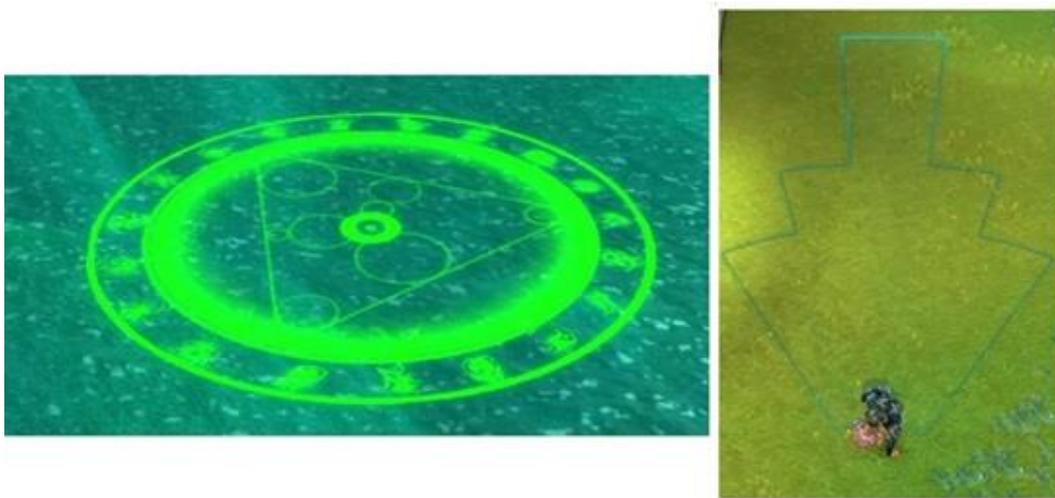
Figure 22: AOE targeting systems – *WoW* (left) & *WildStar* (right)

WildStar in academia

At the time of this research there are no academic studies that refer to *WildStar*. This is likely because it is a relatively young title and because it has been much less popular than *WoW* (SteamCharts: n.d., online). Whereas *WoW* has been lauded as the benchmark in the genre of MMORPGs, *WildStar* has received mixed reviews from the community and from online games reviewers. Over the course of my research, *WildStar* has steadily declined in popularity, and while a core of fans still

plays, the game shows many of the industry hallmarks of dwindling commercial success. For the purposes of this study, I selected *WildStar* because, while it belongs to the same genre, it has many features that differ from *WoW* (including a different narrative, mechanics systems, register and tone of the in-game text). In addition, it is interesting to compare a newly emerging with a well-established MMORPG.

Although the systems of mechanics and narratives differ somewhat between *WoW* and *WildStar*, their in-game player chat systems are similar. The following is a presentation of how I collected and analysed data from these chat systems.

4.3   In-game chat data collection and analysis[42]

The first data set consists of a series of spoken and written text exchanges among players collected during gameplay. Given the vast amount of data available for the two video games chosen, I established some sampling criteria to ensure the data collected were significant yet manageable in order to meet the aims of the research. Data were collected over roughly a one-month period (from October 5th, 2015 until November 1st, 2015)

Regarding written in-game chat, information was gathered from non-role-playing servers. I selected this type of server on both games since *WildStar* only offers non-role-playing servers, and since the majority of the French *WoW* population plays on non-role-playing servers.[43] 20 of the 28 French non-role-playing servers for *WoW*, and both of the 'megaservers' for *WildStar* were reviewed for the written chat sample.[44] In this way I was able to collect a representative yet manageable sample. In *WoW*, this represents more than 70% of the total French-

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[42] The use of these data has been approved by the UCL research ethics committee. In accordance with UCL research ethics guidelines, consent is implied for written exchanges between gamers, since the text is or can be available in the public domain. To preserve anonymity, all information that could identify the subjects will be redacted from the data sample. Regarding spoken exchanges between gamers, consent has been obtained from participants, and the transcription of player exchanges does not contain any identifying information.

[43] While the exact population numbers on role-playing servers and non-role-playing servers are not available, only seven out of 35 servers in *WoW* are role-playing servers. Therefore, even assuming that all server populations were equal, the 28 non-role-playing servers far outnumber the seven role-playing servers.

[44] Megaservers are servers that can house more players than traditional server structures which segregate in-game populations into manageable sizes to be supported by the game's hardware framework.

speaking populations found on European servers, according to the reports on player distribution across servers taken from the in-game display at the time the data were collected (Blizzard 2004-present).

Data for written player exchanges were sampled from the 'General' channel in *WoW*'s integrated chat system. This channel is available most of the time players are connected to *WoW*, and its visibility is limited to the players in the same 'zone', or demarcated virtual map space. This channel is at its busiest in the main cities, or 'hubs', where players gather to form parties for group content, recruit new members for their guild, conduct commerce, craft items via the game's 'profession' system, or simply place their avatars in this safe place so they can communicate socially with other players. Each zone has its own separate general chat, but each faction's hubs share the same general chat. Therefore, only players in the same zone will see each other's messages in the general chat unless they are in a hub, where they will see all messages from players in their factions' hubs. These channels have evolved over the lifetime of *WoW*. Initially there was no matchmaking game system (matchmaking systems are designed to enable group formation automatically, based on each member's role, to create a viable team) in place for recruiting party members, and thus the best method players had for finding teammates was to go to the hubs and advertise in the chat system. Over time, matchmaking systems have been put in place within the game for recruiting party members for most PvE and PvP content via the game menus. These systems have gradually expanded, allowing for players to temporarily group with and/or compete against players on other servers.

When this research first started, *WoW* players were segregated by language group entirely except when playing PvP content, where they competed against other language users, without being able to communicate with them. As the study progressed, however, a feature was integrated to enable players to select the language groups with which they could form parties. With the previous approach, players who had selected French as their language of choice when they created their character could only communicate with other players who had made the same selection. However, with the new feature, these players can now, for certain types of group content, select several language groups of players to increase the

possibility of their finding a party. Nonetheless, this change in language group settings in *WoW* has not affected the study since French gamers still group with French-speaking players when not using the matchmaking system (for example, when typing in the general channel, which is still linguistically segregated, or when raiding with their guild) and thus there is plenty of written and spoken material in French. In addition, it is unlikely that the French players' contact with other language speakers influences the usage or construction of gamer-speak, because French gamer-speak existed before this feature was established in *WoW*. It now seems to be more-or-less established.

No demographics on players were collected other than avatar names, and these are redacted from the final data set to preserve anonymity. However, because the general channels are server-specific, all players sampled here have elected to play in a French-specific server. As a result, while we cannot speak to the age, sex, or geographic location of the respondents, since there is no other obvious incentive for players to select a French server if their first language is not French, it is safe to assume that most of these players are native French speakers. There are two notable exceptions to this. First, there are possibly players for whom French is their first foreign language, but for whom there is no alternative localised version in their native language. For example, players from North Africa might play on a French server, but may not consider French their native language. The second potential exception to this is Real Money Traders (RMTs; see RMT). These are illicit sellers of in-game currency or other services who create level one characters and advertise in-game via the official channel. One example of this sort of communication found in one of the written chats is the following: "■ [BOOSTINGSTORE.COM] ■ 69E FOR 13/13 HFC HEROIC + LOOT 8 ITEMS GUARANTEE. FULL 725+ MYTHIC GEAR 599E! 15% MORE SALE AT THIS WEEK! ▲".[45] Any similar utterances that were determined to have been written by RMTs were therefore not included for the final analysis, since RMTs are typically not legitimate players.

Written exchanges were copied directly from *WoW* and *WildStar* in-game text-based chat platforms in the public channel. This channel is typically used for

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[45] The black squares and triangles are images that the RMTs have inserted in their messages to make them more visible in the general chat.

trade and commerce, casual social conversation, player-to-player advice, and recruitment for group play.[46] Within each server, four 15-minute long segments were randomly sampled to make sure data collected were as representative as possible: one weekday morning, one weekday afternoon, one weekend morning, and one weekend afternoon. A total of 80 segments was sampled for *WoW* and 8 for *WildStar* (due to the difference in the number of servers). The total volume of text for written exchanges was expected to be in the many thousands of words, distributed across both games, with a higher word count expected on *WoW* given that it has a much larger player base, and it is therefore likely to have a larger French population. However, during data collection no written player conversations took place at all in *WildStar* servers, and 25 of the 80 segments sampled in the case of *WoW* did not include any conversation. The number of segments without conversation in *WoW* was not surprising (since the 15-minute periods were taken over both high- and low-traffic times, and the general chat is not continuously active). However, I did not expect that *WildStar* would produce no in-game written chat. As a result, a second month of 15-minute periods was also sampled from November 2nd to 29th. In the second month, no French conversation took place, although there were some exchanges in English.

There are several potential explanations for this. First, *WildStar*'s population is much sparser, and therefore there are fewer gamers at all times, making the likelihood of capturing conversation less likely. Second, and because of the smaller population, there was a merger of the linguistically-segregated servers into linguistically-integrated megaservers that took place after my study began but before I recorded the in-game chat sample. Thus, the most vocal population was English-speaking. Therefore, players in *WildStar* are more likely to communicate in English in the general chat platform and in French only if they are, for example, in a French-speaking guild. Because those French conversations do not appear in the general chat, I could not collect them for my study. As a result, the final sample includes 55 separate 15-minute long snapshots of written exchanges, corresponding only to *WoW*. These exchanges amount to 825 minutes and 9032 words over 753

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[46] In previous iterations of the game, this function was much more emphasised in the public channels, but in recent years in-game 'matchmaking' tools have negated much of the need for such conversation.

separate utterances. For detailed information about how these data are distributed across servers, please refer to Appendix 2. A complete transcript of this data set can be seen in Appendix 3.

Spoken exchanges were recorded during group gameplay corresponding to four "raid" sessions (eight sessions in total were recorded), which took place from November to December 2015. From these four sessions, two for each game were selected at random. In these sessions, the participants were members of the same guild: either a guild of *WoW* players or a guild of *WildStar* players. The same guild group was recorded for both the *WoW* and the *WildStar* samples. These guilds were approached and asked to participate voluntarily. Both guilds regularly record their raids, either to post on video upload sites, or to perform post-mortem analysis of their success or failure during gameplay. As a result, these recordings were collected in order to minimise the impact of the participants' awareness of the study. To enable in-game spoken conversations, players use third-party voice-chat platforms (Mumble® in the *WoW* raid sample and TeamSpeak® in the *WildStar* raid sample), and recordings were made via these platforms. Raid sessions lasted between two and three hours, and involved a group of 10-30 players.

The volunteers in this data sample play together regularly, and some have done so for ten years. Only one female participant was recorded, however there may have been more in the group who did not speak. Their level of gaming can be described as regular raiders, but not highly ranked on their server. This means that they play at least nine, and frequently between fifteen and twenty hours per week.[47]

Players in this guild regularly make video and audio recordings of their raids form one player's point of view. The recordings analysed here are the audio portion of two such raids, collected via the Mumble® and TeamSpeak® chat platforms and submitted to the researcher immediately following the raid's completion. Table 3

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[47] This is based on 1) Regular raiders have at least three, and often four, three-hour raids per week. 2) In addition, players must carry-out other administrative tasks (collecting consumable items, playing non-raid content to improve gear, etc.). 3) Players often take part in other in-game leisurely activities (PvP content, Alts, achievement hunting, in-game holiday events, etc.).

displays this information, demonstrating that samples have a similar duration and are therefore comparable.

		WoW (via Mumble®)	*WildStar* (via TeamSpeak®)
Raid 1	Date	26 November 2015	1 December 2015
	Duration	**2:51:14**	**2:41:00**
Raid 2	Date	4 November 2015	8 December 2015
	Duration	**3:05:24**	**2:58:03**
Total duration		**5:56:38**	**5:39:03**

Table 3: Spoken data sample dates & times

Table 4 below provides an overview of the spoken and written sessions recorded, as well as of the sample analysed.

	Written exchanges		Spoken exchanges	
	Recorded	Analysed	Recorded	Analysed
WoW	1,200 minutes (5/10/2015-1/11/2015)	**825 minutes**	**8:54:54**	**5:56:38**
WildStar	120 minutes (5/10/2015-1/11/2015) & 120 minutes (2/11/2015-29/11/2015)	**0 minutes**	**8:48:09**	**5:39:03**

Table 4: Overview of spoken and written data sample

4.3.1 Methodology for the analysis of gamer-speak in in-game chat data

Spoken and written exchanges between players were collected to meet the following specific aim, as indicated in the introduction of this PhD thesis: to analyse and categorise examples of French gamer-speak found in conversations taking place among gamers while playing two MMORPGs. The aims of the analysis are: (1) to demonstrate the importance of gamer-speak through the frequency with which it is used during gameplay coordination; (2) to identify defining traits and salient characteristics of French gamer-speak drawing both on discourse analysis

(see section 4.3.1.1) and on the theories discussed in Chapter 3; (3) to classify the examples of gamer-speak found in the data sample; and (4) to assess some of the motivations and processes behind the creation and use of gamer-speak.

The analysis is both quantitative and qualitative. The first demonstrates the extent of gamer-speak use, both in general and regarding specific linguistic categories (see section 4.3.1.2). The qualitative analysis provides a detailed description of how gamer-speak is used in a selection of specific examples that I chose for close linguistic analysis, and offers a window into the understanding of players' motivations.

In the written data sample, examples were selected that included gamer-speak to illustrate and contextualise how gamer-speak is used in the written channel. These excerpts where selected based on their containing relevant content, and thus are not randomly selected. In the spoken data sample, a series of short excerpts (ranging from 30 seconds to 2 minutes) have been selected randomly from the four raids. The selection was randomised by starting the audio recording from an arbitrary point. From that start point, the audio was run until the first utterance containing a gamer-speak term took place (see section 4.3.1.2). This point marks the start of the example, with the end of the example being the point at which the contextualising conversation ends, either by a long pause in the discussion or by a change of topic. A total of 7 minutes and 42 seconds has been analysed for *WoW* and of 5 minutes and 54 seconds for *WildStar*. A sub-selection of these examples is discussed in Chapter 5. While this approach may seem to distort the amount of gamer-speak in the voice-chat sample, since examples necessarily contain gamer-speak and are relatively short compared with the overall sample size, it enables an in-depth qualitative analysis of naturally-occurring gamer-speak. In addition, the potential distortion is addressed through the quantitative analysis of the instances of gamer-speak found in the entire 11 hours, 35 minutes, and 41 seconds of audio, presented prior to the exposition of examples.

4.3.1.1 *Discourse Analysis for the study of gamer conversations*

When looking for an appropriate text analysis framework to explore the varied data set collated qualitatively, several options were considered. Although some works

within TS provide appropriate models for text analysis in video game localisation, such as systemic functional linguistics (O'Halloran 2004), this research also looks for inspiration in this regard to GS in an attempt to be truly interdisciplinary. I chose discourse analysis (DA) to explore gamer conversations over other possible approaches, because there is precedent both within GS (Ensslin 2012; Thorhauge 2013; Gee 2014), and within TS (Schäffner 2002, 2004; Wood & Kroger 2000). In addition, it seemed the most appropriate framework to shed light onto players' motivations when using gamer-speak.

This section introduces DA and shows how it supports my analysis of gamer communication.[48] DA has been defined and applied in different ways. One of the more well-known definitions exactly fits the purposes of this study:

> [Discourse analysis] has an analytic commitment to studying discourse as *texts and talk in social practices*. That is, the focus is not on language as an abstract entity such as a lexicon and a set of grammatical rules (in linguistics), a system of differences (in structuralism), a set of rules for transforming statements (in Foucauldian genealogies). Instead, it is the medium for interaction; analysis of discourse becomes, then, analysis of what people do. (Potter 1997: 146, in Wood and Kroger 2000: 3-4)

This definition is useful in that it sets DA apart from other approaches to text analysis. The interest of DA is the 'doing' of a text – what the text means in terms of social practice. DA focuses on how a text constructs reality. By performing descriptive DA, whose goal is to describe and therefore understand the language under consideration (Gee 2014: 18), we can gain insight not only into the salient features of gamer-speak, but also into gamers' motivations when using such language. This approach also enables us to study how localised text is used by players and whether it is manipulated to better suit their needs. Subsequently these learnings can be applied to discuss the extent to which the localised text, or even the TL, provides gamers with the sufficient linguistic tools they need to navigate the technical and social challenges of the MMORPG universes being studied. Gamer-speak terms have also been quantified and classified as explained below.

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[48] This research relies on DA as a framework for the analysis of gamer conversations. For the analysis of the in-game ST and TT, the qualitative analysis relies on principles from DTS.

4.3.1.2 Classification of gamer-speak terms

In my analysis and categorisation of gamer-speak terms I have adopted Algeo's (1999) classification for non-standard language formation which was also used by Ensslin (2012: 69-70) in her analysis of gamer-generated language. Since I situate gamer-speak within Ensslin's definition of gamer-generated language, Algeo's classification is appropriate for gamer-speak analysis. It contains the following categories in which terms are divided by their linguistic formation:

- **Loans**: Words borrowed from other languages. In the case of French, this includes terms taken wholesale from English (Anglicisms), like *week-end*, or altered in spelling or pronunciation when adapted in the target system, like *kiffe* as a modification of the Arabic *Kef*.

- **Shortenings**: Words that contain only a part of their original form. This includes primarily clippings, where part of a word is dropped to shorten the word, as in *dégueu* in French (short for *dégueulasse* / disgusting), or in acronyms such as *OVNI* (UFO).

- **Shifts**: Existing words whose semantic meaning has changed. This is subdivided into different types of shifts: amelioration, pejoration, widening and narrowing. Amelioration is an improvement in connotation (*terrible* becoming a positive), while pejoration leads to a worsening in connotation (*discrimination*, which originally meant 'discern', but, over time, adopted the sense of racial prejudice). Widening causes specific terms to be used as metonyms for other terms like it (*Larousse* referring to any dictionary) and narrowing causes terms to move from more general to a more specific usage (*un/du chocolat* often being used in French to refer to drinkable chocolate and not solid forms of chocolate).

- **Blends**: Words created by combining and shortening other words. *Courriel*, a blend of *courrier* and *électronique,* is used in this way in French in place of 'e-mail'.

- **Composites**: Words that are formed by the combination of words or parts of words. This can be achieved through compounding (combining free morphemes or morpheme constructions, such as *tire-bouchon* (corkscrew)) or affixing (combining free and bound morphemes, like *re-bonsoir* (Hello again))

- **New creations**: Words that do not have any connection with existing terminology. Ensslin (2012: 70) characterises new creations as often relying on other languages, and "occur typically in industries such as electronic, robotics, hardware, or software technologies". Her examples in English also apply in French: "Teflon, Kodak, Xerox and, more recently, Wii".

To illustrate how these terms manifest in French gamer-speak, Table 5 below shows one example from each category, taken from the in-game chat data, as well as their standard equivalents:

Category	Example	Standard equivalent[49]
Loans[50]	*Gear*	*Équipement*
Shortenings	*Cita*	*Citadelle des Flammes Infernales*
Shifts	*Distances*	*Classes à dégâts à distance*
Composites	*Multicible*	*Ciblage Multiple*
Blends	*Chamélém*	*Chamane élémentaire*
New Creations	*QQ*	[Emoticon meant to look like two eyes crying]

Table 5: Gamer-speak examples by category

While this classification is useful for analysing gamer-speak, many terms are difficult to situate herein due to overlapping between categories. For example, *Hunt* is a loan from the English "Hunter" (character class), but it has also been clipped. For the purposes of this analysis, terms like this have been categorised as a loan when they (1) have unambiguous basis in English, and (2) are not an acronym or initialism. I make this distinction because, where acronyms have been derived from English (e.g., AOE) I consider the shortening to be a more pertinent feature of this linguistic modification. This is because first, the shortening engenders both a

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[49] The term "standard" here refers to terms that are either taken from the localised game text or are part of French usage that is approved by the *Académie Française*.

[50] In this case, loans are limited to Anglicisms (words taken from Standard English) or words taken from English gamer-speak, because these were the only types of loans found in the data.

potential practical advantage to in-game communication (i.e., fewer keystrokes or shorter spoken utterances are more efficient), and an element of encoding of the in-group code (that is, to a new player, the term is first recognisable as an acronym, and subsequently as an Anglicism). If either of these criteria is not met, these terms have been placed in another category. For example, *Régen* could be either loaned from the English "regeneration", or simply shortened from the French *régénération.* Since it is impossible to determine whether this term is derived from the English or the French, it has been categorised as a shortening.

Another potential difficulty in classification arises in the overlapping between Anglicisms and either composites or blends. As such, blends or composites have been classified as a loan when (1) they seem to have been loaned wholesale from English, and (2) are one word. Conversely, if the term is separated into two words it has been considered a composite. This decision is, in part, to reflect the use of the lesser-used category in my results, however, most of these terms could equally have been considered as Anglicisms.[51] Categorising terms that could be considered a composite, loan or a shift, and were not loaned wholesale from English was more clear-cut: these have been categorised as either a composite or a shift. Thus, *rebuff*, (to re-apply beneficial status effects on party members) has been counted as an Anglicism rather than a blend (because the blend has been applied to make the English term non-standard, and subsequently loaned to the French). Conversely, *hpal* (a paladin whose specialisation is "holy" (*sacré* in French); the 'healing' specialisation) has been categorised as a blend, since it is not a loan from English gamer-speak (English gamers rather use 'healadin' for this construction). These categorisations are not always clear cut. Nonetheless, I have endeavoured to apply the above criteria systematically in the categorisation of gamer-speak terms found in this study.

There are also several borderline cases of terms that could be considered gamer-speak or not. These terms are: *tank, JcJ, JcE, PNJ, IRL, me,* and *bot.* Different factors that would argue for their inclusion or exclusion as gamer-speak

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[51] I considered using a classification that combined these overlapping categories, but I could not implement it systematically, and it became too complicated to allow for the different complex formations.

were taken into consideration. Typically, where terms were non-standard and game-specific, or used in a non-standard way in-game, they have been included as gamer-speak. Where terms were non-standard, but their use was not specific to the gaming context, they have not been included. Some of the most relevant cases and the reasons for including them are discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Appendix 1 also contains further explanation of these borderline cases, and the arguments in support of their inclusion or exclusion.

4.4   Localised game text collection and analysis[52]

I created the second data set analysed in this study from two original video games, *WoW* and *WildStar*. Since these games can contain millions of words, it was necessary to select a sub-corpus of in-game text in order to meet my purpose. The data sample includes three in-game textual sub-categories: quest titles, ability names and tooltips, and achievement text. Each of these is explained below.

Quest titles are found throughout MMORPGs. When players level up, they gain rewards in the form of experience or equipment that are necessary to advance the game narrative and their character's progression. Quests typically fulfil this function, and each quest in *WoW* and *WildStar* has a title. An example of a quest title in *WoW* is "Marks of Sargeras", which refers to specific objects carried by enemies in reverence of the evil being 'Sargeras'. Players must retrieve these objects and turn them in to one of two factions in a major city, so they can complete the quest and curry favour with either faction (as well as gain experience points and/or gold).

Ability names identify the actions that players' avatars perform depending on the specific keystrokes executed by the player. *Tooltips* contain didactic text which appears when a player mouses-over a game-mechanic name in the game menu. When they are linked with player abilities, tooltips contain an explanation of the ability's function and the relevant character attributes. One example of this in

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[52] The use of these data has been approved by the UCL research ethics committee. In addition to the examples included in Chapter 6 being completely anonymous, with all player avatar names having been redacted, there is nothing in the End-User Agreement of either game in this corpus that prevents any player from making such content available in the public domain, and nothing specifically excludes the use of this information for research purposes.

WildStar is the Engineer class ability named "Bolt Caster". When the player activates this ability, fires an attack explained by its tooltip which reads "Fires 3 shells that each deal [xx] physical damage to 1 target".[53]

Achievements are typically specific challenges that players can either choose to attempt throughout gameplay, or complete inadvertently. Thus, they are typically considered a type of content that advances neither the narrative nor character progression. Achievement texts are short segments of text linked with these achievements, to guide players when completing them, and to reward them upon completion (Strong 2017: 36). One such achievement in *WoW* is entitled "100 Fish", with its descriptive text reading "Fish up 100 items". Players will either intentionally go fishing until they complete this achievement (and its other sequential achievements, starting at "25 Fish" and terminating at "1,000 Fish"), or it will simply be awarded to players as they successfully catch fish.

I chose these three text types for two main reasons. First, they fulfil three distinct functions of MMORPG text: quests are primarily related to the game narrative, abilities names and their tooltips provide information about game mechanics, and achievements' primary purpose is to provide fun and rewards for players and enrich the gaming community (Strong 2017: 36). Second, the choice was informed by the previous research carried out in Strong (2011) and the preliminary data collection of spoken and written exchanges among players, which revealed these textual elements as potential areas of interest for the study of gamer-speak. Based on this information, quest text and abilities and tooltips were selected because they are archetypal examples of text that may prioritise either the game narrative or the game mechanics, respectively. Gamer-speak is frequently used at the expense of the game narrative since it necessarily breaks with the game universe when it refers to 'real-world' gamer conversations and since coordination, and therefore communication, is an integral part of MMORPG gameplay. Therefore, studying in-game texts that prioritise each of these functions might provide information on how the localised text relates with gamer-speak. Achievements, on the other hand, exist as a reward in and of themselves, and serve the unique purpose

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[53] This is a simplified portion of the tooltip. It has been truncated to show the way tooltips explain their corresponding ability names. Full examples of tooltips can be found in Section 6.1.

of enriching the gaming community beyond the in-game universe (i.e., in the community sphere) in a way that no other in-game text does. In this sense, these texts may provide a good platform for the use of gamer-speak in the in-game text, in a similar vein as in the example from Borderlands 2 in Figure 17 above. Analysing how this text is localised is particularly important because of its uniqueness and its potential links with gamer-speak.

I extracted these texts from the original video game text in English and subsequently compared them with their corresponding translations in French. Because analysing all of the in-game text of the above-mentioned types in two MMORPGs is beyond the scope of this study, I narrowed the sample for analysis following two specific criteria. First, the sample chosen is accessible by all in-game factions (or, in the case of achievements and quests under the "PvP" heading, there is an equivalent achievement for both factions). This criterion also eliminates the possibility that the text being studied might only be accessible to one of the two factions of gamers, which could create a bias towards one type of language use over another. For *WoW*, I added several additional filters to limit the word count. For quests, I added a further filter for quests that are part of a series (or quests that lead to, or are preceded by, other quests that build a storyline in sequence) in order to limit the word count. Quest text that has been analysed falls under the headings of "Eastern Kingdoms", "Kalimdor", "Outland", "Northrend", "Cataclysm", "Pandaria", and "Draenor", thus including text that was localised over all existing expansions at the time of this study. Also in *WoW*, I limited achievements to those relating to "Quests", "PvP", "Professions", and "Dungeons and Raids", thus including achievements relating to the central gaming activities in *WoW* across text that was localised over all existing expansions. Table 6 is an overview of the text selection used for this data sample:

	WoW Total Word Count	*WildStar* Total Word Count
Abilities & Tooltips – EN	4003	3909
Abilities & Tooltips – FR	4775	5073
Quest Titles – EN	12162	1616
Quest Titles – FR	14826	1962
Achievements – EN	4414	3596
Achievements – FR	5536	4600
Totals	**45,716**	**20,756**

Table 6: Total word counts – in-game written text

4.4.1   Methodology for the analysis of localised game text

I analyse localised game text both quantitatively and qualitatively. The former is aimed at documenting the presence of gamer-speak in the source text and localised text. In line with DTS, the analysis is not only source text oriented, but also target text oriented. All examples of gamer-speak found in the corpus, in both English and French, have been analysed and contextualised. Although it is expected to find examples of gamer-speak throughout all the different text types in the corpus, it is essential to consider how to approach the lack of material for analysis. The discussion of these cases showing a lack of gamer-speak can be equally interesting, especially when the analysis of gamer conversations has revealed the use of specific gamer-speak terms that could have been used in the target text instead (e.g., in the translation of intertextual references or other departures from the game narrative).

Quantitative analysis is followed by a qualitative analysis of a selection of the most relevant examples which have been identified for this research, discussed in Chapter 6. This qualitative analysis addresses some of the underlying issues in localisation related to gamer-speak (PROBLEM$_2$) and an indication as to how they have been rendered in the TL (SOLUTION$_2$). In addition to the presence of gamer-speak (or lack thereof), space limitations, mixture of text types,[54] terminology, and cultural specificity are considered when analysing PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$,

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[54] As described by Bernal (2014: 109) and Strong (2017: 25-26) these consist of Narrative, Oral/Dialogic, Technical, Functional, Didactic, Promotional, Trophy, and Community. For more information on text types see discussion of Table 2.

since these factors can help to describe some of the potential choices involved in ACT$_2$.

PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ are analysed according to Toury's (2012) proposed DTS approach: (1) place TTs in their cultural systems, which is done by referring to PST concepts; (2) 'map' TT segments onto the ST equivalents; and (3) attempt to draw some generalisations regarding the translation strategies employed.[55] Regarding the latter, it is necessary to apply a relevant framework for analysis of the strategies used for the translation of instances of gamer-speak. While there is not yet an established framework for gamer-speak study, existing classifications of translation strategies could be applied to this end. In particular, due to the nature of gamer-speak, classifications used for the study of culture-bound terms could be considered. In this regard, there is precedent for applying the classification outlined by Pedersen (2011) in his research on the subtitling of Extralinguistic Culture-bound References (ECRs) to video game localisation. Lepre (2014) uses this classification for the study of the translation of ECRs included in video games with humorous purposes. As will be shown below, this classification can be adapted to the study of instances of gamer-speak, which also bear resemblance to ECRs to some extent.

Pedersen (2011: 2-3) defines ECRs as "references to people, places, customs, institutions, food etc. that are specific to a certain culture, and that you may not know even if you know the language in question". According to Pedersen, ECRs can be "transcultural", i.e., existing in the repertoires of multiple cultures; "monocultural", i.e., existing in the repertoire of the SC, but not in the repertoire of the TC; or "microcultural", i.e., existing in the repertoire of the SC, but only recognisable by a minority of the ST audience. Examples of each of these references from *WoW* can be seen below:

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[55] An attempt has been made to keep generalisations as relevant to the data analysed in this research, and applied to the broader practice of MMORPG localisation, or video game localisation only where appropriate.

	In-game text	**Explanation**
Transcultural	NPC name: "Harrison Jones"	This NPC is involved in archaeology and adventures, and is named as such to refer to the film *Indiana Jones* and the films' lead actor Harrison Ford.
Monocultural	Cooking recipe: "Suramar Surf and Turf"	This recipe involves meat and fish ingredients, and therefore refers to a type of dish that combines these ingredients in the SC.
Microcultural	Quest title: "Ain't too proud to beg"	This quest title refers to a song by *The Temptations*, and therefore is familiar only to the subset of the audience whose repertoire includes soul music.

Table 7: Transcultural, monocultural, and microcultural ECRs in *WoW*

Based on this definition, gamer-speak, when included in the in-game text, can be thought of as a microcultural ECR, since only a subset of the SC audience who has gamer-speak in their repertoire will recognise its usage in the in-game text. Thus, adopting Pedersen's classification of translation strategies for the study of the translation of gamer-speak in in-game text is appropriate.

Pedersen (2011) identifies the following set of strategies to apply to the translation of ECRs:

- **Official equivalent**: where the TT uses an existing translation of the ST ECR. For example, *La Guerre des Étoiles* is the existing translation of the *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1979) film.
- **Retention**: where one aspect of the SL ECR is maintained in the TT. An example of retention would be leaving an ECR to the comic character *Astérix* in French for a translated text.
- **Specification**: where the ECR is not translated, but more information is provided, either through explicitation (e.g., spelling out an abbreviation (Lepre 2014: 175), or addition (e.g., more information regarding the connotative meaning of the ST is provided (ibid.)). By example, Pedersen (2005: 5) exemplifies addition by describing an ECR to Ian Botham, which becomes *Cricketspelaren David Botham* (The cricket player David Botham) in the Swedish version of *The Office* (2005).

- **Direct translation**: where either a calque is used, or a minor change to the ECR is applied to render it more recognisable to the target audience. As an example, in *WoW*, the character "Justin Timberlord," an ECR to the popstar Justin Timberlake, is translated as *Justin Sirebûche* (Justin Lordlog).
- **Generalisation**: where the specific reference is made more general. One example of a generalisation would be a reference to Claude Monet that is translated as "a famous artist".
- **Substitution**: where either a specific SC reference is replaced by one more recognisable to the TC, or paraphrasing is used. An example of substitution is the translation of the food item "ガレット・デ・ロワ" (Galette des rois) in *FINAL FANTASY XIV* (Square Enix: 2013) to "Kingcake" in English.
- **Omission**: where the ECR is removed.

I refer to this set of strategies for the analysis of the translation of gamer-speak in the in-game text.

4.5   Gamer reporting: online survey[56]

The third data set is a collection of responses from French gamers to an internet survey to ascertain their familiarity with gamer-speak (see Appendix 6). This survey is divided into two parts. The first is a section on players' background, including questions about their experience with MMORPGs, their level of social interaction while playing MMORPGs, their preferred content, their age, their sex, and their English proficiency. The second section is composed of 25 "fill-in-the-blank" questions where the missing text could contain a gamer-speak term or a standard French term (or an in-game localised term). Twenty-five terms were selected based on the compilation of gamer-speak terms found in the in-game text. These included terms relating to different gaming activities (player abilities, in-game mechanics, player classes and roles, and social terms), belong to different groups according to Algeo's (1999) linguistic categorisations, and could be

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[56] The use of these data has been approved by the UCL research ethics committee. Consent from survey participants has been requested through the first question on the survey. Issues such as controversial content within the game (of which there is none according to PEGI guidelines (see: http://www.pegi.info/en/index/global_id/505/?searchString=world+of+warcraft; http://www.pegi.info/en/index/global_id/505/?searchString=wildstar), and the age of participants (participants under the age of 18 were screened out of the survey) have been deemed as ethics exempt.

considered game-related, gaming-related, or genre-related, as per Ensslin's (2012) distinction of terms (see Chapter 2). For example, Figure 23 and Figure 24 show the English and French versions of question 15, respectively:[57]

Figure 23: Survey Question 15 (English)

Figure 24: Survey Question 15 (French)

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[57] The English version of this survey was created solely for the purposes of this research, i.e., to obtain feedback from the pilot survey test and from examiners of this thesis.

In this example, the ability referred to is *coup de pied* in the localised in-game text, which is often referred to by players (as shown in the voice-chat data) using the English term "kick". As shown here, questions were sometimes accompanied by a contextualising image, if this image did not influence whether a player would select a gamer-speak term or a standard term. Following each fill-in-the-blank question, players were asked to rate their familiarity with their response, with possible responses being "I use this term", "I do not use this term, but I have heard it used in-game"[58], "I chose this term by chance / as a guess"[59] and "I don't know this term". The goal was to ascertain their familiarity, usage, and potential preference for these terms.

I designed the survey in English and then translated it into French (for its distribution to respondents). The fill-in-the-blank questions, however, were either taken word-for-word from the French in-game chat sample (either spoken or written) or fabricated in French. In the latter case, the aim was to create a sentence that mimicked a gamer utterance but provided enough context to guide the respondent to understand what term was requested, allowing them to respond either in standard French or using gamer-speak. The goals of this survey design are (1) to compare and contrast results from the first section based on the background factors, (2) to offer players the unprompted opportunity to use either a gamer-speak term or a standard French term in specific game-related communications, and 3) to determine the level of familiarity of players with the term used. The aims of data analysis here are: 1) to compare these with the qualitative findings from Chapter 5 and Chapter 6; 2) to demonstrate the extent to which these terms are used by gamers playing MMORPGs other than those included in this corpus; (3) to broaden the data sample to include individuals beyond those reporting in Chapter 5; and (4) to expand the discussion of some of the social motivations for using gamer-speak. Ultimately, the aim of the survey is to have a better overview of the target audience

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[58] N.B.: this does not correspond to the English example in Figure 23 because this is a translation of the final survey question in French. The English version was altered in the final French following the pilot survey test.

[59] This translation does not match the English seen in Figure 23 because that text is from the pilot version of the study. Based on respondent feedback, this was changed to "I am guessing / I chose this term by chance" and was translated accordingly in the French version of the survey.

of localised MMORPGs as well as of their needs, which should be considered by localisers.

Prior to dissemination of the final survey, the French and English versions were piloted on a mixed group of 10 volunteer gamers, academics, and games industry professionals who did not form part of the final respondent pool. This trial group offered feedback that was used to refine the linguistic and methodological integrity of the survey. Following this, some questions were changed to reflect different terms, edits were made to the French language elements to remove ambiguity or allow for gamer-speak or standard responses more fairly, and language was updated to sound more like authentic gamer conversations. Furthermore, the number of gamer-speak questions was reduced, based on the recommendation that "survey burnout" might contribute to respondents not finishing the already lengthy survey.

The survey was disseminated via public and private online forums of *WoW*, *WildStar*, and *Blade and Soul*,[60] and via online forums at http://www.jeuxvideo.com, and http://jeuxonline.info.[61] By using these platforms, the survey targets primarily players of *WoW* and *WildStar*, but not exclusively because some of the online forums are likely frequented by players of other MMORPGs. This has obvious advantages and disadvantages. Since the terms selected for the survey are all taken from *WoW* and *WildStar*, there may be terms that are game-specific, and will therefore not be understood by players who are unfamiliar with those games. On the other hand, if some terms are used by players of other games, this can provide insight into the prevalence of use of certain terms that may transcend the two games under study here. Furthermore, since these fill-in-the-blank questions are designed with specific responses in mind, it is possible that players of other video games may offer unexpected responses that apply to

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[60] This MMORPG, while not one of the games studies in this research, had the link to the survey cross-posted onto its forum by a community manager, likely because the game's developer is the same as *WildStar* (NCsoft). As a result, some respondents were primarily *Blade and Soul* players.

[61] The webpages on which these surveys were posted have been removed. This is because moderators tend to remove threads that are unused for several months after the latest post. Furthermore, these forums typically discourage the dissemination of online surveys that are not posted by the official moderators. As such, some of the threads were locked (i.e., forum members could not respond) within days or hours of the survey being posted, rather than being deleted immediately, but eventually they were also removed from the forums due to lack of activity.

other games, thereby providing additional information about how gamers use language in other game contexts. In Chapter 7, these and other survey results are analysed and contrasted to the other data sets to identify trends among users and to expand on the discussion regarding the use of gamer-speak by French players.

The initial target was to recruit 300 respondents. This was decided based on a previous study (Strong 2011), wherein I recruited 100 respondents in less than a month with a smaller pool of respondents, since I was only researching one game and recruiting via one official forum. For this study, the survey was posted on the above-mentioned forums for 31 days; from the 17th of June 2016 until the 18th of July 2016. The final respondent count was 326; however 29 of those were under 18, and were therefore not included in the final sample, which totalled 297 respondents. Respondents who responded multiple times to a single question had their first response counted, and their second response ignored. The survey report is included in full in French in Appendix 6, and can be found online in English in the pilot version (https://eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_9mhKxVJ4SeRzt41?Q_CHL=preview) and in French in its final version (https://eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_8elZbkayqwsQrTn?Q_CHL=preview).

Chapter 5   Analysis of gamer-speak

In this chapter, I apply the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3 using the methods described in Chapter 4 to analyse the corpus of written and spoken gamer exchanges. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first (5.1) discussing findings pertaining to *WoW*, and the second (5.2) discussing findings pertaining to *WildStar*. Each of these sections begins with a presentation of some of the relevant mechanisms in place that affect language consumption and production in these games. Following this, the chapter presents an analysis of examples first from the corpus of written player exchanges (only in the case of *WoW*), and second from the recorded voice chat samples (for both the section on *WoW* and the section on *WildStar*).

5.1   *World of Warcraft*

Players in *WoW* converse primarily with typed and spoken communications. In addition, players may use emotes and other virtual body language, such as jumping in place or running in circles to show they are at their keyboard. Since my focus is on gamer-speak, I discuss emotes and virtual body language only where they influence the spoken or written channels.

The data analysed in this section comprise written and spoken exchanges among French players of *WoW*. These were collected in order to describe gamer-generated language and to determine if, as hypothesised, French gamers appropriate and create language during gameplay for the purpose of obtaining practical advantages in-game and/or to increase their status in the virtual social structure. While written and spoken conversations can take place simultaneously, I analyse them separately and in different settings. The combined effect of communicating via different modes simultaneously has potential for future study (see section 8.4). In both the written and spoken modes, the additional agency that gamers have regarding their game experience invites gamers to modify, create, and appropriate new text that can be based on standard French, the localised in-game text, English gamer-speak, or the original English game text.

Section 5.1.1 is an examination of a corpus of typed text chats that players created during gameplay. Section 5.1.2 is an analysis of voice-chat exchanges that players produced during gameplay via a third party platform (Mumble® in *WoW* and TeamSpeak® in *WildStar*).

5.1.1 *World of Warcraft* in-game text chat

Table 8 includes a breakdown of the relevant gamer-speak statistics found in the data collected from the *WoW* general chat channel:

Total word count	9,032
Total number of gamer-speak terms used	Token count: 1,630 (18.05% of total word count) Type count: 165
Total recorded utterances[62]	753
Utterances containing gamer-speak	501 (66.53% of total utterances)

Table 8: *WoW* in-game written chat gamer-speak statistical breakdown

Table 8 shows that in this data sample: (1) over two thirds of player statements in the general chat channel contain gamer-speak; (2) each of these utterances containing gamer-speak includes an average 3.23 gamer-speak terms (as shown by dividing "Total Number of Gamer-Speak Terms Used" by "Utterances Containing Gamer-Speak"); (3) nearly one in five out of all words typed in the general chat channels is a gamer-speak term; and (4) the variety of gamer-speak terms is low, with only 165 types (distinct terms; as opposed to tokens, or the overall count of gamer-speak terms, whether repeated or distinct). The high frequency with which gamer-speak is used in written player communications is significant, since gamers are likely to come into contact with this language as soon as they enter one of the major cities. Therefore, gamer-speak forms an important part of the gaming experience in *WoW.*

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[62] I consider each time a player hits a "return" key, and therefore publishes their statement into the general channel, as a single utterance.

Table 9 shows the distribution of gamer-speak categories as they occurred in the in-game text chat:

Category	Example	Standard equivalent	Number of terms (tokens) found in the sample
Shortenings	*CaC*	*Corps à corps* (melee)	1,069
Loans	*Roster*	*Répertoire*	505
Shifts	*Distance*	*Classes à dégâts à distance* (Ranged classes)	20
New creations	*Hor2*	*Hordeux* (Horde)	20
Blends	*Brez*	*Résurrection en combat* [Battle rez]	15
Composites	*Raid lead*	*Chef de raid* (Raid lead)	1
Total			**1,630**

Table 9: Gamer-speak categories and written sample data

Worth noting from Table 9 is that roughly one in three gamer-speak terms is an Anglicism (since all loan words found in the corpus are taken from English), and nearly two thirds are shortenings. This is notable for two main reasons: first, the proportion of Anglicism use shows, on the one hand, that gamer-speak borrows heavily from English, and on the other hand, that those who disparage the use of gamer-speak in the in-game text as just Anglicism (see Figure 8) are only partly correct. However, the data in Table 9 are not entirely representative of whether terms are derived from French rather than English. For example, *AH* refers to the in-game trading system "Auction House" which is *Hôtel des ventes* in the French localised version. Because of the way the categorisation has been applied, this term has been categorised as a shortening despite also being a loan. This table could also be broken down to include this information, where loans overlap with other categories:

Category	Example	Standard equivalent	Number of terms (tokens) found in the sample
Shortenings	*CaC*	*Corps à corps* (Melee)	466
Shortening + Loan	*WTS*	*Je cherche à vendre* (Want to Sell)	667
Loans	*Roster*	*Répertoire*	441
Shifts	*Distance*	*Classes à dégâts à distance* (Ranged classes)	20
New creations	*Hor2*	*Hordeux* (Horde)	20
Blend + Loan	*Brez*	*Résurrection en combat* [Battle rez]	15
Composites + Loan	*Raid lead*	*Chef de raid* (Raid lead)	1

Table 10: Gamer-speak categories and *WoW* written sample data – combination of categories

These examples show that the formation of gamer-speak terms that undergo multiple linguistic modifications complicates their categorisation. This difficulty in categorisation is evidence of the "primariness" of this system according to Even-Zohar (1979: 304), since "overalppings" between the primary and secondary systems take place, and by extension, the non-standard linguistic formations overlap in their categorisation in primary systems. It also shows that the frequency of use of Anglicisms and shortenings in gamer-speak is extremely high, as together they account for approximately 98% of gamer-speak terms in the written data sample, and that some gamer-speak terms could be considered both a shortening and an Anglicism (667; 41%).

The following qualitative analysis severs to provide insight into the possible motivations for gamer-speak usage which are not evident from a quantitative analysis. As will be illustrated below, the analysis of gamers' discourse has revealed that: (a) the gamer-speak used in the general channel supports the type of communication taking place (recruitment, commerce, social chat); (b) the medium in which it takes place is characterised by shorter forms for fewer keystrokes when typing; and (c) the social function of gamer-speak is to signal the in-group code by using terms that are encoded through shortenings and game-specific Anglicisms.

The following example in Table 11 illustrates the preference for shorter forms of communication, demonstrating economy of language, and highlights the social stratification created by the hypersalient group identity:

Example	Explanation in English
[Player]: **disci** dispo[63] **v2 cap**	"I am a **Discipline Priest** who is available for **two-versus-two** arena matches until we reach the **weekly maximum** points".

Table 11: Gamer-speak in written chat exchanges – economy of language when recruiting for PvP

Since the player is recruiting for PvP combat (their stating "*v2*" means they are recruiting for two-versus-two Arena battles), they make their role and specialisation (*disci* [discipline priest]) known. Their role will determine the viability of the partnership responses that their request will elicit. Fully 25% of this four-word utterance is devoted to declaring the player's role and specialisation. In addition, the player states they are seeking a partner for two-player team play for PvP combat (*v2*) until the weekly points cap (*cap*) is reached. This is the natural progression of such a request: first an assertion of what the player offers for a partnership, followed by the type of activity the player is looking for. Since the player uses the general channel to recruit a partner, their advert is visible to all players in the same zone. Therefore, both experienced and inexperienced players have access to the message. As a result, the encoding of the message achieved through the use of gamer-speak excludes the less-experienced players, and signals the player's own identity as a more-experienced player.

In fact, the identity of the player is determined here on two levels. First, the role and class are determining factors in this identity creation, since the player's avatar's identity is determined by this role, and any future partnerships with players will be influenced by this identity. Second, the use of gamer-speak and shortenings in general in this utterance identifies the player as an experienced gamer. This is because, first, they are familiar enough with the game to feel comfortable shortening their character specialisation (discipline). They assume that, since this specialisation is specific to their character class (priest), other players will know that this means they are a "discipline priest". Second, the statement that the player is seeking to take part in two-versus-two matches until they have reached their

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[63] In this example, "dispo", short for *disponible* (available) has not been included as a gamer-speak term since it can be found in colloquial exchanges in French outside gaming, and does not originate from in-game communication.

maximum points for the week indicates that this is something of a routine.[64] This understood level of experience, or professionalism, is an integral aspect of the hypersalient group identity. This is particularly relevant in this example, since part of the draw for other players to want to partner with the player in Table 11 is based on the increased likelihood of success of partnering with a more-experienced player. Similarly, encoding their message with gamer-speak increases the chances that only players who possess the in-group repertoire (and therefore are familiar with the systems of game mechanics) will respond to their request, increasing the likelihood of an experienced partner.

The resulting relationships created between the advertiser and the audience are therefore of interest. Because of the parameters of the gameplay outlined in this statement, the player places specific boundaries on the relationships they are trying to create with their partner recruitment. First, the proposal of two-versus-two combat limits the party size to one additional member. Second, since the player's class and specialisation dictate that they are a 'healing' class, it would be understood that they are looking for a complimentary class and specialisation as a partner. For example, another healer class would be an unlikely partner, since a more diverse offer of roles within a team is more likely to produce desirable outcomes. Finally, because of the identity that the player has projected as someone who is seeking to target accumulation of points, it is likely that they are suggesting that they are looking for someone of equal skill and experience level, or at least with enough time, to continue to play two-versus-two matches until the points cap is reached. This is supported not only by the specification that they are seeking to continue until they reach the maximum points level, but also by the use of gamer-speak, which will require the text recipients to have a certain understanding of the game mechanics to which they refer, as well as some of the basic forms that can be used to describe them.

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[64] Since there is a weekly limit on how many of this sort of points can be obtained (whether they be honour points, gained from PvP content, or justice points, gained from PvE content), and since the player states that their proposed PvP partnership goal is for the accumulation of weekly points (rather than, say, trying out a character class in PvP for the first time or trying out some new tactics or simply for casual fun), we are led to believe that the player has done this before and that the gameplay activity here is somewhat routine.

The ways these forms and mechanics are re-appropriated are also of interest. Here, the gamer-speak terms '*disci*' and '*v2*' and the non-game-specific slang term '*dispo*' are all shorter forms derived from standard equivalents (and not from the English version or English gamer-speak): '*prêtre discipline*', '*deux versus deux*' and '*disponible*', respectively. This tendency for shorter linguistic forms contributes to the encoding of the language, but also could be a result of the typed chat medium, since fewer keystrokes make for easier and faster text production. In this way, shorter gamer-speak terms in the written chat may contribute a practical advantage in addition to supporting the social stratification of the gamer community. Therefore, gamer-speak in the example in Table 11 supports the assertion that gamer-speak contributes to the hypersalient group identity and has practical advantages when typed. It is also worth noting that the linguistic forms in this example borrow from the in-game text as well as from the outside world.

By using gamer-speak instead of standard French, players endorse it as part of a system of communication and reinforce the social stratification it engenders. Gamer-speak thus works in contra to the conservative repertoire and performs functions that are not completely fulfilled by the lexis available in the localised game text, which tends to favour standard French lexical renderings (Chapter 6). In addition to subverting the dominant discourse perpetuated by the use of standard lexis in the localised text, this also adds to the ludology v. narratology discussion. Whereas the use of language that is in keeping with the game universe may be preferred in the localised text, gamer communications like the one seen in Table 11 favour gamer-speak, which necessarily departs from that universe and brings the gaming context into the 'real world'. Therefore, there may be different types of text production and consumption within MMORPGs where the narrative is more important, and others where the gameplay is more important. This, and subsequent examples found in this chapter, and Chapter 6, are used to argue this point further.

Whereas the previous example of gamer-speak was based on the French localised version, Table 12 illustrates some examples of alternative formulations of similar messages found in the written chat:

Example	Explanation in English
[Player]: **war need heal** pour **v2**	Player uses the English alternatives for three terms: "war" for "warrior" in place of *guerrier*, "need" in place of *besoin* and "heal" in place of *soigneur*.
[Player]: **hpal lf v2** pts	Player states their class using a gamer-speak shortening: "hpal" where the "h" indicates "holy" or "heal", and the "pal" is short for the "paladin" class. Here, rather than stating they are available, the player uses the initialism "lf" which stands for "looking for". Also, the abbreviation "pts" is used for "points" instead of "cap" (the meaning, however, is the same).
[Player]: **Lock LF Heal / Feral** points	Player uses an English abbreviation for their character class: "Lock" for "Warlock". In this example, the "LF" initialism appears again, as does the reference to points, the latter written out rather than abbreviated. The player is looking for either a healer role or a specific damage dealer specialisation: a "feral druid".
[Player]: **rogue** dispo **v2**	Player uses the English name for their character class: "Rogue" instead of *Voleur*.
[Player]: **Feral** 2.6xp **lf 3s** 2.3 **cr**	Player uses their character specialisation "Feral", of the "Druid" class (here not mentioned). Here, to underline their experience they state their level of competitive PvP arena experience (2.6 rating) and that they are looking to join or create a team capable of 2.3 rating (*cr* standing for *côte requis*). Further, they are looking for the three-versus-three matches (3s).
[Player]: **sp** 718 **need mate** meme **ilvl** pour point	Player uses the English abbreviation for their class and specialisation (*sp* for "shadow priest"). Rather than stating that they are looking for a *v2*, the player uses the term *mate* to indicate they are looking for a singular partner. Furthermore, they state they want a player with the same quality of equipment (*meme ilvl* or *niveau d'objet* ("of the same item level")).

[Player]: **Dp**[65] ou **Sp 689i seek v2**	Player states they can participate in *v2* as either a discipline priest (*Dp*) or shadow priest (*Sp*). They also state their own item level outright (689i), with the understanding that they are looking for a partner of similar level. Finally, rather than *need* or *lf* the player opts for *seek*.

Table 12: Gamer-speak in written chat exchanges – use of Anglicisms when recruiting for PvP

These statements are all similar requests to that of Table 11: players are looking to complete a team of similar-level players to engage in PvP combat to complete the weekly points cap. In doing so, players use gamer-speak for their character class and specialisation (*War*, *Hpal*, *Rogue*, *Dp*, *Sp*), in stating their item level or target rating level (*689i*, *ilvl*, 2.*3 cr*) and in their expression of what they are searching for (*need* / *need mate*, *lf*, *seek*, *mate*, *v2*, *3s*).

The tendencies here shown in players recruiting for PvP combat are similar to those recruiting for PvE. Table 13 is an example of one such message:

Corpus Example	Explanation in English
[Player]: **Up** groupe gorfiend **hm**, 705+ /w me	"**I am available for / I am forming a group that is going to attempt** the boss named "Gorefiend" in **Heroic Mode**. Group members should be equipped with gear of the item level 705 or higher. **Send me a private message** for more information".

Table 13: Gamer-speak in written chat exchanges – recruiting for PvE

While this example has much in common with Table 11, the player makes use of some notably different gamer-speak terms. The significant message is that the player wishes to take part in a raid fight against a specific boss at a specific difficulty. Following this statement, the player requests that other interested players get in touch directly via private message. The specificity of the activity and the requested level of equipment that players ought to have for this content is important

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[65] It is worth noting that the use of '*DP*' in this case might be related to Anglicism, but could also be because the acronym based on the standard French form, '*PD*' is already used as an offensive term.

to this request. As a result, the difficulty of the content, the potential rewards, and the preferred assumed level of experience requested of potential team members (since this specific minimum item level request indicates players have experience with "heroic" level content) are all significant components of subtext in the player's utterance.

While the player here is primarily looking to complete a group for gameplay, it is worth noting that the specific activity that would follow this, should the player be successful in finding a group, would be higher-level PvE content. Typically, this level of gameplay requires a great deal of group coordination, between 10 and 30 players, practice with the mechanics of all boss encounters in the proposed content, and an in-depth knowledge of one's own class and specialisation (and frequently those of the other team members). Due to the high demands on experience and equipment for this level of content, priority is given to experienced PvE players with good equipment, a strong sense of how to play their class and specialisation, and a complete knowledge of the encounter proposed. In addition, since the player requests a specific item level cut-off they might associate that item level with an approximation of game experience. At the very least, the player is showing that they believe that other players with at least 705 item level are sufficiently equipped for likely success in the proposed boss fight. However, this sort of advertising also comes with an understanding that the player proposing such content is also of the same level. Typically, if a player wishes to enlist the abilities of a higher level, better-equipped, or more experienced gamer they will identify that the requested player is to be carrying the group through the content. This is frequently identified as a *PL* (in English: "power-level" or "PL"), or a *boost* (in English: "boost").

Following a stark statement of the requested item level for their group, the player establishes their own experience and equipment level as being of equal pegging. This creates a relationship between the player and equally high-level gamers who are familiar with PvE content and interested in attempting this specific boss encounter. The use of gamer-speak supports this analysis in that, as with the example in Table 11, it will necessarily exclude players who do not understand the message. The use of the "/w me" construction, a wholesale loan composed of English gamer-speak (/w) and an Anglicism (me), reinforces this interpretation

further. Players in the sample used varied forms to instruct players to contact them privately, with *message privé* for "private message" being the standard French equivalent for this request, which is also included in the localised version of *WoW*. However, in this case, the player refers to the in-game keyboard shortcut used to change the text box to private chat mode, using a slash to signal an in-game command (/w). Once this command is entered, typing the player's name will allow any subsequent text to be received only by that player. Hence, any player who successfully contacts the player advertising here will necessarily have to have a basic knowledge of this shortcut in the chat programme.

Opting for the */w me* construction, instead of *me mp*, *mp moi*, *wisp / wispé - moi* could indicate: (1) that the player values concision in their communications in the chat platform; and/or (2) that the player associates the use of gamer-speak with players who are of the desired level of experience they are seeking. As some alternatives, *(me mp)* require the same number of keystrokes, perhaps this player equates higher levels of experience with understanding and accepting of gamer-speak. In this way, a higher value might be placed on such gamer-speak language as part of the social hierarchy evident from the example. Conversely, a player who uses more standard French is not automatically less experienced. This distinction is more important during voice-chat raid coordination, as seen in sections 5.1.2 and 5.2.1.

It is apparent that, in this example, the player seems to relate a higher item level to better viability as a partner. Typically, those who have a higher item level have more game experience. Therefore, more game experience is also a desirable trait in a potential partner. Here, the player relates item level, and therefore game experience, with the viability of the player's proposed group for the content s/he wants to attempt. The unmediated statement of the required minimum item level to join their group is direct and non-negotiable, whereas other recruiters sometimes state these sorts of parameters as preference rather than requirement by saying *de pref.* or "preferably". Also, the player connects this level of experience, or at least this level of equipment, with their own. Finally, and central to the present study, the player relates their use of language with their chances of successfully recruiting for their desired outcome. This may be because of concision, the understood status of

gamer-speak, or other reasons. However, the player is showing an understood connection between gamer-speak and recruitment of players believed to be of their same level, and therefore desirable teammates.

In this and in previous examples from the written chat, players display an underlying tendency to advertise their level of experience and seek other players of a similar level. While this is pertinent to exchanges where players are recruiting team members, when players are conducting commerce, the social component of their language is somewhat different. This is because the exclusiveness that benefits recruitment by limiting it to experienced gamers leads to a smaller potential buyer base when conducting commerce. Table 14 is an example of a player advertising for commerce purposes:

Example	Explanation in English
[Player]: vend toutes **popo** flacon en mass **wispé** moi **bdg** a vidé !	"I am selling all types of **potions** and flasks in large quantities. **Send me a private message**. I have a **guild bank** to empty!"

Table 14: Gamer-speak in written chat exchanges – use of the in-group code when advertising for commerce purposes

The player first makes clear their position as seller in the exchange, although they omit the pronoun *je* and they incorrectly conjugate the first-person singular of the verb *vendre* (it should be *je vends*). They subsequently refer to the items they are selling and the quantity of these items. The latter is both stated explicitly, and reinforced by the player saying that they are emptying a guild bank.[66] The game mechanic, and the interaction that results from it, is the sale of consumable items. Further, as with the example in Table 13, the practice of sending private messages is highlighted as the preferred method of communication, yet it is formulated differently here as *wispé moi*. Here again, the spelling is arguably incorrect, since presumably the player's intention is to use the imperative (*wispez-moi*), which would sound the same when spoken but would be conjugated differently. In addition, the player refers to the common practice that guilds (particularly those

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[66] This is an indicator of the quantity of items because the guild bank is a repository that large groups of players will use to store these consumables to later be distributed among members for raiding.

who focus on large-group content) have large stockpiles of consumables. Again, there are arguably two spelling errors in *bdg a vidé*, which should read *bdg **à vider***.[67]

Here the communication is relevant to the hypersalient group identity because the player must be an administrator of their guild. This is because typically only the 'guild master' or 'guild officers' will have access to the consumables in the guild bank. This is a tendency that varies from guild to guild, but it is uncommon that non-officer guild members will have authorisation to withdraw consumables that the guild has stockpiled. Another occurrence in MMORPGs is that players have their account details stolen, or "hacked", and these hackers, if they have access to a guild bank will sell everything they have access to and send the proceeds to their own character. However, it is unlikely that, if the player had illicitly accessed the guild bank, they would be advertising the sale of goods in the general channels. At first reading, the use of gamer-speak in commerce seems like it might exclude a subset of potential buyers, since less-experienced players would be unable to fully understand the proposed transaction. However, since this exchange is a sale of a high volume of goods typically used for high-level PvE content, it follows that the largest pool of potential buyers will be experienced players who will be familiar with gamer-speak.

Although it could limit the number of potential buyers, using gamer-speak for the mass sale of consumables has two primary advantages for the player: (1) the concision allows for the information transfer to be efficient and coherent, since the potential pool of buyers is assumed to be PvE-experienced players, and (2) the player underlines their legitimacy as a vendor by overtly stating their intention to empty the guild bank (since an illicit hacker emptying a guild bank might not be so forthcoming with this information). These two points in combination are arguably essential to a successful sale: the pace at which items can be sold is very quick – if there is a limited stock the first and fastest person to send the legitimate seller a message may buyout the entire supply. As a result, minimal text is advantageous to the seller here, as is the reminder to the players that they have plenty to sell, and

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[67] It is conceivable that the player intended this spelling and meant "The guild bank has emptied, and I now have these for sale". However, based on the previous similar spelling mistake, and the likelihood that they are trying to empty their stock, I believe the case is stronger for my interpretation.

therefore nobody should hesitate to show interest, no matter when they might see the message. Therefore, the player reinforces their underlying relationship of a seller with a significant stock and leverages their ability to advertise their goods through the use of the in-group code.

Here, by limiting their buyer base on the assumption that the target audience will understand gamer-speak, the player has leveraged the potential exclusive properties of the in-group code based on the shared repertoires of players who are experienced in PvE and those who would be potentially interested in buying large volumes of consumables.

Given the use of gamer-speak here, the language shows a player who uses shortenings (*bdg* for *banque de guilde*), Anglicisms (*wispé* from wisp instead of *message privé*), and gamer-speak that can be considered new creations in French (*popo* for *potion*). The player also shows some lapses in knowledge (or at least usage) of standard French conjugations (*je vend*, *wispé*, *vidé*). Alternatively, these non-standard forms may be a characteristic of gamer-speak (shorter) rather than a lapse of knowledge. The player thus shows both a developed knowledge of gamer-speak terms in a relatively short utterance, and a tendency to be lax with their spelling of standard French, where *é* and the *er* endings are used interchangeably: technically incorrectly, despite being homonyms in French. Therefore, the conveyance of the message privileges the efficiency and economy of language over correctness and strict following of standard French grammar conventions.

In the previous example gamer-speak is used to the same effect but for different reasons. In all examples thus far, the principles of inclusion and exclusion are leveraged to the players' advantage. In the recruitment examples, this was to prevent being grouped with less-experienced players, and in the commerce example this was to filter out groups of players who are less-likely to be interested in the player's goods. Since all of these messages involve including players who are familiar with gamer-speak and excluding players who are not, the dominant discourse in this data set privileges those who can effectively use and understand this sign system. The player exchange in Table 15 exemplifies this status of gamer-speak and the uninitiated gamer:

Example	Explanation in English
[Player 1]: c'est quoi attaque perdisieuse?	[Player1]: what is "Simister strike?"
[Player 2]: Pernicieuse peut étre ?	[Player 2]: Do you mean "Sinister" maybe?
[Player 1]: oui	[Player 1]: yes
[Player 3]: nouvelle vague de **player**	[Player 3]: new wave of **gamerz**
[Player 2]: Un **spell** de **rogue** , merci de rien :D	[Player 2]: A **rogue spell**, thank you you're welcome :D
[Player1]: **spell**?	[Player1]: **spell**?
[Player 3]: [Attaque pernicieuse]	[Player 3]: [Sinister strike]

Table 15: Gamer-speak in written chat exchange – inclusion, exclusion and players helping players

In this exchange, players make use of gamer-speak, as well as of in-game systems that facilitate written communication in interesting ways. First, Player 1 is seeking information about a specific skill: the rogue ability called "sinister strike". In doing so, the player is identifying themselves as a less-experienced player, since this is a basic ability that is frequently used by rogues, and even if the player does not play as a rogue, with more experience it is likely that they would have heard of this ability. Player two is first trying to clarify the spelling mistake in Player 1's utterance, and subsequently answering the question: it is a rogue ability. Player 3 makes a point of exposing Player 1 as an inexperienced player (also using the anglicised gamer-speak *player* instead of *joueur*), in the first utterance by stating this observation, and in the second utterance by making use of the game's system of "linking" abilities and other in-game tooltips in the chat programme.[68] In this way, Player 3 has unambiguously explained what the ability is to answer the player's question, and made clear that they have the answers, but also that they know an in-game system that can be used to access this information.

Since the discussion is around basic gameplay – one player asking for information on basic character abilities – it can be thought of as player-to-player help. Since Player 1 does not know this basic rogue ability, it is possible that they have never played as a rogue, and/or that they have not played *WoW* for very long.

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[68] By pressing "Shift" and right-clicking an in-game ability, that ability is placed as a hyperlink in the chat, and other players can click on the link to read the ability description and tooltip.

Player 3 uses the in-game system of linking player abilities in an inclusive way, contrary to gamer-speak, enabling Player 1 to have clear, unambiguous, un-coded explanation in the chat channel.

In this way, Player 1 is provided with the information they need after asking in the general channels for advice on basic gaming concepts. In so asking, they are identifying themselves as an uninitiated player, at least to the subset of game mechanics specific to rogues, and perhaps to the broader concepts in *WoW*. This self-identification may be an unintended by-product of their trying to learn the answer to their question, or it may be an intentional way to ask for help from other players. If they were perceived to be asking without actually needing a response, they would be poorly seen in the gaming community. A player who is in the know about game concepts, but asks about basic questions is sometimes seen as someone who goads other players into responding. These players, also known as "trolls", are one type of unappreciated personalities that can be found in the general chat channel. The subsequent negotiation of the first response is interesting because it leaves Player 1 still uncertain about the answer due to gamer-speak. This shows that the use of Anglicism by Player 2 ("spell") can exclude less-experienced members of the gaming community. Subsequently, Player 3 shows their own display of experience, but does so in a way that is also accessible to Player 1.

This dialogue places an importance on the relationship between the less- and the more experienced players. In this example, the former is asking for help from the latter. As a result, these relationships are established by the act of the request itself, but also reinforced by the language used by each side: Player 1 asks their question using standard French (and also, incidentally misspells the name of the ability, potentially further accentuating their lack of knowledge, or at least their inattention in typing), and Players 2 and 3 use gamer-speak. In fact, as a secondary request, Player 1 asks for an explanation of what Player 2 means when they use the gamer-speak term *spell*. Therefore Player 1 uses the relationship to extract the information they are seeking, and Players 2 and 3 use the relationship to (1) provide help for a fellow player, and (2) publicly display their experience on the general chat channel. This latter interpretation is reinforced by the flourishes that both more experienced players make: Player 2 saying *merci, de rien :D* and Player 3 saying

Nouvelle vague de player. Finally, Players 2 and 3 are highlighting the stratification between experienced players through their use of gamer-speak, thus reinforcing the hypersalient group identity supported by the in-group code. Furthermore, these players make use of both exclusive and inclusive systems to display their experience – first through gamer-speak, and later through the in-game mechanics system of linking character abilities. Their use of language sets them apart from Player 1, as shown by Player 1's lack of understanding.

Based on these excerpts from in-game written player communication, the data sampled from the general chat channel provide information on how players recruit for group content in both PvE and PvP, how players conduct commerce, and how players exchange game-related information. While they use this chat channel for other purposes, such as recruitment for new guild members and social chatting, the examples in this section show the importance of gamer-speak. Gamer-speak is used in these examples to reinforce the social structures created by gamers: to situate gamers within the in-game social hierarchy, assert gamer legitimacy in the gaming community, and to exhibit their knowledge of game mechanics. Although the purpose of the chat analysed in the next section is decidedly different, as are the activities taking place, gamer-speak is still used to a significant extent.

The examples discussed in this section have been centred on Anglicisms and shortenings. While these examples have been found to be the most pertinent to this study, there are noteworthy examples from other categories (such as new creations, 87% of which were found exclusively in the written channel) that could contribute to further study of written gamer-speak. The next section moves from the written mode to the spoken mode in the analysis of gamer exchanges taking place over a voice-chat platform during raids.

5.1.2   *World of Warcraft* voice chat

Table 16 is a breakdown of the relevant gamer-speak statistics found in this sample:

Total time of recorded conversations	356 minutes
Total number of gamer-speak terms used	1,008

Total recorded utterances	1,494
Utterances containing gamer-speak	552 (36.95% of total utterances)

Table 16: *WoW* in-game voice chat gamer-speak statistical breakdown

This sample is interesting regarding gamer-speak usage, not only because of the frequency but also the amount of gamer-speak. More than one third of the utterances (37%) contained gamer-speak, the majority containing more than one gamer-speak term (about 1.8 gamer-speak terms per utterance on average). This is in part because many frequently-repeated utterances used to coordinate gameplay that use gamer-speak contain a simple subject-verb pair, with both terms being gamer-speak (for example, '*go pull*' or '*taunt boss*').

The categorisation of gamer-speak terms found in the voice chat sample is also interesting. This is demonstrated in Table 17:

Category	Example	Standard equivalent	Number of terms (tokens) found in the sample
Loan	*Kick*	*Coup de pied* (Kick)	550
Shortening	*Déz / dés*	*Désenchanter / désenchanteur* (Dis-enchanter)	399
Shifts	*Carpette*[69]	*Mort* (Dead)	36
Composites	*Monocible*	*Ciblage individuel* (Single-target)	12
Blends	*Brez*	*Résurrection en combat* (Battle res)	10
New creations	*Flood*	"Spam"	1
Total			**1,008**

Table 17: Gamer-speak categories and *WoW* voice chat sample data

Overall, these counts reflect the way gamer-speak is used during raid coordination. Gamers use these terms to coordinate gameplay and negotiate complex and fast-paced game mechanics. Surprisingly in this regard, Anglicisms were found more frequently than shortenings (again, all examples of loans come from English). While some Anglicisms are nonetheless typically shorter than French when spoken

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[69] The inclusion of *carpette* as gamer-speak is arguable, since it has been used in this way in broader slang, however because it is attached to other gamer-speak (e.g., *je suis spé carpette*, to mean "my specialty is dying frequently") it has been included as gamer-speak in this analysis.

(kick vs *coup de pied*), some are not (trinket vs *bijou*). Increased concision, therefore, while frequently an inherent feature of game-speak in the spoken chat data found here, is not always provided by Anglicised terms. In line with this thinking, shortenings are also highly prevalent (39.58% of all gamer-speak terms). The use of shortenings typically equips players with concise terms that enable gameplay coordination where speed is paramount in successful raid organisation. This discussion is further nuanced when we consider the overlapping categorisations based on Algeo's (1999) classification:

Category	Example	Standard equivalent	Number of terms (tokens) found in the sample
Loan	*Kick*	*Coup de pied* (Kick)	533
Loan + Shortening	*Chan*	*Canal* (Channel)	17
Shortening	*Déz / dés*	*Désenchanter / désenchanteur* (Dis-enchanter)	249
Shortening + Loan	*ML*	*Maître de butin* (Master loot)	150
Shifts	*Carpette*	*Mort* (Dead)	36
Composites	*Monocible*	*Ciblage individuel* (Single-target)	2
Composite + Loan	*Raid Off*	*Raid annulé* (Raid Off)	10
Blends	*Chamélio*	*Chamane spécialisé amélioration* (Enhancement Shaman)	6
Blend + Loan	*Brez*	*Résurrection en combat* (Battle res)	4
New creations	*Flood*	"Spam"	1

Table 18: Gamer-speak categories and *WoW* voice chat sample data – combination of categories

Of primary interest here is that nearly 40% of terms classified as shortenings are also Anglicisms, and over 80% in the case of composites, therefore showing an even more widespread influence of English on gamer-speak. Beyond the frequency and categorisation of gamer-speak, individual examples from the voice-chat warrant closer analysis to explain how it is used in the coordination of group

gameplay. Relevant examples are discussed below, considering the corresponding virtual events taking place at the time of the speech act in the example, the French gamer-speak terms used, and the relevance for MMORPG localisers. The qualitative analysis has once again shown that concision and underscoring the hypersalient group identity are central features of gamer-speak used in this section. As shown below, gamer-speak is used in the voice chat during raids to coordinate tactics, discuss loot distribution and speculate on character optimisation. To this end, gamers use gamer-speak to deliver concise orders, and assert their experience with game mechanics. Throughout this sample, the respondent labelled "Player 1" is the Raid leader. Gamer-speak terms have been highlighted in bold in the data transcriptions and explanations.

The first example here in Table 19 shows instructions being given regarding placement of raid members before starting a major encounter. This example is relevant to the discussion on gamer-speak because it contains an instance of a shift (*distances*), a less-frequent gamer-speak category, and because both gamer-speak terms are derived from standard French and not from English:

Example	Explanation in English
Player 1 : Les **distances** quand vous aurez la bombe ça sera plutôt coté croix…	Player 1: **Ranged**, when you have the bomb go rather to cross…
Player 1 : Et les **CaCs** ça sera plutôt coté carré, hein…	Player 1: And **melee** rather to square, eh…

Table 19: *WoW* **in-game voice chat example – raid positioning**

This example shows the raid leader describing to the rest of the raid how the positioning will be during a specific encounter mechanic. This instruction takes place before the actual fight has begun, to prepare the raid's strategy before the encounter. In a raid group, the damage dealing roles can be divided into "ranged" and "melee". Each of these types deals damage, but the former does so from a distance with bows-and-arrows or magic, and the latter in close quarters, with swords, spears axes, hammers, daggers, or bare hands. For many boss fights, raid positioning is essential to overcoming some of the more challenging mechanics. To facilitate these positioning requirements, *WoW* has an integrated game system that

allows players to place icons on the in-game environment so that they can group in different areas. An example of this is shown in Figure 25:

Figure 25: *WoW* positioning icons[70]

In this image, we can see an example of the red "cross" (second from the left) and the blue "square" (furthest to the right) to which the raid leader refers.[71] The raid leader refers to these markers when directing the melee characters to go to the square and the ranged characters to go to the cross should they be affected by the "bomb" mechanic from the boss encounter.

The use of gamer-speak here is pertinent to the French linguistic system. There is one example used to describe each of the two types of damage dealing, or "DPS" classes: Ranged / *distance* and Melee / *CaC*. Before discussing the use of the two terms used to this end (*distances* and *CaC*), it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the term DPS, as it is somewhat complex. DPS is an English acronym that stands for "Damage per second". This acronym was originally a statistic used in weapon tooltips to indicate how much damage throughput an item would provide.

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[70] Source: http://tostarcraft2models.blogspot.com.es/2015/01/best-wow-addons-for-healers.html

[71] While this is not the same encounter that is taking place during the audio recording, these are the same icons used for positioning in raid encounters.

However, it has since become widely used as a statistic attributed to individuals or raid groups as an indication of their performance. In addition, it can be used to identify a player role. The "holy trinity" of MMORPG roles are usually referred to as "tank", "healer" and "DPS".[72] This term is therefore an example of a shift when used in English, as it can refer to the damage per second statistic on a weapon, damage in general, and the damage-dealer role in MMORPGs. When it is used for the latter, English gamers often refer to Ranged DPS and Melee DPS. In French, Ranged DPS, referred to in the localised text as *dégâts à distance*, are named in different ways by gamers. In the present corpus, *distance* or *DPS distance* are the most prevalent choices; however, also used are *range* and *casters* or the French *casteurs*[73]. In the previous example, the raid leader has used *distances* to describe Ranged DPS players. It is considered that the term *distances* is derived from the description of ranged damage in the localised French text *dégâts à distance*. Based on this term, French gamers have created the name for a role of damage dealers from the defining characteristic of the type of damage they deal, as it pertains to raid encounters. Therefore, a functional shift (Ensslin 2012: 70) has taken place here, probably because their role in terms of melee vs. ranged is more important to raid mechanics than whether, for example, they deal magic damage or physical damage. This nuance might be specific to *WoW*, since other games (such as the *FINAL FANTASY* series) place more emphasis on the school of magic (e.g., enemies in *FINAL FANTASY* are often more vulnerable to a specific elemental school; either fire, water, earth, ice, air). Nonetheless, it is evident from this instruction that the central defining characteristic that pertains to raid positioning is whether the character deals ranged or melee DPS.

The derivation for the term used in the previous example for melee DPS characters is equally interesting. Whereas the localised in-game text uses *dégâts de mêlée* to describe melee damage, in this case the raid leader uses *CaC*, which is a shortening (acronym) of *corps-à-corps* (hand-to-hand). Given that *mêlée* is not only

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[72] This has been shown in the present corpus, and in other games this acronym might be used differently. For example, Damage Dealer, or DD, is also used, and may be preferred by certain communities.

[73] Technically "casters / *casters* or *casteurs*" is the subset of ranged DPS who use magic. This term, despite excluding the non-magic ranged DPS class (Hunter) is used in the present corpus to describe ranged DPS and sometimes healers.

the option used in the localised game text, but also similar to the original English, the use of *CaC* here is interesting for several reasons. First, this term is also used by gamers to describe the close-quarters distance for raid positioning during gameplay. For example, one potential raid coordination requires players to all come into melee range, and for this instruction, the raid leader in the present corpus says *tous au CaC*. The use of this term both to describe the character class and the zone that they occupy might be due to the need to communicate quickly and precisely during positioning coordination. However, following this argument, the raid leader should have used the term *range* (instead of *distances*) in their raid instructions, especially since this is included in another common positioning instruction, which is to go to "max range" / *max range* (to be as far as possible from a target while still being able to attack or heal them). It may seem contradictory that a player uses one term and not another. However, this could be evidence of the primary nature of the system. Even-Zohar (1979: 299) states that the more rapidly evolving system will engender "augmentation and restructuration of a repertory by the introduction of new elements, as a result of which each product is less predictable". Therefore, the primary nature of this system could explain the unpredictability in some cases of gamer-speak usage. Despite this discrepancy between similarly derived terms, the usage of gamer-speak in the above cases shows that its usage does not always provide an obvious practical advantage for gameplay, and therefore other explanations for its use are necessary.

Both gamer-speak terms in Table 19 above show that gamer-speak extends beyond the game universe and draws on overarching game mechanics to gain their meaning and facilitate gamer coordination. For the localiser, this is an important consideration, since this feature of gamer-speak could be indicative of a shortcoming of the in-game text. In other words, where players tend to shorten or otherwise modify terms from the in-game localised text it could indicate that these terms in the localised text are somehow less appropriate for gamer communication. Having to make balanced localisation choices that consider both the passive and active consumption of the in-game text is therefore a significant challenge.

For example, one of the important aspects of characterisation in *WoW* is to give each class a unique look and feel, so that players sense that their class and role

are defined by the game's fantasy as well as the game's mechanics. However, for the purposes of efficiently coordinating group play, this individualisation is counter-productive, since it may be necessary at times to group players quickly and efficiently (melee classes and ranged, healer classes and tanks, etc.). As a result, while the unique flavour of each class and role may enrich the game's fantasy and therefore its narrative, it can simultaneously lead to the impediment of gameplay coordination. This clash in notions of text function and usability hints at one of the central issues that gamer-speak brings to localisers of MMORPGs: gamers must coordinate their gameplay to be successful in group environments, and therefore they will appropriate the game text in a way that facilitates this communication. Because of this, the appropriateness of a given localisation could also consider this function of the in-game text. Therefore, to some degree the functionality of the localised text for gamer communication can cause additional clashes with the game narrative, and may only be accessible for assessment after the fact, since gamers modify language during gameplay, and therefore are working from a finished, localised text. As a result, localisers may only become aware of the ways gamers modify language once the games have been released.

The next example illustrates each of these different derivations in French gamer-speak around what is potentially one of the most important subjects in MMORPGs: Loot.

Example	Explanation in English	GS Categorisation
Player 2 : La rune – c'est le bijou **DK tank**, ça ?	Player 2: The rune – is that really the **DK tank** trinket?	**DK**: Shortening + Loan ("Death Knight") **Tank**: Loan
Player 3 : Ouai.	Player 3: Yea	--
Player 2 : T'es sûr de ça ?	Player 2: Are you sure about that?	--
Player 3 : Ouai. Mon **Main** c'est un **DK tank**, en fait. Je suis venu avec le **reroll** pour ce raid, en fait. Et quand tu veux mitiger ton… ta survie et tes dégâts, parce qu'en **DK DPS** c'est aussi bien, c'est le **BIS** avec la plume d'Anzu.	Player 3: Yea. My **main** is a **DK Tank**, really. I actually brought my **alt** for this raid. And if you want to balance survivability and damage, because **DPS** for a **DK** is also good, it's the **BIS** with the Anzu's Plume.	**Main**: Loan **DK**: Shortening + Loan **Tank**: Loan **Reroll**: Loan + shift **DPS**: Shortening **BIS**: Shortening + Loan

Table 20: Gamer-speak in *WoW* voice chat exchanges – loot

This example in Table 20 shows a brief exchange between players at the moment of distribution of loot, following the defeat of a boss. In this example, players are discussing whether the item in question ("Unending Hunger") is a viable option for the class and role in question (i.e., the Blood Death Knight specialisation). It should be noted that Player 3 is raiding with this guild group for the first time.

Gamer-speak figures into this conversation about loot in six instances: *DK, Tank, DPS, Main, Reroll*, and *BIS*. They are each discussed in turn below.

The English two-letter initialism for the "Death Knight" class has been adopted here despite the existence of a localised name for this character class, *Chevalier de la mort*. Rather than shortening the French localised name (*CM*) gamers have resorted to the English gamer-speak repertoire.[74] This is not an isolated

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[74] DK is frequently used in English gamer-speak. I am aware of this from my own extensive experience with *WoW* (over 8,000 hours played between English- and French-speaking servers), and it can be corroborated on the *WoW* official forums (see https://us.battle.net/forums/en/wow/topic/20761066520)

phenomenon: the analysis has revealed that players tend to use gamer-speak to refer to character class names, and that the terms used are often Anglicisms, taken from English gamer-speak. All character classes were found to have a non-standard name in either the written or the spoken data. Table 21 below shows these alternative names, with those found in the voice chat highlighted in bold.

English name (specialisations)	Localised French name (specialisations)	Gamer-speak corpus examples[75] (specialisations)
Death Knight (frost)	*Chevalier de la mort* (*givre*)	**DK** (*frost*)
Druid (feral / balance / restoration)	*Druide / farouche / équilibre / restauration*	*Drood / féral / équi / rdrood*
Hunter	*Chasseur*	***Hunt***
Mage (frost)	*Mage* (*givre*)	*Mago /* (*frost*)
Monk	*Moine*	***Monk***
Paladin (Protection / Holy / Retribution)	*Paladin* (*protection / Sacré / Rétribution*)	***Pal / Pala*** (***Palatank*** / *Hpal* / *Palret - ret*)
Priest (Discipline / Shadow / Holy)	*Prêtre* (*Discipline / Ombre / Sacré*)	*Priest* (*Disci – Dpriest / SP / Hpriest*)
Rogue	*Voleur*	***Rogue***
Shaman (Elemental / Enhancement / Restoration)	*Chamane* (*Elémental / Amélioration / Restauration*)	***Cham / sham*** (***chamélém - élém*** / ***chamélio*** - *amélio* / ***Cham Heal***)
Warlock (Destruction)	*Démoniste* (*Déstruction*)	***Démo*** / *Lock* (*Destrolock*)
Warrior (Protection, / Fury)	*Guerrier* (*Protection / Fureur*)	***War*** (***Def / Fury***)

Table 21: Gamer-speak used in *WoW* for character class names

The tendency to use gamer-speak to name character classes is counter-intuitive when we consider the motivations of the game narrative. One potential purpose of providing unique and individualised personas for each type of character class is to offer gamers an immersive narrative experience through strong identification with the player's avatar. Despite this, gamers frequently disregard the terms carefully

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[75] Some of these examples are for specific class specialisations, not necessarily for the class alone. These examples have been placed in the line below the class name.

chosen by original writers and localisers for characters classes and use gamer-speak instead where it is pertinent to gameplay coordination. In this way, gamer-speak further supports the notion that gamer agency enables players to tailor their experience to their preferences, either individually or as a community.

Player 2 refers no only to the character class (Death Knight) but also to the role (Tank), using another gamer-speak term. The character's role is also pertinent to the discussion of loot attribution, because some equipment will only be optimal for certain classes and roles. The use of the gamer-speak term *Tank* is interesting because it has been incorporated into the in-game text as the accepted term for this character role. A further discussion on the derivation of this term and its usage can be found in the explanation of Table 25, in the examination of *WildStar* examples. In this case, Player 2 uses the term to justify this item for the Tank role. Their further justification is made by comparison with the potential benefits it has for the DPS role. Because the player is justifying their knowledge of the game's mechanics regarding loot priority, the player may be using gamer-speak as a way of supporting their argument by using the in-group code to signal their game experience.

DPS is another gamer-speak term that has several potential interpretations. In French, this term has been localised as *dégâts par seconde*. In this case, the player uses it to state that, for the Death Knight, when in the tanking role, damage output is also as important as mitigating incoming damage (which is traditionally one of the more central roles of a tank). Therefore, in French this term has undergone a functional widening, as well as a shortening (the initialism was not originally part of the localised text). This shortening and re-appropriation of the original game term constitutes an alternative usage to that intended by the game writers and localisers, and therefore is classified as gamer-speak. In addition, although DPS could be derived from the localised game text (*dégâts par seconde*), it could equally stand for the English version of the term. Indeed, when probed, some gamers report that this is the case.

Two of the gamer-speak terms included in this example are related: *main* and *reroll*. MMORPG players often play more than one character. This can be because they want to enjoy different fantasy experiences by embodying an alternative

persona, because they want to experience different roles in a party, or because their guild needs a certain class or specialisation to optimise their raid composition. Whatever the reason, players often have a primary character, referred to with gamer-speak as their Main / *main* (*personnage principale* in standard French), and their secondary characters, referred to as Alts / *rerolls* (*personnages secondaires / alternatives*). Clearly, one player embodying multiple avatars at different times clashes with traditional notions of linear narrative. In a universe where events already unfold non-linearly, players can also re-visit game events from different points of view, embodying these different "alternative" avatars. Since this phenomenon of "alts" causes a unique interpretation of game narrative that requires extradiegetic information, it is unsurprising that the game universe does not account for their existence. As a result, French gamers have created their own gamer-speak terms to refer to these concepts. The term *main* has been loaned from English gamer-speak and it is pronounced like the English, /meɪn/, despite the written form being identical to the French word for hand (*main*). In the case of *reroll*, rather than referring to the alternative character as the English does, the French gamer-speak term relies on an English gamer-speak term that has undergone a shift. Reroll is derived from one mechanic in the table-top *Dungeons and Dragons* games. In these games, players would generate their character statistics by rolling dice. In these games, rolling dice determines the original statistics of characters, and the notion of re-rolling the dice has been associated with the creation of secondary characters. In this example, Player 3 uses these terms to show their experience about DK Tanks, despite playing a different character class during the raid in progress. Gamer-speak is therefore used to assert their expertise on the subject.

The final gamer-speak term in this sample is a three-letter acronym for the English term "Best in Slot", or "BIS / *BIS*" in gamer-speak. Player equipment in *WoW* is allocated according to different placements, or slots. Figure 26 shows these placements as they appear in the in-game interface:

Figure 26: *WoW* **equipment slots**

Each of the squares surrounding the avatar in the centre of the image in Figure 26 is one of the "slots" where a piece of equipment can be placed. Since optimisation of character performance relies, to some degree, on having the best possible equipment, each slot usually has one piece that is the "best in slot" (BIS). Players in the community determine what the BIS is by simulating different scenarios such as damage per second, healing per second, or damage mitigation scenarios and by generating statistical weighting for the different attributes that are increased by each specific piece of equipment. This practice of simulating outcomes to assist in the determination of optimal performance scenarios for gamers is referred to as "theorycrafting". Thus, BIS items are typically determined through theorycrafting by the community and not explained in the in-game text.

It is interesting that French gamers take this acronym as a loan from English gamer-speak, because in standard French, *bis* is shouted as a request, for example, an additional song at a concert (like "encore" in English, which is a loan + shift from French) or as an additional item in a numbered list (*1, 1bis*, like 1, 1b in English). One possible explanation for this is that the majority of theorycrafting information is available in English. This paratextual influence from external

community sources means that many experienced gamers who have some level of English will encounter these terms during their exploration of online paratexts and will add them to their repertoire. Further study would be required to determine the extent to which players consult external sources for their game information and to which it influences their language use.

Finally, one term that is not present in this example deserves mention: trinket.[76] This is the piece of equipment being discussed in this example, referred to as *bijou* by Player 3, who uses the localised term for this equipment slot. What is interesting is that this term is sometimes replaced with *trinket* by French gamers. Indeed, examples of the use of *trinket* were found in both the *WildStar* (three times in one raid) and *WoW* (five times across two raids) voice chat sample. This finding is significant for several reasons. First, the term for player equipment in general was almost exclusively referred to using the Anglicism: "gear" or "stuff," instead of *equipment*. Based on this, it may be that the similar length of *trinket* and *bijou* give no practical advantage for using the Anglicised term, and therefore both the localised term and the gamer-speak term are used. Alternatively, it may be that the names of specific equipment slots tend to be more strongly linked to the game narrative, leading to players using both gamer-speak and standard terms, while equipment in general is more frequently mentioned in the theorycrafting community, and therefore drawn out of the game universe, and as a result the reflex is to use gamer-speak. However, trinkets are frequently the subject of additional theorycrafting discussions, since unlike other equipment slots that tend to provide simple statistical increases, they often have additional "on use" effects, or effects that activate when the player clicks the item, much like activating a player ability. Therefore, the use of *bijou* in this instance is a useful example of where the localised text is used by gamers for in-game communication as well as gamer-speak.

Features of standard terms that are used alongside their gamer-speak equivalents are particularly interesting for the localiser. The use of gamer-speak here can inform some of the ways in which in-game text around loot, class names and roles, and equipment is categorised. With the knowledge that gamers have

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[76] In addition to their armour, players equip jewellery, including necklaces, rings, and trinkets.

alternative names (whether they be taken wholesale from English, or derived from the localised French text) for every character class, they can assume that, at some point in a gamer's experience, they will come across these alternative terms, and therefore their game experience will be drawn out of the game narrative and into the community sphere. Equally, the parallel existence of multiple avatars controlled by the same character leads to players consuming the game narrative in ways that draw them out of the immersive narrative experience. Because of this, there is a mismatch with the way in which the narrative is presented and the way it is consumed. Therefore, because the localised text is consumed both actively and passively, gamer-speak study can show some of the trends in how localised text is consumed, and therefore its appropriateness for both types of consumption. The existing tendency to maintain the standard language of the game universe in the in-game text is appropriate to the extent that it would be jarring to have non-standard language draw gamers out of their immersion. However, the fact is that gamers eventually play cooperatively in MMORPGs, and the control that the localiser has over the text they produce is limited to the reading of the text. Beyond this, gamers will appropriate and re-imagine the game content to fit their own preferences. Further, the breadth and depth of the narrative in *WoW* is matched only by the complexity and precision of its mechanics. This co-existence and, at times, competition between the narrative and mechanics causes text to function differently for different uses. In the previous example, priority is given to mechanics when *DK* is preferred over *chevalier de la mort*, for example. The existence of alternative usage in gamer communication should inform localisers of a mismatch in their brief and the skopos of the game text. In other words, the end user uses this text in ways in which the localised version does not fully accommodate, and the use of gamer-speak is evidence of this.

The findings from the analysis of spoken conversations during *WoW* reveal the following conclusions: (1) players use gamer-speak frequently when coordinating raids over the spoken channel; (2) gamer-speak terms are used to describe a variety of situations, including specific raid mechanics, player roles, and player abilities; (3) forming gamer-speak through shifts, loans, and shortenings (acronyms/initialisms in particular) creates a highly-encoded in-group code in these

settings; and (4) this encoding supports the hypersalient group identity and the dominant discourse of the experienced gamer.

5.2   *WildStar*

Communication in *WildStar* takes place in a similar way to *WoW*. Players communicate either via the in-game typed chat platform or via a third-party voice-chat programme, frequently using both simultaneously.

The data analysed in this section were originally to contain both written and spoken player exchanges taking place during *WildStar* gameplay. However, because of several changes to the game systems pertaining to server structure and player communication, and due in part to the dwindling numbers of *WildStar* players, no data could be recorded in the written portion of this study. Therefore, no insight into written player exchanges in *WildStar* is provided. However, 5.2.1 contains an in-depth analysis of voice-chat exchanges taking place between players during their raids on their third party voice-chat platform (TeamSpeak©), recorded by players and submitted to the researcher for analysis.

5.2.1   *WildStar* voice chat

The data in this section contain player voice conversations in *WildStar*. Since in *WildStar* there is no integrated voice-chat platform, players use third party software programmes, running simultaneously to the game, to communicate. As with *WoW*, this sample was collected from two, roughly three-hour gameplay sessions from one Exile faction French guild. The conversations took place while players were raiding. Most spoken exchanges refer to coordination of gameplay during boss fights, and include other game-related or social conversation between major encounters. Like the sample in *WoW*, only a small portion of the raid party communicated during the raids, and exchanges during the boss encounters were almost entirely limited to the raid leader and raid members affected by critical gameplay-related mechanics.

These players raid regularly, and are drawn towards challenging PvE content. One female gamer was recorded during gameplay, however there may have been

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more who were participating without speaking. Their gaming level can be described as regular raiders who appear relatively highly in *WildStar* rankings (in the top 20 in the world on some encounters). This ranking system, however, is difficult to equate with that present in *WoW*, since the latter is far more popular. In any case, because of their regular commitment to high-level PvE content, it is estimated that players in this sample play between nine and twenty hours per week.

This guild regularly produces videos that they subsequently publish on social media platforms such as YouTube or Twitch, either to show their first victory over a specific boss fight, or to be used as instructional videos for other players. Some of these videos contain the voice-chat between the players, while some simply have a music track added over the video. This sample was recorded for the purposes of one of these video uploads, and provided by the guild with consent for the purposes of this research. Table 22 is a breakdown of the relevant statistics found in this sample:

Total time of recorded conversations	339 minutes
Total number of gamer-speak terms used	1,803
Total recorded utterances	2,957
Utterances containing gamer-speak	1,160 (39.23%)

Table 22: *WildStar* in-game voice chat gamer-speak statistical breakdown

Table 23 includes quantitative information regarding gamer-speak terms found in *WildStar*'s voice chat data sample and their distribution across the different categories used for this analysis.

Category	Example	Standard equivalent	Number of terms (tokens) found
Loan	*Datascape*	*Infosphère*	1,436
Shortening	*TP*	*Téléportation / Portail* (Teleport / Portal)	440
Composite	*Multiaggro*	*Génération de menace sur plusieurs cibles* (Generate threat on multiple targets)	21
Blend	*Gkick*	*Renvoyer (quelqu'un) de la guilde* (Kick someone out of the guild)	3
Shift	*Carpette*	*Mort* (Dead)	2
New creations	*Fufu*	*Classes furtives* (Stealth classes)	2
Total			**1,803**

Table 23: *WildStar* voice chat sample data and gamer-speak categories

These counts show loans in the form of Anglicisms as the most frequently-used gamer-speak category, with over three times as many instances (1436) as the second most frequently-used (shortenings: 440). This finding is interesting, in that there may be other motivating factors behind the use of gamer-speak in the spoken channel other than concision. Alternatively, it could be that Anglicised gamer-speak terms are also typically shorter than their standard equivalents. In either case, it is also noteworthy that, while Anglicism features prominently in the gamer-speak found in the *WildStar* voice chat channel, it is not the only type of non-standard language found. However, examination of the overlapping categorisations provides more insight into the influence of Anglicism:

Category	Example	Standard equivalent	Number of terms (tokens) found in the sample
Loan	*Datascape*	*Infosphère*	1,413
Loan + Shortening	*War*	*Guerrier* (Warrior)	135
Shortening	*Déco*	*Déconnexion* (Disconnection)	328
Shifts	*Carpette*	*Mort* (Dead)	2
Composites	*Multiaggro*	*Génération de menace sur plusieurs cibles* (Generate threat on multiple targets)	3
Composite + Loan	*Hard mode*	*Mode difficile* (Hard mode)	18
Blend + Loan	*Gkick*	*Renvoyer (quelqu'un) de la guilde* (Kick someone out of the guild)	3
New creations	*Fufu*	*Classes furtives* (Stealth classes)	2

Table 24: Gamer-speak categories and *WildStar* voice chat sample data – combination of categories

Here again, nearly 25% (135 out of 328) of the shortened gamer-speak terms in the *WildStar* voice chat data are derived from Anglicisms. Furthermore, all blends (3) found in this sample were based on English gamer-speak terms.

These counts, like those from the *WoW* voice chat sample in Table 17, are interesting regarding gamer-speak usage. First, Anglicism was nearly twice as frequently used in this sample than in the *WoW* sample. This result could be interpreted in several ways. For example, being a newer game, the gamer-speak repertoire in *WildStar* could be less-developed and thus rely more on the original in English, as well as English gamer-speak, having not had time to develop more terms based on the TL. Alternatively, this individual raid group or raid leader may simply feel more comfortable with Anglicisms than the raid group from the *WoW* sample. In any case, the importance of Anglicisms to both voice chat samples is evident based on the high number of Anglicised gamer-speak terms. To contextualise the way these terms are used, the following is a presentation of several examples of the gamer conversations from this data sample.

Each example is followed by a contextualisation of the conversation taking place, an analysis of the French gamer-speak terms, and a discussion of the relevance for localisers.

Table 25 contains several examples of gamer-speak usage taking place during a boss fight. It shows two players speaking at the point where the raid transitions from fighting trash mobs to the first boss fight:

Corpus Example	Explanation in English
[Player 5] : De toute façon il manque un **Tank** - [Player X] t'es pas **tagué** en **Tank.**	[Player 5]: Anyway, there's one **tank** missing – [Player X] you're not **flagged** as a **Tank**.
[Player 1] : Groupe 1 on descend.	[Player 1]: Group 1 go down
[Player 1] : Et vous concentrez de suite aussi.	[Player 1]: And concentrate now.
[Player 1] : Ça **pop**.	[Player 1]: They're **up**
[Player 1] : **Kick**.	[Player 1]: **Kick**
[Player 1] : **Pop**.	[Player 1]: **Adds up**
[Player 2] : **Déco** sud.	[Player 2]: **D/C** south
[Player 1] : On **switch.**	[Player 1]: **Switch**
[Player 1] : En ralentissant un peu le **DPS.**	[Player 1]: Slow down a bit on **DPS.**
[Player 1] : **Stop DPS** nord, **stop DPS** nord, **stop DPS** sud, on descend on finit les sondes.	[Player 1]: **Stop DPS** north, **stop DPS** north **stop DPS** south, go down and finish the probes.
[Player 1] : Les **adds.**	[Player 1]: **Adds.**
[Player 1] : On remontera, tous faire passer le **boss**. Troisième sonde ça **pop**, attention [Player 2].	[Player 1]: Let's go back up, all push **boss**. Third probe **up**, watch out [Player 2].

Table 25: Gamer-speak in *WildStar* in-game voice chat exchanges – start of boss fight

The first segment of this example is one administrative point that is important for raid organisation: players in a raid group are identified, or "flagged", according to their role. Raid composition in *WoW* and *WildStar* typically consists of a small number of Tanks (usually one or two), several healers, and the rest damage dealers,

or DPS. The central importance of the tanking classes often dictates the positioning of the raid, since the bosses will be focused on Tanks, and therefore they will follow these characters' movements. Because of this mechanical factor, the game allows players to flag team members with their role so they can be readily identified during combat to ease coordination during gameplay. This mechanic exists to enable raid coordination, but seems to have a complicated integration into the game narrative, since "flagging" is a piece of extradiegetic information that is useful for gameplay coordination but not an integral part of the game narrative.

Because of this mechanic, the statements in the first three cells in Table 25 show the pivot point between the more casual conversation, conclusion of final important pre-boss-fight organisation, and the beginning of the fight, where the raid leader calls for concentration. The subsequent cells have been divided according to the time elapsed between each utterance. Several seconds of silence punctuate each of these while the raid is concentrating on the fight and not verbally communicating.

The utterances in the last nine cells are all related to game mechanics. They are eight cells of instructions from the raid leader on how the raid is meant to coordinate their gameplay, or alerts to the raid about the unfolding of the in-game events, and one response from another raid member on a player's status (one player in the "south" division of the raid has disconnected from the game). As such, the statements are mostly in the imperative or the indicative.

Since the conversation in the Table 25 is limited to the coordination of gameplay, the functionality of such conversation relies on clarity and pertinence. Since off-topic utterances, or simultaneous utterances on the chat channel would confuse gameplay coordination, they are less common during boss fights. This parsimonious use of language is also present in the gamers' linguistic preferences, and therefore in the use of gamer-speak for the sake of precision and concision.

The first two gamer-speak examples *tank* and *tag* are interesting for various reasons. *Tank* is an Anglicism on loan from the original English text for this character role. Interestingly, it is not exclusive to gamer-speak, as this term is also the equivalent to this character role in the French localised version. While there is

a French word for tank (*char*), this term seems to be part of the repertoire of French MMORPG gamers, and it was adopted "as-is" even since before popular titles such as *WoW* were released. The decision to maintain this term in the French version could be because the word-for-word translation, *char*, does not capture the same meaning as in the original. Despite the fact that Tank figures in the in-game text, it has been determined to be sufficiently encoded in the context of gamer culture and in particular to MMORPGs to be included as gamer-speak. It is an Anglicism that takes on new specialised meaning within the context of the game, and therefore that a non-gamer would not understand.

The term *tag* is also a loan from English standard language that has also undergone a shift: it has been appropriated in French gamer-speak to have a different function. It is also interesting that the shift includes a semantic shift, by conjugating *tagué* (tagged) as a participle in French. In this context, the *tag* a player has is akin to pre-set filter options used to refine internet searches, in that an "if … then" clause will respond in different ways to a player depending on their *tag* (e.g., if the tank tag is present, the player will be grouped to the top of the user interface to be more visible). In this sense, this term is used as the English gamer-speak term "flag". Therefore, it is possible that "tag" has entered into gamers' repertoire via the IT context rather than from English gamer-speak.

Although it is difficult to ascertain why the term "tag" has been loaned instead of the term "flag", this could be because the latter is often used as an abbreviation for *flagrant* in French. Thus, the linguistic configuration of the French system could have influenced the adoption of "tag" instead of "flag". However, *tag* has other uses in French. For example, it is also used in PvP combat as an equivalent for the English gamer-speak "cap". In this case, the term refers to capturing a zone in the "king-of-the-hill" style encounter, where two teams fight for resource nodes. Players must click on an object in the resource node, or simply remain in the area without being killed by the opposition, to "cap / *tag*" that zone. Finally, *tag* is used in French game-speak taken wholesale from English. In this case, it is used in the same way it is used here, but in a different context. Raid encounters reset every week, and therefore players' progress flags their avatar so that, should they try to enter the raid with another group, the game will remember their progress from their

previous raid. In this way, players receive a "raid ID" which is commonly referred to as a raid "tag / *tag*".

Although the motivations for the use and evolution of these different derivations are difficult to ascertain, some explanations can be found when considering the linguistic configuration of the source and target systems. The term "tank", for example, used widely in MMORPGs, refers to the defensive qualities that are associated with the armoured military vehicle. In English, a tank, or someone who is "tanked" is an overly strong or muscular person (urban dictionary: online). In French, this meaning is conveyed by the non-standard term *tanqué*. In this case, the pre-existence of this similar term could explain the acceptance of the gamer-speak term *tank* both in the gamer community and by localisers.

Three terms in this example: *pop*, *switch* and *adds* are related. Whereas the last two are Anglicisms loaned from English gamer-speak, the first of these is not. The term *pop* is used in French gamer-speak to indicate when something has spawned, or arrived, in-game. This can be an NPC, boss, trash mob, or enemy players. In this example, the enemies that are arriving in-game are "adds", that is, additional monsters that come to the aid of the main boss. The players are meant to "switch" / *switch* from the main boss to these enemies to defeat them as quickly as possible so as not to be overwhelmed by the smaller waves of enemies.

When the raid leader states that *ça pop*, to indicate that new enemies have entered the fight, he assumes that the raid members understand which enemies are being referred to, and that they will react appropriately. This term is used in place of a standard French equivalent such as *ils arrivent* ([here] they come). The term "pop" is not used in English gamer-speak. In raids, where the boss fights require fast action and quick reflexes, English-speaking players will say "up".[77] However, in slower-paced situations, such as hunting for rare monsters in the open world, players will say "spawn". Thus, the French gamer-speak term *pop* is not a direct

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[77] It is worth noting that *up* is also used in French gamer-speak, typically as an equivalent for *disponible* / "available".

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loan from the English gamer-speak, but rather a loan from standard English plus a semantic shift.

The follow-up command, several lines later, instructing players to "switch" is, however, taken directly from English gamer-speak. There is no immediately evident practical reason for French-speaking gamers to use this term over a standard French term such as *on change*. Since it is no shorter than usable French equivalents, it may be that *switch* is used to disambiguate from *échange*, where players need to swap or trade enemies or debuffs (i.e., negative status effects inflicted upon the target).[78]

Finally, the insistence and the urgency of the raid leader for the party to deal with the "adds" is reiterated with *les adds*. With this command, the raid leader has progressed from more indirect directives (Searle 1975: 89) by announcing the spawning of enemies, to slightly more specific in their instructing players to switch, and finally with this specific command to identify the enemies to which they were referring, first with the localised enemy name (*sondes*), and then with the gamer-speak term for other additional enemies (*adds*). This is loaned wholesale from English gamer-speak. The use of this term, in both English and French, shows the friction between game mechanics and narrative. While the narrative dictates that each enemy encounter is different, with each boss having its own backstory and having different minions referred to with specific terms, when raiders are playing against these encounters, their primary concern is managing the mechanical challenges the game presents them. As a result, gamers have the need for a functional term that communicates game mechanics that are repeated across encounters. English gamers have opted for "adds", a clipping of additional (enemies/monsters) and in this case French gamers have borrowed this term.

One common technical issue when playing MMORPGs is being disconnected from the game or from the internet. Since the game requires online connectivity of all players, any break in the connection will cause the player's avatar to become immobile and unresponsive in-game. In these cases, it is important for the raid that

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[78] It is worth noting that French gamers also use "*trade*" for this, perhaps for similar reasons.

the members be aware that the player is disconnected and compensate accordingly. As such, this needs to be communicated to the raid, as seen here with the statement *déco*. This is a clipped version of the word *déconnexion*, which is the standard term for disconnection. This term is interesting because in non-gaming contexts this shortening is typically used for *décoration* (decoration). Although avoiding ambiguity is one of the main reasons for using gamer-speak, the use of this term and its ambiguity is inconsequential, given the context of gaming. The term typically used for this in English gamer-speak is a two-letter shortening of disconnection, expressed in the written form with a slash (D/C), but in the spoken form simply as the two letters: "DC". If gamers had decided to borrow this term from English instead, its rendering would be a homonym of "death" in French (*décès*), which in the context of the announcement of the virtual gameplay events could cause confusion.

Table 25 also includes the French gamer-speak term "kick", a standard term in English referring to a specific mechanic in the in-game text which has been localised as *coup de pied* in the French version. Kick is discussed at length in the explanation of Figure 30, when analysing the survey data, and as such is not discussed further here.

The gamer-speak term "DPS", explained above in relation to Table 19 and Table 20 is used here to refer to the damage per second that the raid is doing to the enemies. As such, it enables the raid leader to communicate a mechanics-related notion quickly and concisely to the rest of the raid party.

The term "boss" is an English gamer-speak loan, used in the same context as in English gamer-speak. However, the reasons behind the use of this loan are not clear, since there are some alternatives in French. For example, *chef* could be used, and since it is no longer than *boss*, the rule of concision does not apply. The reason for not using this term could be related to ambiguity in the TL, since the French localised term for "raid leader" is *chef de raid*. However, this argument is complicated by the fact that French gamers also use the term *raid lead* instead of *chef de raid*. Since the notion of a boss in video games (and the use of this term in

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English) pre-exists the MMORPG genre, it is also possible that this Anglicism is ingrained in the French gaming community.

Finally, one expression worth mentioning in the final cell in Table 25 shows an instance where standard French is used in a situation where English gamer-speak could have been used. The raid leader instructs the raid to *faire passer le boss*. This is an instruction that relates to a specific game mechanic that is typical across boss fights. Certain bosses will have slightly different mechanics that will change depending on "phases". These phases will change at different intervals, with one common trigger being the percentage of boss health. Therefore, when a raid leader wants a raid to advance into the next phase at a given moment, they will instruct the raid to "push boss", to reduce their health level and progress. In this example, the raid leader uses standard French to express this. However, a similar instruction exists in French gamer-speak: *focus boss*. Rather than instructing the raid to push the phase like in English gamer-speak, they are instead instructed to direct their attention to it. Since both this gamer-speak term and the standard form can be applied to a similar situation in the coordination of mechanics, this could be another instance of the diversity of the system yielding standard and non-standard usage.

The gamer-speak found in this example is important for the localisation of MMORPGs for several reasons. First, these terms show that gamer-speak lexis fulfils specific functions in gamer communication, such as streamlining gameplay coordination by reducing time spent speaking, and perpetuating the hierarchical structure of more- or less-experienced gamers through encoding. One possible explanation for gamers using gamer-speak terms in these situations is that the localised text does not give gamers the tools to fulfil these functions. While this is also true of the original text, as shown by the existence of English gamer-speak, the assumption that the localised text will be approximately 30% longer (Chandler & Deming 2012: 132) supports this interpretation. Therefore, the localised text may be intrinsically less-appropriate to be used in gamer communication, where concision is preferred. In this way, the skopos of the localised game text includes its use for communication among gamers, since in MMORPGs it is reasonable to assume that players will use the text to communicate at some stage during gameplay. This is discussed further in 5.3.

As argued previously, that is not to say that localised French game text should replace any instances of standard French with gamer-speak where possible. On the contrary, this could potentially cause a significant departure from the game narrative and diminish, or at least alter the game experience as described by Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 14). However, the concept of gamer-speak is useful in identifying the different situations where the localised text does not fully address the needs of gamers when communicating. For example, gamers frequently use shorter gamer-speak terms where a longer standard term is available. While this may not be a justification to include gamer-speak in the localised text, it could inform some decisions between different standard terms in French. Where available, it might be preferable to use a shorter term than one that seems more appropriate considering other translation-related aspects in texts that will be used in in-game communication, since MMORPG text is, at least in part, used for communication as well as for consumption. This reinforces another reason that gamer-generated text is significant for video game localisers. The status of video game text shifts from being consumed passively, as with other media such as novels and films, to being used actively by gamers. The active role of the gamer not only enables the co-creation of in-game text, as seen in Chapter 6, but also informs the way in which this text is consumed. This information, as a result, can provide insight into our understanding of how game text is consumed, and therefore how it can be analysed.

While the debate between ludology and narratology has been discussed at length (see 3.2.1), there has been little consideration for gamer communication as an indication of consumption of video game text. In Table 25 we can see a clear tendency to prefer communication around mechanics over narrative. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, gamer-speak informs our notion of immersion. Gamer communication during raids shows that gamers are not embodying their avatars, or in other words, the use of gamer-speak shows that gamers are not immersed in the narrative to the extent that they are immersed in the mechanics. Since gamers prioritise the coordination of the gameplay over the lexical fields that are common to the game universe, their immersion, at least during raids, draws them out of the narrative. In this way, immersion during raid encounters will necessarily reinforce the conflict between mechanics and narrative, since these two notions can be

functionally opposed. Whereas in other video game text prioritising the narrative may maintain the look and feel of the original without adversely affecting the game mechanics, doing so during raid coordination would be sub-optimal.

5.3   Conclusions

These data show interesting tendencies in gamer-speak use in these specific communication situations. The principal findings of this Chapter are: 1) gamer-speak is used frequently during in-game communication in the situations recorded in this study; 2) gamer-speak prioritises in-game mechanics because it enables the coordination of these mechanics, at times at the expense of the maintenance of immersion in the in-game narrative; 3) gamer-speak is most frequently formed through Anglicism or shortening; 4) the motivations for gamer-speak use could relate to its being more concise, its increased variety in widened or specified terms, its supporting of the hypersalient gamer identity, or the correlation of gamer-speak with game experience.

Regarding the prevalence of gamer-speak in these gamer communications, in the written chat sample over two thirds of utterances contain at least one gamer-speak term, and utterances containing gamer-speak frequently had several gamer-speak terms. In the spoken chat sample, nearly 40% of utterances (37% in *WoW* and 39% in *WildStar*) contained gamer-speak, and utterances containing gamer-speak also frequently contained more than one gamer-speak term per utterance. This prevalence of gamer-speak terms is important, since it shows that gamers rely on this language for written and spoken communication.

The use of gamer-speak is determined by the media used to communicate and by the type of gameplay being coordinated. Regarding the former, this is evidenced in this study by shortenings being more prevalent in the written sample than in the spoken sample. Since some types of shortenings (e.g., acronyms) require fewer keystrokes, but are not necessarily more concise in spoken conversation, they are more likely to be used in the typed chat than in the voice-chat. Certain terms are more likely to appear in spoken conversation than written conversation. This could be because of the activity taking place during these conversations, since some terms

are specific to different activities, or even different boss encounters. For example, *kick* appeared 273 times in the voice chat sample and not at all in the written sample. Conversely, *PvP* was found 34 times in the written chat (where recruiting for PvP was common) and never in the spoken chat (where the main activity was PvE).

The analysis has also revealed that gamer-speak is highly encoded. This encoding is achieved principally by players using shortenings or Anglicisms to form gamer-speak. This could be a result of the secondary nature of the French system in relation to the English one, the prevalence of English-language paratexts, or the additional encoding offered by Anglicism when forming the in-group gamer-speak code. Given that English loan words feature so prominently in French gamer-speak, the goal of replicating the look and feel of the original and producing a TT in French that could be passed off as though it were an original could be unattainable. Since gamers use anglicised language when communicating, they are necessarily aware of the existence of the English polysystem, and therefore reminded that they are playing a localised version of the game. This is particularly significant since it flaunts the traditions protected in the *Loi Toubon*, subverting the principles outlined by that institution. On the other hand, it is worth noting that not all gamer-speak is Anglicism: many of the acronyms and other morphological non-standard varieties that make up gamer-speak terms are based on the localised game text's terminology.

While the subject of that terminology can therefore be game-specific, its formation can be common to multiple games. As seen here, the samples from *WoW* and *WildStar* show interesting similarities and differences in this regard. First, Anglicism was nearly twice as frequently used in *WildStar*'s voice chat data than in *WoW*'s. This result could be interpreted in several ways. For example, *WildStar* being a newer game, the gamer-speak repertoire in *WildStar* could be less-developed and thus rely more on the original in English, as well as English gamer-speak, having not had time to develop more terms based on the TL. Alternatively, this individual raid group or raid leader may simply feel more comfortable with Anglicism than the raid group from the *WoW* sample. In any case, the importance of Anglicism to both voice chat samples is evident based on the high number of Anglicised gamer-speak terms. Shortenings were highly prevalent in both games' data samples, and while further study would be needed to determine whether this

goes beyond the two games under examination here, it is suggestive that this is a feature of gamer-speak that is genre-specific rather than game-specific.

Table 26 is a summary count of all gamer-speak terms found in this research, divided by Algeo's (1999) categorisation:

Category	Example	Standard equivalent	Number of tokens found
Loans	*Mob*	*Monstre* (Monster)	2,654
Shortenings	*PROC*	"Programmed Rate of Occurrence"	1,962
Shifts	*Ping-pong*	*Faire passer un monstre d'un joueur à un autre* (pass a monster back-and-forth between players)	107
Composites	*Multiaggro*	*Menace multiple* ("AOE" threat / Threat generated on multiple monsters)	34
Blends	*Destrolock*	*Démoniste spécialisé destruction* (Destruction Warlock)	28
New Creations	*Fufu*	*Classes Furtives* (Stealth classes)	23
Total			**4,808**

Table 26: Counts of all gamer-speak terms found in this study, organised by Algeo's (1999) classification

This summary shows that gamer-speak found in this study is highly influenced by English, frequently becomes shorter in its formation, and combines both English and French to create new terms. For video game localisers these features of gamer-speak are important to consider. First, gamers communicate in-game to facilitate and enrich their gameplay. Therefore, when typing and speaking, terms with fewer letters or syllables, or terms that can be easily assigned an acronym are frequently used. To this end, gamer-speak terms are typically shorter than their standard equivalents. In fact, across all gamer-speak terms found, roughly 85% were shorter than their standard equivalent (278 shorter types out of a total 326 types). Second,

using gamer-speak signals the belonging to and hierarchy within the gamer community. These two features are significant because, if we accept Mangiron and O'Hagan's (2006: 75) assertion that transferring the user experience is a key goal of localising multimedia entertainment such as video games, the language of the localised text necessarily shapes the way gamers communicate in-game. As such, gamer-speak forms a part of gamers' repertoire in this study, and therefore it is an important part of the TC. Since user experience is an essential consideration for game localisers, the impact of the localised text on in-game communication is therefore an important by-product of the lexis found in the localised text.

The presence of altered or re-appropriated non-standard language in gamer communication is evidence that gamers prefer these forms when gaming. One line of thinking could be that the standard forms lack the linguistic efficiency and social status that gamers need or want to be able to communicate in-game. We see that the gamer has an active role in text production, equal in influence on the role of the verbal sign and the medium itself. This active role of the gamer in their involvement with the game text allows for it to be used in ways that are unintended by the author, and therefore by the localiser. This phenomenon affects the original text as well as the localised text, however because of the simultaneous existence of both the English and French systems, the influence of English seen in this study makes gamer-speak an important consideration for localisers in particular, since many French gamer-speak terms are English terms found in the ST (e.g., kick, boss, taunt, greed, need, among others). The presence of French gamer-speak in in-game conversations is evidence of this influence. Since gamers appropriate text in this way, the text is created to be read, with the knowledge that its purpose will extend to it being "played". Therefore, the author and the localiser necessarily relinquish a degree of control over the text. In the case of MMORPGs, one manifestation of this is that the players will need to communicate about in-game concepts to be able to experience certain aspects of game content.

Included in these aspects of game content, and represented in the present corpus, are cooperative and competitive play, knowledge sharing, player recruitment, and commerce. In cooperative and competitive play, gamers use gamer-speak to streamline conversation with more concise options than are

available in the localised text (*kick* vs. *coup de pied*, *ça pop* vs. *ils arrivent*, *DPS* vs. *Dégâts par seconde*, *DK* vs. *Chevalier de la mort*) and assert their status as an experienced gamer (*Main* vs. *personage principal*, *reroll* vs. *personage secondaire*). In knowledge sharing, players use gamer-speak to demarcate the stratification of the knowledgeable and the less-knowledgeable (*spell* vs. *sort*, *rogue* vs. *voleur*, *player* vs. *joueur*, the practice of linking in-game abilities). During recruitment and commerce, players use gamer-speak to target specific subsets of the population (and exclude others) with their messages (*seek* vs. *à la recherche*, *ilvl* vs. *niveau d'item* or *niveau d'objet*, *dp* vs. *prêtre discipline*, *bdg* vs. *banque de guilde*). In all of these situations, gamer-speak fulfils either a practical or social function that the in-game text does not perform. If we agree with Mangiron and O'Hagan's (2006) statement that the localised video game should enable gamers in the TC to experience the game as though it had been developed originally in their own language, gamer-speak could inform the way in which the localiser approaches the TT. With knowledge of what terms gamers replace from the localised text with gamer-speak, the localiser can gain information on how the localised text is being used during gameplay. A comparative study of how this is done in the SL and TL could, for example, enable localisers to create TTs that are more convincing as originals in the TL.

Gamer-speak is evidence that, when the in-game text is localised, the situation is complicated by the co-existence of the SC and TC polysystems. These systems do not exist separately from one another; they overlap at various points. One of these points, as we have seen in the discussion of the voice-chat data, is where paratextual information is provided by the English-speaking gamer community and consulted by the French-speaking community. In addition to the overlap with other linguistic (poly)systems, the game text also comes accompanied by a system of game mechanics. These mechanics are not localised, in that if a given enemy ability lasts for ten seconds in the SL version of the game, it will also last for ten seconds in the TL version. Because the localisation process into French is likely to lengthen the text, this can cause a reduction in the functionality of the in-game texts regarding player communication. Finally, because games engender both systems of rules and systems of fiction, these two must exist simultaneously for the game experience to take place. However, some text is more apt for supporting the game narrative and

some for the game mechanics. In fact, as the analysis of gamer-speak seems to reveal, some text that supports game narrative can detract from player's ability to have a satisfying experience regarding game mechanics, and vice versa.

Because of this discrepancy between the features of the standard language found in the localised text and the linguistic requirements of gameplay coordination, gamer-speak that can be found frequently in the vocal and written channels, and not in the localised text, is important for the localiser because it speaks to aspects of the skopos of the localised text, and it is evidence of the function and purpose of that text.

Furthermore, the importance for the localiser is further underlined by the evidence of the primary nature of the gamer-speak system. Since gamer-speak is difficult to categorise, varies in certain conventions (e.g., spelling, and semantic shifts), and evolves rapidly, the localiser may struggle to assess or predict how gamer-speak is- or will be used, and how that can inform their localisations of MMORPGs.

In the next section, I bring the discussion of gamer-speak into this discussion of the localised text. Chapter 6 is an examination of in-game text examples where the influence of gamer-speak (or its features) can be seen both in the ST and TT, here analysed according to DTS and PST notions.

Chapter 6   Text analysis: the localisation of *World of Warcraft* and *WildStar*

MMORPGs contain vast amounts of text. For *WoW*, the latest statistics available at the time of writing date from 2012 (with the expansion named "Mists of Pandaria"), where it had over six million words of in-game content. With each expansion, the game has grown by one to one and-a-half million words (wow-europe 2013: online). Since 2012 there have been two major expansions to date ("Warlords of Draenor" and "Legion"), and the new expansion "Battle for Azeroth" has been announced for release in the summer of 2018). In *WildStar*, there is little data available on word content. However, for comparison, while *WoW* is in its seventh expansion and was created in 2004, *WildStar* is still in its first iteration and was released ten years later, in 2014. Further, *WoW* at its peak had over 12 million active subscribers in 2011 (Knight 2015: online), and *WildStar* only just under one million (Steamcharts: n.d., online). While these statistics are not necessarily indicative of the amount of content, *WildStar* is smaller in terms of both word count and the number of players. Nonetheless, an MMORPG at the time of its release still contains a vast amount of text, and frequently more than a million words. Therefore, there is a significant amount of localised text for consideration.

Due to the volume of text in both *WoW* and *WildStar*, the corpus for this research was sampled from a portion of the in-game text, as described in section 4.4. The text types analysed below are (1) Player ability names and tooltips, (2) Quests, and (3) Achievements. These text types were selected because they each perform a distinct function. Player ability text and their associated tooltips are designed to inform the player about game mechanics and enable players to master their character class and role. Quest text is designed to further the game narrative and reinforce the feeling of immersion in the game universe. Achievements are a textual reward in and of themselves, and direct players towards in-game challenges. As a result, translation strategies may differ depending on these different functions the texts perform. This was determined, in part, based on Bernal's (2014: 96) classification of text types and Juul's (2011: 1) assertion of the dual nature of video games as rules and fiction: video game text types may tend to focus on game rules (i.e., abilities and tooltips), the fictitious game world (i.e., quest text) or they may

support the game's entertainment value (i.e., achievements). Furthermore, since Strong (2017: 22-23) states that achievement text has a unique function that has stronger links with the community and is more directly influenced by gamer culture, their inclusion is essential.

The following sections are an analysis of ST and TT of *WoW* and *WildStar*, divided into Player ability names & tooltips (6.1), Quest titles (6.2), and Achievement text (6.3). In this analysis, the principal questions addressed are: 1) how do the translations of these texts relate with gamer-speak drawing on the analysis presented in Chapter 5?; 2) does gamer-speak appear in the ST, and, if so, how has it been translated?; and 3) are there examples of the TT that do *not* contain gamer-speak, but have similar features (such as departing from the game narrative, or using non-standard language)? With a view to address these questions, this analysis begins with a brief statistical overview of the in-game text sample collected, and is followed by in-depth qualitative analysis of relevant examples. These examples are analysed within the framework of DTS in terms of PROBLEM$_2$, SOLUTION$_2$, and ACT$_2$. In addition, PST principles are taken into consideration, especially for the contextualisation and situation of gamer-speak in the French polysystem. Table 27 below shows a statistical overview of the in-game text collected for this corpus in *WoW* and *WildStar* and the presence of gamer-speak in those samples.

	WoW		*WildStar*	
	Total Text	**Gamer-Speak Terms (tokens)**	**Total Text**	**Gamer-Speak Terms (tokens)**
Abilities & Tooltips – EN	4003	0	3909	42
Abilities & Tooltips – FR	4,775	0	5,073	52
Quest Titles – EN	1,2162	0	1,616	1
Quest Titles – FR	14,826	0	1,962	1
Achievements – EN	4,414	11	3,596	6
Achievements – FR	5,536	4	4,600	5
Totals	**45,716**	**15**	**20,756**	**107**

Table 27: *WoW* and *WildStar* **in-game text gamer-speak statistical breakdown**

Worth noting in Table 27 is that the gamer-speak terms counted in this table are the total number of tokens and not distinct terms. As such, the in-game text only saw seven different gamer-speak terms in English (buff, CC, debuff, DOT, Faceroll, Gank and nerf) and another seven in French (*bot*, *cap*, *CF*, *DOT*, *ganke*, *PV* and *pwn*), but some of these were repeated. The French gamer-speak terms include shortenings (*bot, CF, DOT, PV*) and loans (*cap*, *ganke*, *pwn*). This distribution is interesting in particular because of how the terms categories align with the text type in which they appear. Table 28 shows this distribution:

Game	Abilities & tooltips		Quest titles		Achievements	
	WoW	*WildStar*	*WoW*	*WildStar*	*WoW*	*WildStar*
Shortening	0	52	1	0	2	0
Loan	0	0	0	0	4	3

Table 28: *Wow* and *WildStar* **breakdown of in-game text gamer-speak by category**

This distribution is interesting in that no Anglicisms were found in the Abilities & tooltips or Quest titles. Also, over three times as many Anglicisms were found in the achievements section. This could suggest that Anglicisms are less appropriate in some text types, or that the effect created by adding Anglicism to the in-game text is more acceptable in Achievements. Furthermore, since the majority of gamer-speak terms found here are shortenings, it could be that these are more readily incorporated into the secondary system than Anglicisms.

It is perhaps unsurprising that gamer-speak is scarce in the in-game original and localised text. In *WoW*, these terms were only found in the achievements, and in *WildStar*, they were found in all three text types. One of the most remarkable findings is that the localised text sample in *WildStar* contains more gamer-speak than the original (55 in the French versus 3 in the English), as well as more than the localised text in *WoW* (55 in *WildStar* versus 7 in *WoW*). This is interesting, because it begs the question of what might have caused this difference. It could be that the tone of *WildStar* is different than *WoW*, and the immersion in the game narrative therefore is not compromised by including gamer-speak. It might be that the prioritisation of the in-game narrative is not as important to the writers and localisers, and therefore even though gamer-speak detracts from that narrative, the

benefits it applies outweigh this cost. It could also be that because *WildStar* is a younger game, some of the gamer-speak terms have become more widespread and less peripheral in players' repertoires, and as a result accepted in as standard terms. In any case, the inclusion of gamer-speak in the in-game text is interesting, and examples from each of the text types are discussed below.

6.1   Player ability names & tooltips

This section examines one subset of informative text whose main purpose is to provide further knowledge for gamers about game mechanics. These texts – player ability names and their corresponding tooltips – provide clear, concise descriptions about the functioning of some of the core actions that players will use to interact with the game universe.

Abilities are of central importance for gamers because they are the mechanics with which they will interact the most frequently. They not only determine the success or failure of their gaming experience, but they also shape the role and play style of their character. For example, mages use the "Fireball" spell as one of their basic damage-dealing spells. Effective use of the fireball spell (not interrupting the spell casting by pressing "escape" or moving while the spell is cast, having enough mana to cast the spell, positioning at the correct range, etc.) will determine their success or failure in defeating enemies. Also, because it is a magic spell that relates to the elements that mages wield in *WoW* (Fire, Frost, and Arcane), it supports the mage fantasy (as opposed to firing arrows or shooting a rifle). Abilities often share similar mechanical functions, but differ in name between different character roles to maintain the flavour of the character's role or class ("Aimed Shot", a hunter ability, has casting and positioning requirements similar to those of "Fireball"). Therefore, in gamer-generated language, abilities can be grouped by functional metonyms, or individual ability names that have undergone a semantic shift to widen their meaning to include all similar abilities, in situations where any one team member must execute the ability's function, but it is unimportant which class of character does so. This is discussed further in the explanation of the example in Figure 30.

Tooltips are short descriptions of mechanics-governed game systems that typically appear when players mouse over the relevant section of the game's UI. Figure 27 and Figure 28 are examples of tooltips that are not associated with player abilities in *WoW* and *WildStar*, respectively:

Figure 27: Tooltip – *WoW* **dungeon journal**

Figure 28: Tooltip – *WildStar* **inventory**

In Figure 27 we see the view of the reference section of the GUI where the player can search for information about bosses in dungeons and raids known as the "Dungeon Journal". This text appears in the shape of a book that covers the player's avatar. Within this book there are segments that pertain to the player's role in a given boss fight. Here, we see the section for "Damage Dealers" open, and the relevant boss mechanics listed below. The text in blue contains tooltips: when the player scrolls over these blue texts, a window pops up with a further description of that specific mechanic, as seen in Figure 27 with the enemy's ability "Rending Howl". In *WildStar*, the same system exists. Figure 28 shows this in relation to in-game item organisation. The player has opened their inventory and scrolled over an item within (Robe of Corrupted Reality). The pop-up description contains more specific information about the statistics of this item, in this case a piece of equipment.

These two examples show the two archetypal tooltips: one is a prose description of in-game mechanics, and the other an interface within an interface that contains statistics and other explanatory information on relevant mechanics-related systems.

While these examples are not included in the present corpus for linguistic analysis, they illustrate the link between mechanics and narrative: while the information is stripped of dialogue, story, or character development, it is still steeped in the game universe. The interface design and the use of the boss ability names to describe the mechanics are evidence of this, since an entirely mechanics-oriented description, such as those that can be found on fan sites describing boss fights or inventory items, often use not only the in-game terms, but also gamer-speak terms. Probably due to the co-existence of and tension between narrative and mechanics, there are relatively few examples of gamer-speak in the in-game text for this text type. The in-game text tends to maintain the feeling of immersion through use of language that exists in the game universe, and gamer-speak terms would destabilise this immersive language use. So, where French gamers in this study typically borrow the English term to refer to ability names such as "taunt" as a form of gamer-speak, the in-game text uses a French term like *provocation* for the translation of "taunt".

6.1.1 *World of Warcraft*

In line with this translation approach, no gamer-speak was found in the abilities or tooltips in *WoW*. This finding is unlike findings from the in-game chat analysis, where gamer-speak is used frequently to refer to abilities (e.g., *kick, pull, stun, détourne, snare,* etc.). This difference is expected, since the in-game text functions differently than in-game communication. However, what is somewhat surprising is that the ability and tooltip text nonetheless includes some features which are share with gamer-speak, i.e., terms that depart from the game narrative. As a result, since the content in this text type is presented to inform the player about the game mechanics and maintain the flavour of the game's narrative regarding character classes, there is some tension between this attempted balance between mechanics and narrative. The first example from the corpus (Figure 29) shows an ability and tooltip that exhibits this inextricable link between mechanics and narrative in the ST, which is also maintained in the localised version.

Figure 29: *WoW* ability & tooltip – "Winter is Coming"

This ability belongs to the Death Knight character class. When players select the "Frost" specialisation, they unlock a system of "Talents", or a variation of abilities that can be selected in different combinations to subtly alter the performance and play style of the character, as they gain experience and reach higher levels.

PROBLEM$_2$

The ability name and its accompanying tooltip have several challenges for localisation. First, the title is an intertextual reference to a quote from the novel and television series *A Game of Thrones* (Martin 1996). This reference relies both on the user's knowledge of the series and the frost-themed character specialisation. The relationship between these two elements in the ability name creates the

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intertextual reference that links the game universe with the world beyond *WoW*. By doing so, the ability name breaks the fourth wall; however, by tying the reference to the game universe (Frost specialisation), the text justifies this action. Furthermore, the strong tie to the game mechanics further draws this reference into the game universe, since the ability that the talent modifies is called "Remorseless Winter".

At stake for the localiser in such an ability title is the polysystemic relationship between the elements of intertextuality, narrative, and mechanics. The assumption of the title is that the end-user's repertoire will include knowledge of *A Game of Thrones* if they are to understand the reference. In addition, PROBLEM$_2$ gains its meaning in part due to its linguistic relationship with the game's narrative and mechanics; in this case, to the winter and frost themes of the Frost Death Knight specialisation. As a result, PROBLEM$_2$ contains, in three words, an intricate balance of relationships with other texts, both diegetic and extradiegetic, some of which are localised (all the text figuring in the English portion of Figure 29), and some which are not (all the "back end" game code that allows for the mechanics to work, the text to display in the GUI, the enabling of clickable buttons, etc.).

The tooltip's primary purpose is to deliver the technical information that explains the player ability. In the first place, the white section of the tooltip describes the ability as "passive". This means that it will simply affect a character's existing abilities without offering them additional options to input. This is in contrast to "active" abilities, which will typically give a new ability (or a new button on the GUI) for the player to press to make use of the ability. For the remainder of the text, the description refers to three principal game mechanics. Two of these are Death Knight Specific: "Remorseless Winter" and "Pillar of Frost". The third is a general game mechanic: the status effect "stun". The tooltip assumes that the repertoire including these game mechanics is shared between the consumer and the producer. In addition, PROBLEM$_2$ favours unambiguous, clear, and concise writing to convey the information. Finally, PROBLEM$_2$ contains no gamer-speak.

SOLUTION₂

The ability name has been rendered in SOLUTION₂ omitting the intertextual reference: the reference to *A Game of Thrones* is lost here, since the official translation in the novel and film in French was *L'Hiver vient*. Considering this option would fit the translation brief, it seems likely that the localiser has not recognised the reference. However, there is a popular Quebecois folk-rock song that shares the same name as this ability, and this may or may not be intentional. Thus, consumers whose repertoire includes this folk song will read this text and identify an intertextual reference. Because of this, the effect is like that of the reference in the ST, in that it breaks the fourth wall and links the text with an element of popular culture.

The tooltip has maintained the clarity, concision, and unambiguity of the PROBLEM₂ in SOLUTION₂. In French, the translation of the abilities fits roughly in the same space as the English, except for the instruction in green that tells players how to enable this talent in the selection pane, which is slightly longer in French. For the tooltip text to function, the abilities included in PROBLEM₂ must be translated in SOLUTION₂ as they are elsewhere in the game text. This is not only for linguistic consistency within the translation, but also to maintain the functionality of SOLUTION₂, since any lack of clarity or alteration of names of gameplay concepts referred to will cause SOLUTION₂ to no longer function as a tooltip. SOLUTION₂ also contains no gamer-speak.

ACT₂

The translation strategy of substitution has been implemented in the ability title in SOLUTION₂, as one intertextual reference has been replaced with another. This may cause a loss or distortion of the meaning generated by the localised text. However, the localiser has chosen an ability name that offers the same link with the game narrative and mechanics, despite having modified the intertextual reference. The meaning of this reference relies on the relationship with the game mechanics and narrative, and since the character class and the fantasy associated with it are bound to other systems (in-game images, icons, concept art, other NPCs, world environments, etc.) these elements cannot depart from the lexical field on which they are based if they are to maintain their relationship with these game systems.

Therefore, the localiser is restricted to intertextual references that include elements from the same lexical field in the TL. In this case, nevertheless, maintaining the reference to *A Game of Thrones* in SOLUTION₂ could also achieved this aim. In addition to the mechanics and narrative, systems such as French language, the layout of *WoW*'s GUI, and the icon associated with the text have bearing on the localisation of this text.

Following this analysis, Table 29 shows the in-game text example with its associated PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂. Analysis of this ability and tooltip shows two relevant features relating the text to gamer-speak: intertextuality and the connection between mechanics and narrative which could contribute to the use, or lack thereof, of gamer-speak terms:

ST	PROBLEM₂	SOLUTION₂	TT
<u>Ability Name</u>: "Winter is coming" <u>Tooltip</u>: "Enemies struck 5 times by Remorseless Winter while your Pillar of Frost is active are stunned for 4 sec."	Ability name and tooltip affecting two abilities with winter and frost themes, relying on an intertextual reference to the popular fantasy novel and television series *Game of Thrones*.	Ability name and tooltip affecting two abilities with winter and frost themes, which contains an intertextual reference to a *Quebecois* folk song.	<u>Ability Name</u>: "*L'Hiver approche*" <u>Tooltip</u>: "*Les ennemis touchés 5 fois par Hiver impitoyable alors que votre pilier de givre est actif sont étourdis pendent 4s*".

Table 29: PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂: "Winter is Coming"

First, the use of intertextuality in PROBLEM₂ shows that it is acceptable in some abilities and tooltips to depart from the in-game narrative: this reference necessarily brings gamers who have *A Game of Thrones* in their repertoire out of the *WoW* universe. Second, this example is interesting because the description of the in-game mechanics is translated with the standard French term for a mechanic that is often referred to by French gamers using gamer-speak. The analysis in this study showed that instead of using the term *étourdis* gamers resort to the Anglicism "stun". There are two potential explanations for this phenomenon. First, because of the didactic nature of tooltips, standard terms are preferred over gamer-speak terms to avoid ambiguity and limiting the target audience. This could explain why no gamer-speak was found in abilities and tooltips in *WoW*. Another possible explanation for the

lack of gamer-speak would be the tendency to keep in-game text rooted in the in-game narrative. However, because of intertextuality as seen in Figure 29, this explanation is unlikely. Given that intertextuality relating to popular culture seems to be acceptable and gamer-speak is not, there must be another explanation for the absence of gamer-speak in *WoW* ability text.

In any case, we can see that while PROBLEM$_1$ contains a specific intertextual reference, SOLUTION$_2$ forgoes that reference for another (either through the application of direct translation, or a substitution strategy, according to Pedersen (2011)[79]), and makes no mention of the gamer-speak term that players use in place of the standard term in the tooltip. That is not to say that "stun" should replace *étourdis* in this case. However, since the non-standard term is used by gamers to coordinate gameplay, the didactic nature of tooltips could provide this information, thus improving the end-user experience by preparing gamers for using the in-game text in their gameplay coordination. Because the gameplay relating to the stun is the same for the English and French audiences, referring to this mechanic with a longer term (*étourdis*) will lead to a different gameplay experience than referring to it with a term of the same length. As a result, while the standard term provides gamers with the look and feel of the original narrative, it does not provide a similar look and feel regarding the gameplay experience. For this reason, the localised text may fall short of providing this authentic experience for the target audience.

In this example, the importance of the intertextual reference is not so much its content, but that there is a reference at all. It seems more important that SOLUTION$_2$ retains some intertextual reference that has the potential to be understood here by consumers in possession of the relevant repertoire, than referring to the same specific element of popular culture in PROBLEM$_2$. Furthermore, the intertextuality derives its meaning from the connection between the element of popular culture and the in-game text. While the content of the intertextual reference can be altered, the relationship with the in-game text must be maintained, at the risk of altering the text's functionality. In this way, the notion of *carte blanche* afforded to localisers to modify intertextual references according to

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[79] This is difficult to ascertain in this case since the direct literal translation does share a name with a TL ECR, and therefore it is unclear which of these two strategies was applied.

Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 15) must be nuanced. In cases such as this, the localiser modifies, or potentially removes the cultural reference, but they do not modify the text's relationship with the game mechanics and narrative. In this way, the *carte blanche* is not so much restricted by severe space constraints (ibid: 15), but more so by the interdependency of the game text on other in-game text, both relating to game mechanics and narrative.

This last point might seem mundane, since the creative license afforded to video game localisers rarely extends to modifying gameplay. Where this becomes relevant to the present research is the relationship video game text has with the different systems that form the localised video game polysystem, and the relationship these systems have with gamer-speak. This is explained further in the section 6.4.

The text in Figure 30 is a Rogue ability, whose analysis sheds light on the relationship between the in-game text and gamer-speak, as well as on the nature of the latter, illustrating the use of a functional metonym:

Figure 30: *WoW* **ability & tooltip – "Kick"**

This ability ("kick") is used to counter certain mechanics in-game that are considered "spells". All rogues, regardless of specialisation, have access to this ability. Furthermore, this type of ability that "interrupts" spellcasting is available to nearly all classes, and referred to with different terms in the in-game text. However, possibly since rogues were originally the only class that could do this reliably, "kick" has undergone a sematic shift. It has been widened in its meaning, and is often used in English and French gamer-speak as the metonym for all interrupt abilities. These can either be during PvE or PvP combat. The qualitative analysis

below reveals more about the interaction between gameplay and narrative, and the relationship between gamer-speak and the in-game text.

Here the title of the ability is one word. Its translation could be problematic because the part of speech that "kick" is meant to be is ambiguous, as it could be a verb or a noun[80]. However, in the context of most other ability names, it is likely to be the noun form. This ability is less-strongly tied to the mechanics and narrative than the previous example, since it is somewhat arbitrary why a rogue would be more likely to kick than other character classes. However, other rogue abilities draw from the lexical field of fighting dirty and unfair play (e.g., "cheap shot", "blind", "backstab", "ambush", etc.). Since the rogue relies on agility and acrobatic styles of fighting, the kick might fit in line with the trickery and agility. For this reason, the ability title is simply "kick", as opposed to some of the monk abilities that rely more on the lexical field of the martial arts ("spinning crane kick", "rising sun kick", etc.).

Here the white text in the tooltip contains three key pieces of information: the range (8 yards), the cast time (instant), and the resources required (time: once used, this ability will be unavailable for a 15 second "cooldown"). The tooltip is clear and concise as with Figure 29, except for the addition of the adjective "quick". This is an interesting addition because it offers no real value to the didactic nature of the tooltip. Rather, it fulfils two secondary functions: 1) it draws the tooltip closer to the game narrative, and 2) it indirectly hints at the context in which the ability will be used. The interrupt mechanic is usually something that requires patients to react quickly. Often, to prevent enemy mechanics that would otherwise cause significant damage or other undesired effects, players with interrupt abilities such as "kick" will have to use their ability before the cast has time to complete. In addition, the ability is instant, meaning it requires no time to charge and no delay in casting. Therefore, both the way this ability is triggered and the context in which it is needed are fast-paced. This quickness is reinforced by the tooltip. The tooltip refers to three

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[80] This type of challenge is accentuated by localisers frequently having to work in Microsoft Excel, without the context of how a string fits in with the broader game context.

game mechanics that affect this ability: 1) spells and spell "schools", 2) "instant" cast abilities, and 3) interrupts.

SOLUTION₂

The translation of this title is, principally, three words in place of one. While this might traditionally be thought of as problematic for video game localisation (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 16) because of space constraints, the window is large enough to accommodate the additional text. However, since the text is used in the context of fast-paced in-game mechanics, the increased length might affect the functionality of this ability title when players are communicating. In the in-game voice chat, *kick* was used 273 times (both *WoW* and *WildStar*), and *coup de pied* was not used. In the survey, 60.31% of respondents used the term *kick*, and 8.56% used *coup de pied*.[81]

The SOLUTION₂ tooltip is also considerably longer than in PROBLEM₂. However, this 31.58% increase in length is to be expected in translation from English to French (Chandler & Deming 2012: 132). The mechanics referenced in PROBLEM₂ are rendered in standard French in SOLUTION₂. Several of these terms are replaced by gamer-speak terms in gamer conversations in this corpus. Beyond the previously mentioned *coup de pied* which becomes *kick* (see 5.1.2), also *instantané* becomes *instant*, *portée* becomes *range*, *interrompt* becomes *interrupt*, *lancement* becomes *cast*, and *sort* becomes *spell*.[82] Notable here is that not all of these gamer-speak terms are shorter than their standard French counterparts (see discussion of Table 26), and all of them are Standard English loan words. Despite gamer-speak being used for these terms among gamers, SOLUTION₂ contains no gamer-speak. It could be argued that the inclusion of gamer-speak in SOLUTION₂ is not justified due to the absence of gamer-speak in PROBLEM₂, and that the difference in length in the ability is not problematic as there is enough space in the GUI. However, since the French standard term *coup de pied* is notably longer, it is less optimal for use when coordinating gameplay situations where there is a limited time in which this ability must be executed, given

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[81] Also worth noting, 13.62% used another gamer-speak term (such as *cs* or *cc*), and 14.40% did not recognise the term.

[82] These examples were all found in the voice chat or written chat data.

that game mechanics are the same for both English and French-speaking players. Despite this complicating factor for the target audience, SOLUTION$_2$ contains text which supports the game narrative instead of the system of game mechanics. By using standard French, the text does not break the fourth wall in the way that it might were gamer-speak included. Yet, new gamers relying on this tooltip to learn about game mechanics will also not be provided with the terminology that would enable them to communicate about these mechanics with more experienced players, nor will they have immediate access to the term *kick* which may lead to more efficient gameplay coordination.

ACT$_2$

Since scholars maintain that the text should be translated with the goal of having the look and feel as though it were an original (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 11), opting for standard French in SOLUTION$_2$ aligns with PROBLEM$_2$ (standard English is used in PROBLEM$_2$ and standard French is used in SOLUTION$_2$). Nevertheless, because the system of mechanics is the same for the source and target audience, and therefore the timings and length of mechanics are not modified in the localised game,[83] the fact that the text in SOLUTION$_2$ is longer makes it impossible for the French-speaking audience to access the text as though it were an original. In this case, the localisation of text into standard French maintains the look and feel of the text by aligning with the game's narrative. However, we know from the data from section 5.1.1 that gamers tend towards alternative solutions enabling communication to overcome the challenges that are linked to specific game mechanics. As a result, it could be argued that the skopos of the localised text cannot be fulfilled in this instance. This reasoning may explain why the look and feel and game experience appear at odds, just as the notions of gameplay and narrative can be at odds: while the text *reads* as though it were an original, it will not *play* as though it were an original. This discrepancy could be one of the primary motivating factors for the creation of gamer-speak in French.

The "spellcasting" mechanic and "interrupt" counter mechanic are common features in MMORPG play. In the original version of *WoW*, rogues made up one of

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[83] That is, the same number of seconds allowed to successfully execute certain abilities such as interrupts is the same for the SC and TC.

the few character classes that could interrupt spells with a regularly available ability such as "kick" (15 second cooldown). Subsequently, as the game evolved, this ability became more and more in-demand, and the other character classes were modified to have a similar ability. Figure 31 shows these abilities in each of the other classes in the current iteration of *WoW* at the time of writing:
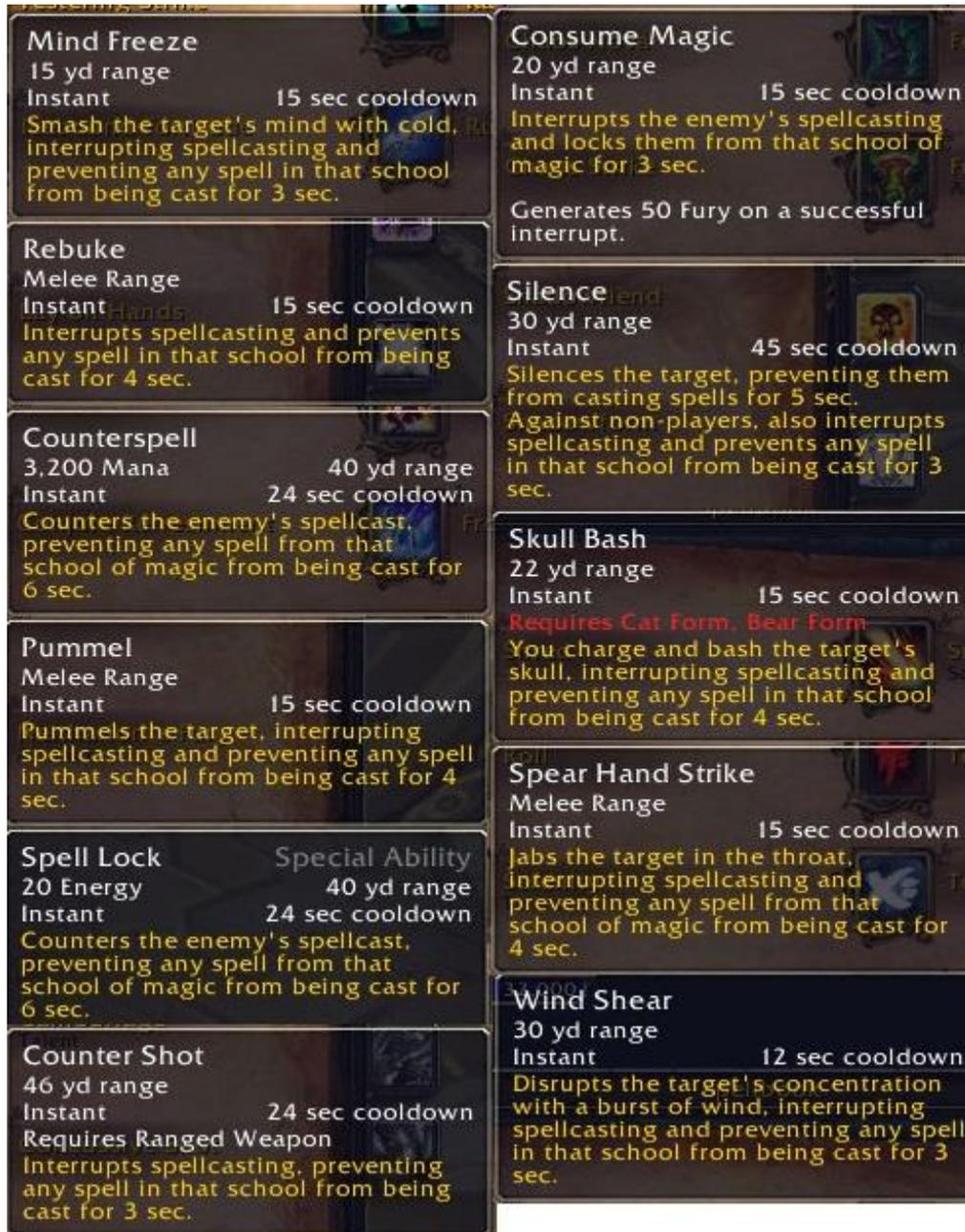

Figure 31: *WoW* **interrupt abilities – non-rogue classes**

These abilities serve roughly the same purpose in terms of the in-game mechanics: they are used to counter certain enemy spells, whether players or NPCs are casting

them. Each one varies slightly in its mechanics (cooldown, length of spell lockout, range, resources consumed/generated) and each is nuanced slightly either in the title and tooltip to fit with the fantasy of the character class using the ability (e.g., "Spear Hand Strike", from the martial arts lexical field, is used by Monks). As discussed in this section, in the examples of French gamer-speak found in this study, the "interrupt" mechanic is often referred to simply as *kick* when players communicate during raid coordination. This phenomenon is exemplified in Table 25, where kick could be used to refer to any of the abilities shown. Gamer communication during raids primarily revolves around the coordination and successful besting of in-game challenges based on mechanics. However, these mechanics are explained to players in text that includes the game's narrative. The clash here between the translation of the fiction associated with the game's narrative and the unlocalised game rules associated with game mechanics causes the localised text to be functional for players to learn about the game, but less fit to use during their gameplay.

ST	PROBLEM₂	SOLUTION₂	TT
<u>Ability Name</u>: Kick <u>Tooltip</u>: A quick kick that interrupts spellcasting and prevents any spell in that school from being cast for 5 sec.	Ability name and tooltip that relate to martial combat. The ability relates to game mechanics such that it enables the player to interrupt opponents' spellcasting.	Ability name and tooltip that relate to martial combat. The ability relates to game mechanics such that it enables the player to interrupt opponents' spellcasting. Ability name text is three times longer and tooltip text is ~20% longer than in PROBLEM₂	<u>Ability Name</u>: *Coup de pied* <u>Tooltip</u>: *Un coup de pied rapide qui interrompt l'incantation en course et empêche le lancement de tout sort de la même école pendant 5s.*

Table 30: PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂: "Kick"

Under this analysis, without the difference in length, PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂ are similar. However, because of the implications the difference in length (particularly of the ability name) has on gameplay coordination, the text functions very differently in the English and the French systems. For this reason, although the game narrative that relates to the "rogue" character class abilities is maintained, it

comes at the cost of the functionality of this ability name in the TT for gameplay communication.

The next example is another instance where the negotiation of game narrative and game mechanics can be problematic. However, and unlike the previous example, in the example provided in Figure 32 priority has been given to shorter forms when localising the spellcasting ability "Starfall" (*Météores*), even when this results in overlapping with another ability name (the "Meteor" ability from Mages who select the "Fire" specialisation, also localised in French as *Météore*).

Figure 32: *WoW* **ability & tooltip – "Starfall"**

The "Starfall" ability is used by Druids with the "Balance" specialisation. The specialisation uses nature magic and astral energy to deal damage to enemies. The spell is one of a category typically referred to as an "Area of Effect", or AOE. As seen in Figure 22, AOE abilities allow players to target a specific zone, rather than targeting a single enemy or friendly player. All who enter the targeted zone will be affected by the spell's mechanic. Below, the analysis of PROBLEM$_2$, SOLUTION$_2$ and ACT$_2$ for this example reveal complications both for this text's reading and for its use during gameplay by the target audience.

PROBLEM$_2$

This ability name is a one-word compound noun that evokes both the reference to the game's narrative and mechanics. Referring to the stars relates the ability to the character specialisation to which the ability belongs. The notion of the stars falling evokes an area of effect ability, as if the stars are raining down on the ground, causing damage to those who enter the zone.

The tooltip relies on several systems to explain this ability. The white tooltip text just below the title specifies the resources needed to activate it (60 Astral Power), the range the caster has for casting (49 yards) and the cast time of the spell (Instant). The yellow portion of the tooltip is split into two sections: the first describes the AOE nature of the ability and the amount of damage it does, and the second describes a debuff or secondary effect that the ability inflicts on enemies. This description relies on two primary game mechanics in the two sections: AOE abilities and debuffs, respectively. The link to the game's narrative is made with the stellar themes that are attributed to the Balance Druid specialisation, with the description including the reference to "astral damage", and the "Moonfire" and "Sunfire" abilities.

SOLUTION₂

The SOLUTION₂ for the ability name here maintains the relationship to the game's mechanics and narrative: the notion of the ability falling to the ground from the sky because of some sort of astral event is encapsulated by *Météores* [meteors] in the TL in a similar way to what Starfall does in the SL. However, this ability has a different effect in the TC system because of another ability with a similar name. Mages who select the "Fire" specialisation can use an ability called "Meteor", which has been localised into French as *Météore*. Being homonyms in the TL, this overlap between these two skills could potentially cause confusion when French gamers coordinate gameplay. Also noteworthy is the difference in the layout of SOLUTION₂ – while the text in the tooltip is only between 11% and 12% longer (both in terms of word count and character count), the tooltip box has been elongated. This is probably done in order to accommodate the extra words used to refer to the resources needed for this ability "astral power" (*points de puissance astrale*).

The description is also interesting because of the way in which calling down Starfall is depicted. In PROBLEM₂ the damage is described as waves, and in SOLUTION₂ it is described as *pluie* [rain]. This word choice is explored further in the following section, where descriptive and tentative explanations of translation solutions are discussed.

ACT₂

The localiser has made some interesting lexical choices for both the ability name and tooltip in Figure 32. Since the French collocation *pluie d'étoiles filantes* [meteor shower] used in the tooltip description could also have been used as the ability name, it is interesting that the localiser has opted for an ability name that shares the root with the Fire Mage ability "Meteor". Following the current thinking on localisation limitations (Bernal 2014: 195; Chandler 2011: 34; Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 11), a logical conclusion would be that space restrictions could have prompted the localiser to use a shorter ability name. However, this is not supported in the present corpus, where there are many longer TL ability names (Kick / *coup de pied*, Zap / *zappeur*, Bloodlust / *furie sanguinaire*, Obliterate / *anéantissement*) and since the text box was altered to accommodate a longer text in other parts of the tooltip. A possible explanation may be that the benefit of a shorter ability name outweighed the problem of the overlap with the Fire Mage ability, and it would neither depart from the game narrative nor impede the didactic function of the text.

ST	PROBLEM₂	SOLUTION₂	TT
Ability Name: Starfall Tooltip: Calls down waves of falling stars at the targeted area, dealing 236,142 Astral damage over 8 sec. Also applies Stellar Empowerment to each target, which increases damage taken from your Moonfire and Sunfire by 93%.	Ability name and tooltip involving abilities in the lexical field of the stars and sun energy, affecting area of effect abilities and damage over time abilities.	Ability name and tooltip involving abilities in the lexical field of the stars and sun energy, affecting area of effect abilities and damage over time abilities. The ability title is a homonym with another player ability.	Ability Name: *Météores* Tooltip: *Invoque une pluie d'étoile filantes sur la zone ciblée, qui inflige 236,142 points de dégâts des Astres en 8 s. Applique également à chaque cible Renforcement stellaire, qui augmente de 93% les dégâts subis d'Éclat lunaire et Éclat solaire.*

Table 31: Summary of PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂: "Starfall"

The addition of the homonym in SOLUTION₂ here suggests a potential ambiguity not present in the ST. While the example in Figure 32 contains no gamer-speak per se, gamer-speak could have had some influence on the localised text. Even though this ability name allows for the possibility of confusion in the TL, and could be

deemed sub-optimal for gamer communication, the localiser has still chosen this term, perhaps considering gamer-communication. As such, the localiser could have been influenced by the knowledge that gamers use different language to refer to these terms. Whereas it is possible that this option was chosen without considering the issue of gamer communication, there is significant evidence from my data that concision is often not the first choice when other options are available. This example further highlights the division of the function of the in-game text between being read and being "played". This divided purpose is one more reason for the prevalence of gamer-speak in the written and spoken gamer exchanges and the relative lack of gamer-speak in the in-game text.

6.1.2 *WildStar*

The analysis of ability names and tooltips in *WildStar* has revealed some similarities with those analysed in *WoW*, but also some notable differences. Regarding similarities, the analysis of this text type in *WildStar* has also revealed the relationship between game mechanics and narrative, and the different purposes of the in-game text when it is read versus when it is played, which result in the absence or limited use of gamer-speak. As for divergences, while no gamer-speak was found in *WoW* for this text type, 42 instances have been found in the ST and 52 in the TT for *WildStar*. The English gamer-speak terms included here were "bot" (shortening of robot) and "CC" (shortening of Crowd Control). The French gamer-speak terms that were included here were *PV* (shortening of *point(s) de vie* [health points]), *CF* (shortening of *Controle de foule* [Crowd Control, or "CC"]), and *bot* (either a shortening of *robot* or a loan from the English gamer-speak term). Perhaps most interesting of these findings is that more gamer-speak was found in the TT than the ST. This is due to the use of *PV* in the French text. Where the English tooltips refer to "health", the French text refers to *PV*. Because *PV*, *CF*, and *bot* appear many times in Ability names & Tooltips, the gamer-speak count is significantly higher in *WildStar* (see Table 27). This is discussed further in the analysis of Figure 34.

All *WildStar* ability tooltips are divided into five distinct parts: (1) the ability name and nature is shown at the top; this is followed by (2) a segment in blue above an in-set box showing the circumstances that allow the use of the ability; (3) the

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white text in an in-set box summarises the effect that ability has on the enemy; (4) the green text immediately below the in-set box summarises the effect that the currently held "tier upgrade" has on the ability; and (5) the remaining light-blue and blue text explain the effect of future upgrades if they occur.

The first example for analysis shows similar characteristics to examples from *WoW* in terms of the relationship between game mechanics and narrative. Perhaps as a result of this relationship and tension, we see in this example that preference is given to standard French versus gamer-speak (e.g., "stun" is localised as *étourdissement*). In addition, although this example (Figure 33) does not include gamer-speak as such, we see an instance of creative use of morphology in the TL, similar to those used by gamers when creating gamer-speak.

Figure 33: *WildStar* **ability & tooltip – "Zap"**

This ability is used by the "Engineer" character class. The ability works as an AOE stun ability as well as dealing a small amount of damage. Its interaction with gameplay and narrative in the ST and TT as well as some of the choices made in localisation are now discussed.

PROBLEM$_2$

The title is either a verb or a noun for the action taking place: the character uses a discharge of electricity to deal damage and stun enemies. This one-syllable ability name is interesting both because it aligns with the game narrative of the Engineer using mechanical, technical, and industrial means to dispatch their enemies, but also with the game mechanics of being an instant cast. Furthermore, the notions of speed, sudden application of energy, and projectile movement all serve to reinforce the mechanics and narrative systems that contextualise this title.

The first section of this tooltip resembles the tooltips from *WoW*: the information provided includes the range, resources required, and cast time of the ability. However, in addition, an indication of the target or area that is affected by the ability is given. In this case, the ability is "freeform" (see 4.2) which means that instead of targeting an individual, the ability will deploy in a designed direction outlined by a graphic superimposed in front of or around the player. This is like the green "targeting reticule" used to target certain AOE abilities in *WoW*.

The tooltip also differs from *WoW* tooltips in this first section with the addition of the "base" text in the top-right corner. This indicates that the ability forms a part of the core abilities available to this character class, rather than bestowed on them by their choice of talents. The section in white text in the inset box functions as the prose explanation section of the tooltips in *WoW*. However, there is an additional explanation of the core game mechanic referenced in the explanation ("stun" in this case). The stun mechanic also functions similarly to that in *WoW* in that it causes the player character or NPC to be unable to act for a short duration. Furthermore, there is an additional mechanic called "interrupt armor" which is a positive passive effect that is continually present, or "buff", on certain opponents that can have several charges, or "stacks", and that will decrease in stacks as players use crowd-control (CC) abilities against the bearer of this buff. The third section provides information about the current "tier" level of the ability. As the player advances in *WildStar* they can upgrade certain abilities. This green text states the upgrade that is currently in effect: a longer stun effect duration and an increase in damage. Finally, in the fourth section, the tooltip describes the bonuses that significant tier upgrades will provide should the player invest in this ability. If

upgraded, the ability will include removal of two stacks of "interrupt armor", and the application of an additional negative status effect, or "debuff", on enemies called "Expose". This debuff is subsequently explained in this final section of the tooltip.

This ability title and tooltip incorporate many core game mechanics, some of which are taken for granted and some of which are explained within the tooltip. For example, there is no explanation of what a freeform attack is. Similarly, "interrupt armor" is not explained. On the other hand, the stun and expose status effects are explained. It is curious that the tooltip writers feel it necessary to explain certain core game mechanics and not others. This calls into question the textual status of the different effects. The notion that some mechanics are assumed to be understood by gamers and not others is difficult to justify, since the stun mechanic is one of the most common and widespread across MMORPGs, and "interrupt armor" is an effect that is unique to *WildStar*. While discerning the different statuses of these mechanics is beyond the scope of this study, it remains an integral aspect of PROBLEM$_2$. As with other tooltips, the tone is clear and concise. Abilities are explained simply and are unembellished.

SOLUTION$_2$

SOLUTION$_2$ contains several compelling and revealing renderings in standard French. First, the title has been transformed from an act to an agent – rather than the "zap" the name is now a "zapper". This is particularly interesting, because in this transformation the French version alludes to the word *sappeur,* or "sapper", which is traditionally a military engineer. This brings a new link with the game's narrative and mechanics, since this ability belongs to the Engineer character class in-game. In addition, further in-game mechanics of stun, expose, and "interrupt armor" removal that accompany this ability fit with the "real-life" role of a military sapper: degrading, diminishing, and weakening enemy defences.

The words "cooldown" and "range" were translated into standard French as *temps de recharge* and *portée*, respectively. This portion of SOLUTION$_2$ is in line with the previous renderings we have seen in tooltips in *WoW*. However, it is worth noting that *WildStar* players, during their gameplay coordination, sometimes use

the shortening *cd* (found eight times in this study, compared with no recorded uses of *temps de recharge*) and the Anglicism *range* (only used once, compared with no recorded uses of *portée*). In this first section the text is also notably longer except for the translation of "freeform". Here, the rendering as *libre* has left the French text shorter than the English text. This rendering is interesting, because it assumes contextual information based on the placement of the text in the UI. While the word *libre* does not refer to the casting area of abilities as "freeform" does in English, because the word is alone in this portion of the tooltip, it is understood that it offers information about the ability, and by process of elimination and compared against other tooltips (see Figure 34) gamers can discern the meaning of this portion of the description. It is interesting to note that *libre* was not found in the voice chat data.

The second section of the tooltip is interesting for the use of translation options which would be valid in different contexts. This ability description uses a "*(s)*" to allow for the value that precedes it to be singular or plural (*Inflige 879 point(s) de dégâts*), and the structure "destroys x interrupt armor" (*détruit armure disruptive x 1* or *détruit armure disruptive x 2*). Potential reasons for rendering text in this way are discussed in the ACT_2 portion of this section. This tooltip section is also notably longer than the $PROBLEM_2$ however, the increase in length does not necessitate any extra lines for text, nor any changes in the dimensions of the box in which the text is inset.

The final section contains similar abbreviations and the use of the colon to demarcate a sub-tooltip. Interesting in this section is the omission of the word "unlocked" in $PROBLEM_2$. This could be due to space concerns, or because it is understood that, by labelling the ability upgrade with a character level, the level indicates when the ability will be unlocked. Finally, the last section assumes the gamer understands that *Exposition* is a negative status effect because it omits the mention of the "enemy" present in $PROBLEM_2$. Because of this omission, $SOLUTION_2$ in this example takes for granted the end-user knowledge that this ability targets enemies based on the contextual information in the tooltip.

ACT₂

ACT$_2$

Some of the information obtained from the analysis of PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ in this tooltip does provide insight into ACT$_2$. Primarily, this is seen in the use of the *point(s)* and *armure disruptive x 1* construction to enable the value to be either singular or plural. This indicates that the localiser has had to translate text with a variable. O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 11) define a variable as a "[p]arameter in a software string that can be replaced by different values when certain conditions are met". In other words, while the gamer sees "Deal 879 physical damage […] Destroys 1 Interrupt Armor" the localiser had a text that said "Deal $(eff=125182.input0pct) physical damage […] Destroys $(eff=125183.data03rawInt) Interrupt Armor". With this sort of text, developers can reuse stock phrases of text for given situations. However, the localiser is faced with the problem that, whereas in the English version "damage" and "armor" are both appropriate for singular and plural permutations, the French version can differ. Therefore, if the localiser had rendered the text as *$(eff=125182.input0pct) points de dégâts*, without the "*s*" in brackets, in the case that the variable shows a "1", the localised version will not agree in number.

ST	PROBLEM₂	SOLUTION₂	TT
Ability Name: Zap Tooltip: Deal 879 physical damage and apply a stun to 5 foes Stun: Prevents any action for 2.5s. Destroys 1 Interrupt Armor.	Ability name and tooltip relating to an electrical discharge that an Engineer can use to damage and stun enemies. Also provided is an explanation of the "Stun" and "Interrupt Armor" mechanics.	Ability name (using a new coinage through morphological adaptation) and tooltip relating to the electrical discharge that an Engineer can use to the role of a military sapper to damage and stun their enemies. Also provided is an explanation of the "Stun" and "Interrupt Armor" mechanics.	Ability Name: *Zappeur* Tooltip: *Inflige 879 point(s) de dégâts physiques et applique Étourdissement à 5 adversaires. Étourdissement : empêche toute action pendant 2,5s. Détruit Armure disruptive x1.*

Table 32: PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂: "Zap"

The difference between PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ of note here is that the localiser seems to have a degree of freedom regarding the title. They maintained a link with the game's mechanics and narrative, but altered the form of the title name

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adding in SOLUTION$_2$ a reference that is not in PROBLEM$_2$. Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 11) support this notion that the localiser has a high degree of creative freedom for such text, thus allowing for this sort of addition, within the space restrictions of video game interfaces.

This creative freedom, however, does not extend to gamer-speak use in this example despite the ability title having similar features. The non-standard *zappeur* is a sort of blend that brings together the electricity of the in-game mechanic (zap) and the narrative flavour of the engineer (*sappeur*). It is worth noting that *zappeur* was not found in the *WildStar* voice chat data. Based on this example, the use of non-standard linguistic forms is permitted in the localisation of ability names. Indeed, the analysis has revealed that non-standard forms are also included in tooltip text in the ST and TT, sometimes even in the form of gamer-speak as shown the following example in Figure 34:
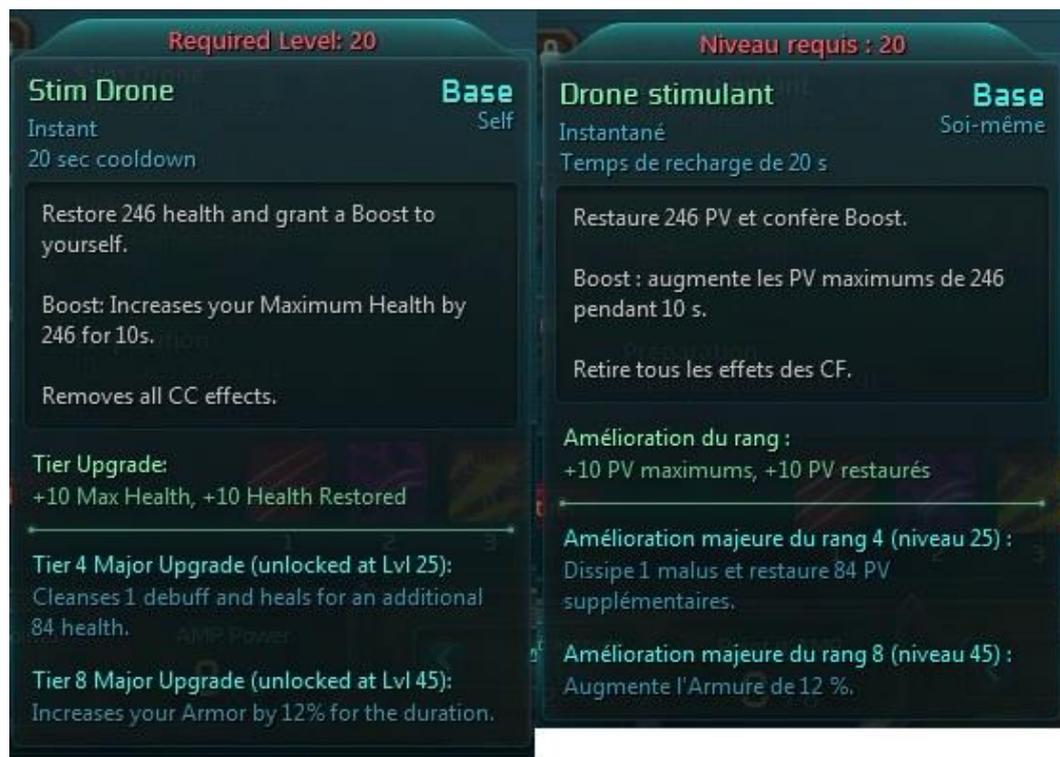
Figure 34: *WildStar* **ability & tooltip – "Stim Drone"**

This ability belongs to the "Stalker" class, and refers to one of the healing abilities that this class uses to cleanse themselves of negative status effects and restore health points.

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PROBLEM₂

PROBLEM₂ in this ability's tooltip incorporates two notable gamer-speak terms: "CC" and "debuff". CC is a shortening of "Crowd Control", which could also be classified as a shift. This term refers to abilities that apply an effect that temporarily incapacitates the target or renders it innocuous. Typically, these abilities are used in PvE combat when several strong monsters are closely grouped together and attack simultaneously. To make the group manageable, one or more monsters is/are "cc'ed" and the rest are killed. The use of this gamer-speak term in PROBLEM₂ is significant, since it both breaks with the in-game narrative, and is non-standard language. Since it is a metonym that could refer to a number of different in-game abilities ("stun", "tremor" or "collapse", among others) it removes the individual flavour that CC abilities typically include. Also, the shortening of this term makes the tooltip inaccessible regarding this mechanic to players who are not familiar with the gamer-speak term. As a result, PROBLEM₂ in this example also requires the localiser to be familiar with this gamer-speak term.

Regarding the second gamer-speak term included in the in-game text, "debuffs" are negative status effect inflicted upon the target (as opposed to "buffs", which are positive effects). This ability, when the Tier 4 upgrade is applied, removes one such negative effect.

Inclusion of these terms has two effects on the in-game text. First, it places an emphasis on the use of these terms in cooperative play. Second, these terms bring the in-game text out of the game's narrative, since CC and debuff do not exist in the language of the in-game characters. These terms, therefore, break the fourth wall and cause the consumer to be aware of the extradiegetic use of this text in group gameplay.

SOLUTION₂

SOLUTION₂ also contains two gamer-speak terms: *CF* and *PV*. *CF* is a shortening of *contrôle de foule* [crowd control], used as a French gamer-speak equivalent of the English gamer-speak term CC. Like its counterpart, *Contrôle de foule* could also be classified as a shift. Although *debuff* is a gamer-speak term used by French gamers, borrowed from English gamer-speak, it has not been included in

SOLUTION₂. Nevertheless, the gamer-speak term *PV*, a shortening of *Point(s) de vie* [health point(s)] used by players when communicating during gameplay (*PV* was found seven times across all voice chat data in *WoW* and *WildStar*, and was not found in the written chat data), has been included as an equivalent of "health" in PROBLEM₂.

ACT₂

Three different approaches have been applied here regarding gamer-speak: "CC" has become *CF* through the use of an equivalent gamer-speak term; "Health Points" has become *PV* with an addition of gamer-speak where none existed in PROBLEM₂; and "debuff" has become *malus* in an omission of the gamer-speak term in favour of a standard term (meaning malus, or penalty in English). This shows that, when gamer-speak figures in the in-game text, there may not be a systematic approach for how to render it in the TL. Furthermore, the use of *PV* could be interpreted as a compensation strategy: where gamer-speak was removed in one instance ("debuff" to "malus") it has been added in another ("health points" to "PV").

ST	PROBLEM₂	SOLUTION₂	TT
Ability Name: Stim Drone Tooltip: Restore 246 health and grant a Boost to yourself. Boost: Increase your maximum Health by 246 for 10s. Removes all CC effects […] Cleanses 1 debuff and heals for an additional 84 health	Ability name and tooltip relating to a robotic stimulant that cleanses the user and restores health points. Uses gamer-speak terms relating to enemy management (CC) and status effects (debuff).	Ability name and tooltip relating to a robotic stimulant that cleanses the user and restores health points. Uses gamer-speak relating to enemy management (*CF*) and health points (*PV*).	Ability Name: *Drone stimulant* Tooltip: *Restaure 246 PV et confère Boost.* *Boost : augmente les PV maximums de 246 pendent 10 s.* *Retire tous les effets des CF* *[...]* *Dissipe 1 malus et restaure 84 PV supplémentaires*

Table 33: PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂: "Stim Drone"

This analysis illustrates how gamer-speak has been handled in the transfer from PROBLEM2 to SOLUTION2. Because of the addition of gamer-speak, SOLUTION2 is of similar length. With the use of an equivalent, an omission, and an addition of gamer-speak terms in this example, there seems to be no uniform

strategy adopted in the localisation of gamer-speak. As such, because of this apparent lack of uniform strategy in localising gamer-speak, and because of the evolving nature of gamer-speak in the TL, where gamer-speak figures in the in-game text, it engenders a unique challenge for MMORPG localisers.

Gamer-speak is frequently used by gamers during exchanges about mechanics, but much less often in the in-game text referring to those same mechanics. In *WoW*, this result is stark, in that no gamer-speak was found in abilities and tooltips. In *WildStar*, while some gamer-speak terms are used systematically in abilities and tooltips in the TT (*CF* and *PV*), others are not (e.g., *debuff*, *stun*). This discrepancy may be due to the differing acceptance of certain gamer-speak terms into the secondary system. Since *debuff* and *stun* are Anglicisms and *CF* and *PV* are shortenings based on standard French, it may be that target-language based gamer-speak is more readily accepted into the centralised system. Based on this interpretation, it could be argued that a shortened term is more likely to be assimilated by a new gamer, since contextual information and process of elimination could lead gamers to discover the meaning of a French-based term. On the other hand, without having gamer-speak as part of their repertoire, and without some level of English mastery, Anglicised gamer-speak terms will be difficult to understand.

As such, gamer-speak, according to the examples found in the present corpus, has the potential to exclude a subset of gamers, and while frequently more concise than standard equivalents, can be less clear. Since the localisation of in-game text seems to prioritise the in-game text as a "read" text, this reason might explain the discrepancy between in-game text and gamer-generated text found here.

The next text type, the quest title, has strong links with the game narrative. Despite perpetuating the game's narrative function, quest titles present several interesting features that relate to gamer-speak usage and, from a linguistic point of view, traits such as the use of non-standard language.

6.2   Quest titles

Quests in MMORPGs are tasks that players must complete to simultaneously acquire experience points (XP), in-game currency, equipment upgrades, and advance the storyline. In *WoW* and *WildStar* quests tend to be the most efficient way to gain XP and level up, but even once maximum level is reached, players will continue to complete quests for the additional rewards and to advance the story. Typically, most of the game's narrative and events that shape the game universe are told via quests. Often there are significant quests that mark the end of a chapter in the game narrative that contain cutscenes, or cinematic depictions of the game's narrative. All these act as additional rewards to encourage players to experience the full storyline. Some of these can be completed alone, and others only with the help of a group. They may exist because MMORPGs do not have a linear progression of storyline, as with novels, films, or many other traditional forms of literature. Rather, players can complete the endgame content, typically found in large group content such as raids, every week without exploring much of the game's storyline. The principal antagonists are the bosses found in the most difficult raid content in each expansion, and these are on a weekly timer so that players can repeatedly kill (or "farm") the bosses for more chances at acquiring the items ("loot") – the reward for killing them.

Quests employ different text forms to advance the game's narrative. There is a quest title, a description of how to complete the quest, dialogue between the quest giver and the player, and sometimes sound, virtual body language ("emotes" or other gestures), cinematic cutscenes, and music. As the aim in this study is to determine the influence of gamer-speak in quests, the analysis focuses on quest titles, as intertextual references (and therefore gamer-speak) are more likely to occur there. However, while I found significant amounts of intertextual references and wordplay in the analysis of quest titles, gamer-speak was found only in one example in this corpus in the *WildStar* quest titles. This example will be discussed in detail but, given the practical absence of gamer-speak in this text type, the focus will be on the questions identified at the beginning of this chapter. Particular attention will be paid to examples in the TT that do not contain gamer-speak but have similar features, such as departing from the game narrative and using non-

standard language. The three devices under examination are 1) the breaking of the fourth wall via intertextuality, 2) the use of neologisms and non-standard language, and 3) the use of phonetic devices in the written text.

6.2.1 *World of Warcraft*

Figure 35: *WoW* **quest title – "Dah, Nunt... Dah, Nunt..."**

This quest title is nonsensical at first glance. However, reading it in conjunction with the objective of the quest, the title gains its meaning.

PROBLEM$_2$

The quest takes place in an under-sea zone where the player is required to hunt a giant shark ("Gnaws" [*Ronge-la-mort*], depicted in Figure 35). The title is meant to sound like the ominous theme song from the film *Jaws* (1975). This intertextual reference and phonic imitation is taken further in a subsequent quest in the same quest chain "DUN-dun-DUN-dun-DUN-dun" [*Ta-DA-Ta-DA-Ta-DA…*], which imitates the latter portion of the theme song, when the music increases in speed and urgency. Because of the many systems at play in this quest title, the localiser must confront several challenges to render this text. First, the game narrative requires that the quest relate to the undersea hunt for a large shark. In other words, the polysystemic relationship between the film and the game's narrative is responsible for the intertextual reference. For this reason, the reliance on the game narrative is paramount.

This also has potential implications for the naming of the characters involved with the quest, the actions the player takes to complete the quest, the quest dialogues, etc. The systems in place for conveying meaning via quests contain characterisation and in-game events that contextualise quests to support the game narrative. For this reason, the localisation of quest titles is also affected by these systems, and the co-existence of these texts in the localised texts produces the SOLUTION$_2$ that will be consumed by the TA.

In addition, the title relies on the system of representing music in text. The theme song for this film might be represented and recognised differently in the TC than in the SC.

SOLUTION$_2$

SOLUTION$_2$ here contains a different phonic representation of the *Jaws* theme song that is presumably closer to the way in which the TC refers to this specific reference in the TL. Since reading the text will sound different in the SL and the TL, it follows that SOLUTION$_2$ could be written differently, despite referring to the same song. Furthermore, SOLUTION$_2$ uses an additional "a" in the initial music reference, possibly to show the elongated note that plays at the beginning of the *Jaws* theme song. Finally, SOLUTION$_2$ has two repetitions of the text, where PROBLEM$_2$ is repeated once.

ACT2

If the localiser wishes to keep an intertextual reference, in accordance with Mangiron and O'Hagan's (2006: 15) assertion, ACT$_2$ requires that they should first be able to recognise the reference in PROBLEM$_2$. Following this, the localiser is faced with the choice of either keeping the same reference, finding another reference that does not depart significantly from the game narrative, or removing any intertextuality and retaining the link with the game narrative. In this case, the localiser seems to have identified the reference and reproduced it in the TL, rendering a SOLUTION$_2$ that relates to the *Jaws* theme song in the same way PROBLEM$_2$ does.

Therefore, the creativity afforded to the localiser in such a case does not, for example, allow for them to simply chose another film reference that would be recognisable in the TC. Rather, the localiser must prioritise the relationship the title has with the game narrative, since departing from this would cause the intertextual reference to become meaningless.

ST	PROBLEM$_2$	SOLUTION$_2$	TT
Dah, Nunt... Dah, Nunt...	Quest title referring to the theme song of a popular film to depict the hunt for a giant shark.	Quest title referring to the theme song of a popular film to depict the hunt for a giant shark.	*Taa-da…* *Taa-da…* *Taa-da…*

Table 34: PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$: "Dah, Nunt... Dah, Nunt..."

In this case, while the ST and TT vary in terms of their length and phonic impersonation of music in writing, both PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ use the same linguistic features to introduce the same intertextual reference. The translation strategy according to Pedersen (2011) is retention, in that the aspect of phonic imitation of the ECR in this text (in this case the theme song) has been retained, however altered to be more accessible to the target audience.

Despite one of quests' primary functions being to advance the game narrative, this quest title not only breaks the fourth wall with the intertextual film reference, but also evokes a piece of music that exists outside of the game universe by using a non-standard form of language. Yet, among the principal arguments against the inclusion of gamer-speak in the game text are the desire to avoid clashes with the game universe and an aversion to the use of non-standard language (see Figure 8) and the aim to include as wide an audience as possible. Regarding the latter, should the gamer not possess the relevant information about *Jaws* in their repertoire, they will not only miss the intertextual reference, but the link between the quest title and the events that contextualise it will be lost. For this reason, while this text does not include gamer-speak, it presents two features typical of gamer-speak that break with the immersion in the game universe. Based on this, it seems that breaking with immersion or using non-standard language are not always sufficient explanations for the exclusion of gamer-speak in the in-game text.

Gamer-speak also breaks the fourth wall because the non-standard language that prioritises gameplay is atypical in the dialogues found in many game universes. In most of the in-game text analysed in this study, there is a "standard" that supports the different factions, races, and cultures of the game universe. However, three types of non-standard language also occur in quest titles: puns (e.g., "Crouching Carrot, Hidden Turnip / *Des carottes ? Y'en navet plus !*"), written realisations of regional accents (e.g., "Zeh'gehn Sez / *Zeh'gehn li pale*") and the use of compounds (exemplified in Figure 36 below):

Figure 36: *WoW* quest title – "Gnomebliteration"

PROBLEM₂

This quest title requires the player to ride a ball of fire over many enemies. These enemies are all gnomes, one of the major humanoid races in the *WoW* universe. The quest title is a compound of the two standard terms "gnome" and "obliteration", encapsulating the contextualising action that the player must take to complete the quest. This sort of playful creativity in the language used for quest tiles is also used in achievement titles (e.g., "Dwarfageddon" [*Exterminaintion*]) and in French gamer-speak (e.g., *Tourbilol* as a compound of the warrior ability "Whirlwind" / *Tourbillon* and "*lol*").[84]

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[84] Anecdotally, this compound is used in this way because, when warriors using either the "Arms" or "Fury" specialisation in a party overuse the whirlwind ability (an "AOE") it can cause them to

SOLUTION₂

This SOLUTION₂ works seamlessly in French, since the combination of the translations of both terms in the TL can combine to the same effect as in PROBLEM₂. However, a more creative solution may be necessary in other languages, and therefore SOLUTION₂ may differ depending on the TL. I discuss this further in 8.4.

ACT₂

Here, the localiser has leveraged the close relationship between the two compound terms in English and French to localise the quest title that is linguistically similar and has an equivalent relationship with the in-game virtual events, and therefore the game narrative. The localiser has retained the compound form rather than, say, standardising the language by providing a TT like *oblitération de gnomes*. Because of this, PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂ could be described in the same way, as shown in Table 35:

ST	PROBLEM₂	SOLUTION₂	TT
Gnomebliteration	Quest title composed of a single compound noun combining the race of enemy involved and their being killed.	Quest title composed of a single compound noun combining the race of enemy involved and their being killed	*Gnomeblitération*

Table 35: PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂: "Gnomebliteration"

New terms created in this way are like some gamer-speak terms in that the combination of two terms can be used to comedic effect. Since one of the terms in forming the title in Figure 36 is rooted in the lexical field of the fantasy genre (gnomes), and the other is a more standard term, the juxtaposition of the two contributes to the effect. Gamer-speak also makes use of this juxtaposition of the game universe and the real world. For example, the character class "Death Knight" / *Chevalier de la mort* is often abbreviated in French gamer-speak as *DK*, (33 recorded instances in the *WoW* written and voice chat samples in this study). In

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attract the attention of the monsters they were attacking (or "pull aggro") and be killed. Since their deaths would be surprising and sometimes comical (hence the "laugh out loud: lol"), this gamer-speak term is often used as a gamer-speak alternative to the whirlwind ability.

spoken French, a decaffeinated coffee is often referred to as a *Déca*, which is a homonym with the gamer-speak term for DK. In addition, this class abbreviation has been used creatively by gamers to name their Death Knights, with names such as *Psuleur*, which, when combined with *DK* sounds like "Bottle opener" / *Décapsuleur*, or *Pité*, which means "Decapitated" / *Décapité*. In this way, some forms of gamer-speak resemble non-standard language used in the game narrative, not only for their intertextual properties, but also in the way in which they are formed.

A text such as this can be challenging for the localiser if they attempt to render the same compound noun structure in the TL. ACT_2 in this instance was relatively straightforward since combining the two terms that make up the compound in the TL is a functional solution. However, the rendering of $PROBLEM_2$ into $SOLUTION_2$ is complicated by the fact that both rely on the narrative and mechanics of the (unlocalised) contextualising quest events. This example aligns with Mangiron and O'Hagan's (2006: 13) notion of restricted freedom, where the localiser can create a new term so long as it does not interfere with the reference to the quest events.

6.2.2   *WildStar*

As the fantasy genre influences *WoW* quest text, so the science fiction / space opera genre influences that of *WildStar*. In addition to the narratives belonging to different universes, the style and tone of the texts also often differ. Nonetheless, since both games belong to the same genre, their quest titles have many of the same features (i.e., non-standard language and intertextuality). The examples in Figure 37 and Figure 38 show some of these. The first example includes the only instance of gamer-speak found in this text type within the subcorpus analysed.

Figure 37: *WildStar* **quest title – "This is not a bot you're looking at"**

PROBLEM$_2$

This quest allows the player to use a robot workshop to take on a robot disguise. In PROBLEM$_2$ the title relies on the overlap between the game universe and MMORPG culture with the gamer-speak term "bot". In the context of the game universe, this is understood as a shortening of "robot", often used in enemy names (e.g., "Probe Bot" / *Bot sonde,* "Assault Bot" / *Bot d'assaut,* "Arena Bot" / *Bot d'arène*, and many others). However, in English gamer-speak, "bots" are computer scripts that automate a player's avatar, and are typically used to complete repetitive or time-consuming tasks in-game without the need for the player to be at the keyboard. These programmes are against the End-User Agreement of most MMORPGs, and strictly policed by the game's employees. Typically, there is a human either reporting (i.e. another player) or investigating the illicit "botting" activity (i.e. company employee). Because of the human element, there are some legitimate players who can be mistakenly identified as bots. Others develop bot scripts that have countermeasures to deceive investigators. Because of this dynamic, a player who is experienced with MMORPGs would recognise the sentence in PROBLEM$_2$ as something that a legitimate player might say when accused of botting, or something that a more-sophisticated script might be programmed to respond. In either case, the intertextual reference and humour is achieved by the fact that the player is disguised as a robot when the quest takes place.

SOLUTION$_2$

The gamer-speak term *Bot* has been retained in SOLUTION$_2$. This shortening in SOLUTION$_2$ is accompanied, however, by a slight grammatical shift, shown here with emphasis added: *Ce n'est pas **le Bot que vous recherchez*** [This is not **the** Bot you are looking **for**]. This change adds an intertextual reference to *Star Wars* (1977), since it is like a well-known quote from Obi-Wan Kenobi "These are not the droids you're looking for" / *Ce ne sont pas ces droïdes-là que vous recherchez*. This slight linguistic change between PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ represents a significant change in the way this text generates meaning. SOLUTION$_2$, while using the same gamer-speak term as PROBLEM$_2$, uses it in such a way that the intertextual reference is now focused on the film rather than the situation of automated gameplay.

ACT$_2$

Although we cannot say for sure if this linguistic shift and resulting addition of intertextuality produced during ACT$_2$ are intentional, it is interesting that gamer-speak has been re-appropriated in the game text to assign meaning that coincides with the game narrative. In this universe, because of the science fiction theme, the frequent use of "bot" / *bot* as a suffix for naming NPCs draws this term back into the standardised language of the game. Because of this, the intertextual relationship between the bots of *WildStar* and the droids of *Star Wars* creates the reference instead of relying solely on the link with gamer culture. This could be either because the localiser has recognised the gamer-speak reference and as a result contextualised it in the in-game universe by associating it with robots, or it could be that the relationship between the shortening of *robot* has been used without the knowledge of its relationship with illegal gaming automation.

This can be explained by Even-Zohar's (1979: 298-9) notion of primary and secondary models of communication:

> The primary/secondary opposition refers to the principle governing features of semiotic types from the point of view of their admissibility into the established repertoires. […] Products of the conservative system I label "secondary." On the other hand, the augmentation and restructuration of a repertory by the introduction of new elements, as a result of which each

product is less predictable, are expressions of an innovatory system. The models it offers are of the "primary" type.

The contextualisation provided by the intertextual link between a *bot* and a *droid* supports the re-appropriation of the term *bot* into the secondary system, or in this case the localised game text. Even-Zohar (ibid.) states that this process of "secondarization" (sic) is unavoidable, and that the imposing of pre-existing functions onto new terms serves to supress innovation by not changing or creating a new function for existing terms. In other words, by assigning a function to this gamer-speak term that is part of the discourse of the in-game universe, the in-game text stifles linguistic innovation. Thus, a player who is faced with this term in the in-game text (if they did not know of the term prior to reading) will generate their meaning based on the in-game universe, and understand the shortening of robot. This reference is further reinforced by the intertextual reference, assuming they have *Star Wars* in their repertoire.

ST	PROBLEM$_2$	SOLUTION$_2$	TT
This is not a bot you're looking at	Quest title referring to the player disguising themselves as a robot, while also referring to the process of automating gameplay, or "botting".	Quest title referring to the player disguising themselves as a robot, while also making the intertextual reference to a well-known dialogue line from *Star Wars*	*Ce n'est pas le Bot que vous recherchez...* (This is not the bot you're looking for)

Table 36: PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$: "This is not a bot you're looking at"

Here, the notable difference is the addition of the intertextual reference. However, because of this addition, the link with gamer-speak and gamer culture is diminished, since the minor grammatical shift in the quest title construction has brought the gamer-speak term into the secondary standardised system of the in-game text. By likening the in-game robots, here called bots, to the droids of *Star Wars*, the in-game text has contextualised this non-standard shortening and therefore appropriated it from the primary gamer-speak system. In this way, because of its localisation, the linguistic shift in the SOLUTION$_2$ contributes to the secondarisation of this gamer-speak term.

Shifts in linguistic function like that of *bot* being drawn into the in-game text are commonplace, and do not always contribute to secondarisation of the system. The example in Figure 38 shows how such linguistic shift can relate to the use of wordplay, in this case an adaptation of such a linguistic device.

Figure 38: *WildStar* quest title – "How Hard Can It Bee"

In this quest, the player is tasked with using a specific weapon ability on a certain type of insect-like enemy (depicted in Figure 38) that causes the enemy to produce honey, dip their weapon in that honey, thus imbuing it with additional power, and finally kill the enraged insect.

PROBLEM₂

PROBLEM$_2$ pokes fun at the complicated nature of this quest with a pun that relates a colloquial sarcastic expression to the type of enemy involved. Since this pun relates to the metonym (bee) for the type of enemy encountered in the quest "Sourhive Buzzbings" [*Vrombeuses ruchamères*], the central challenge for the localiser is to find a SOLUTION$_2$ that meshes with the enemy name in the TL. Outside the game universe bees produce honey, so it makes sense in PROBLEM$_2$ that the pun relates to bees.

SOLUTION₂

The pun related to bees in PROBLEM$_2$ is problematic because of the difficulty of finding a colloquial expression in French that includes the term *abeille* (bee) and also relays the complications of completing the quest. To maintain the relationship

with the enemies involved in the quest, SOLUTION$_2$ refers to another winged insect: a fly [*mouche*]. In doing so, SOLUTION$_2$ adapts the wordplay by using an expression in the TL to refer to getting frustrated easily or being "bugged" (*prendre la mouche*). In this way, SOLUTION$_2$ maintains the lexical field of insects as well as wordplay relating to the contextualising virtual events.

ACT$_2$

Faced with this linguistic difficulty, the localiser has found a colloquialism that is consistent with the game narrative, approximates the related visuals and expresses emotions of anger, annoyance, or frustration in the TL. This could be associated either to the player or their avatar when faced with the complicated challenges of the quest, or by the enemies who become furious when attacked in this way. Nevertheless, this substitution involves forgoing, to some extent, the contextual events of the quest, since the expression uses the word *mouche*, and the enemies are anatomically and behaviourally more akin to bees or wasps. However, because the lexical field is similar, the function is still maintained. The text refers to the enemy type with a play on words, however less directly than it does in PROBLEM$_2$.

ACT$_2$, therefore, has prioritised keeping a play on words over the connection to the game narrative. While the connection is not removed, it is weaker than in PROBLEM$_2$. In this case, it is unlikely that the localiser de-prioritised the link with the game narrative. However, in prioritising an expression to include wordplay over a text that was more closely in line with the contextualising quest events, the localiser appears to be favouring the preservation of this tone in the quest title.

ST	PROBLEM$_2$	SOLUTION$_2$	TT
How Hard Can It Bee?	Quest title referring to the enemies in focus, in this case winged insects that produce honey, through wordplay (pun: heterograph) making light of the difficulty of the quest.	Quest title referring to the enemies in focus, in this case winged insects, through wordplay (pun: homograph) referring to the frustration that either players or enemies experience during the quest.	*Qui prend la mouche ?* [who's buggin'?]

Table 37: PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$: "How Hard Can It Bee?"

This table shows the change taking place in this quest title. The alteration in the title, as with the name of the enemy ("Sourhive Buzzbings"), has involved a creative approach from the localiser, since the balance of the in-game reference and the wordplay used is not straightforward, and the name of the enemy is invented and onomatopoeic. Therefore, the strategy employed could be thought of as a cultural substitution. In this case, SOLUTION$_2$ contains a similar wordplay device (homonyms in both cases), but replaced with one that would be recognisable in the TC. The approach supports the argument for transcreation in video game localisation according to Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 20) represented by the inventive use of language to balance the semiotic relationship among the sounds, game mechanics, and wordplay used in English and French.

While this quest title contains no gamer-speak, it contains several features that support the use of gamer-speak in the in-game text. As an aside, the compound neologism of the creative naming of the enemies involved – "Sourhive Buzzbings" / *Vrombeuses ruchamères* – suggests that the use of non-standard language is acceptable in the naming of enemies. Furthermore, linguistic expressions such as puns derive their meaning from beyond the game universe and draw gamers out of their linguistic immersion in the in-game text in the manner of gamer-speak.

Thus, I argue that linguistic immersion is not necessarily a requirement, even in a quest title whose function tends towards supporting the game narrative. This is shown in two features found in quest titles, and as exemplified in the previous analysis. First, intertextuality necessarily alerts gamers to the presence of the extradiegetic system, and therefore removes them from their immersion in the in-game narrative. Second, the use of non-standard language, either wordplay like puns or gamer-speak, juxtaposes the in-game universe with the real world. It may be that, to this end, while gamer-speak is used by gamers as a result of specific features of the localised text and in-game mechanics, gamer-speak is used by game writers and localisers for different reasons and to a different effect.

Gamer-speak figures most frequently in the in-game text that serves as a reward in and of itself: Achievement text. The following section is an examination

of examples of this text type featuring gamer-speak in either PROBLEM$_2$, SOLUTION$_2$, or both.

6.3 Achievement text

Achievements in video games are unique or noteworthy challenges that players can undertake (Strong 2017: 22). Because of their multiple functions, achievement texts are unique to video games and interesting objects of study for video game localisation. This is a result of two facts: 1) what makes text rewarding is subjective and could therefore be different in the SC and TC, and 2) achievements contain many intertextual references, and potentially more than other text types (ibid.: 27). Given the latter and the strong ties to the community exhibited in these texts, gamer-speak was expected to be found in achievements in both the ST and TT versions of the present corpus. As expected, analysis has revealed that gamer-speak is an important element of gamer culture present in achievement texts (and can therefore be an integral part of PROBLEM$_2$) that video game localisers should be able to recognise and render in SOLUTION$_2$. However, while gamer-speak was not used frequently in Achievements, they were the only text type where gamer-speak was found in both the source and target texts in both *WoW* and *WildStar*, appearing 15 times in total in *WoW* and seven times in *WildStar*. In *WoW* gamer-speak terms appear 11 times in the ST ("buff", "cap", "DOT", "faceroll", "nerf" and "PUG") and four times in the TT (*cap*, *DOT* and *PWN*), whereas in *WildStar* they appear four times in the ST ("Gank" and "Tank") and in the TT (*bot*, *ganke* and *tank*). In this analysis I do not discuss all of these examples, but I rather examine some instances of gamer-speak in the in-game text, and some examples where the in-game text relies on features or linguistic devices that resemble gamer-speak.

At first glance, achievements resemble abilities and tooltips. In addition, they share a similar function in that players refer to them for information on certain game mechanics. However, while abilities and their tooltips appear for player information only, achievements will also appear on the player's screen, and be announced to other players, when they are completed. Further, players can refer to other players' achievements to compare and evaluate each other's progress.

6.3.1 *WildStar*

The first example of achievement text from the corpus has characteristics that lead to complicated localisation, including the use of non-standard language and its relation to the in-game mechanics. As shown in Figure 39 this example refers to a colloquial expression for eating, as well as the name of the boss and one of their abilities relating to the achievement.

Figure 39: *WildStar* achievement – "Ohm Nom Nope"

PROBLEM$_2$

This achievement requires that players defeat a certain enemy (Dreadphage Ohmna) while avoiding a certain in-game mechanic (being devoured). The achievement text uses wordplay by blending the name of the enemy with the mechanic that relates to the achievement: the title refers to the expression "ohm nom" for eating something quickly (urban dictionary: online), and contains wordplay since the enemy's name also contains "ohm-". As a result, the link between the linguistic similarity and the in-game mechanic that is to be avoided during the encounter gives comedic value to the relationship between the title and the explanation. While this achievement does not include gamer-speak according to the definition used in this study, it is a non-standard construction that is used by internauts when communicating about food or eating.

SOLUTION$_2$

The rendering of this achievement in French has some limiting factors. The central issue is that the name of the enemy remains similar to the English version, with the "Ohmna-" portion of the name being untranslated. For this reason, while the title retains the reference to eating (*miam miam* / nom nom) and to the in-game mechanic

relating to eating (*dévoré* / devour) in the description, the wordplay in the name of the enemy in question is lost. The use of non-standard French in the achievement title (*miam miam*) is similar to that in the SL, and it also bears a close similarity with a gamer-speak term found in this research: *j'AFK miam*, used to indicate that a player is taking a break (Away From Keyboard) to eat. For this reason, it could be argued that this slight difference in relation to TL gamer-speak brings an additional reference to gamer culture in SOLUTION2. Regarding technical differences, the description is also longer, and spills onto the second line in the box. This is not problematic, however, since there is ample room in the box provided. Finally, the point score and the image remain unchanged.

ACT2

The localiser has a difficult task with this text. First, they are required to recognise and/or research the meaning in the title and understand the non-standard language usage. Second, they must strive to retain the links not only with the in-game mechanic to which the title refers and how it is overcome to complete the achievement, but also the wordplay that is used in this connection. The importance of the non-standard language in the achievement title may depend on how it strengthens these links, since the skopos of this text is (1) to be a reward for players upon completion of the achievement; (2) to enable players to identify and understand how to complete the achievement; and (3) to serve as a way for players to measure up to others in the community based on completion of achievements. This final point could be argued to be achieved simply by the number of points awarded for each achievement, and therefore the localiser has little influence. To identify the mechanic and how to overcome it in the achievement requires that the localiser explain the mechanics so that the target audience can understand and use that information to complete the achievement, maintaining consistency with the naming of enemies, abilities, etc. However, the challenge of identifying and rendering what makes a text rewarding is an essential difficulty of localising achievements. In this case, the juxtaposition of the non-standard language and its relation to the in-game virtual events that correspond to the achievement could be part of what makes this text rewarding. Therefore, where non-standard language is used to this effect, it is an important feature of the in-game text and localisers must identify and retain this relationship where possible.

ST	PROBLEM₂	SOLUTION₂	TT
Title: Ohm Nom Nope Description: Defeat Dreadphage Ohmna without anyone being devoured	Achievement whose title refers to both the name of the enemy involved and a non-standard expression for eating. The enemy's ability to be avoided in this achievement involves devouring the player and/or their teammates.	Achievement whose title refers to a non-standard expression for eating. The enemy's ability to be avoided in this achievement involves devouring the player and/or their teammates.	Title: *Pas miam miam* [no ohm nom] Description: *Terrasser Ohmna la Terriphage sans que personne ne soit dévoré* [defeat Ohmna Dreadphage without anyone being devoured]

Table 38: PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂: "Ohm Nom Nope"

The primary difference between PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂ is that SOLUTION₂ loses the link between the non-standard expression for eating and the enemy in this achievement. However, since the mechanic involved still relates to eating (devour / *dévorer*), the link is not absent in SOLUTION₂, but is less strong than in PROBLEM₂. Thus, the strategy employed could be described as the official equivalent, in that *miam miam* is a ready-made translation of "ohm nom". However, the relationship to the game's mechanics has been altered because of the relationship the texts have with the achievement's main enemy, since the non-standard expression in SOLUTION₂ no longer relates to the boss name (Dreadphage Ohmna / *Ohmna la Terriphage*).

This example relies on non-standard language to gain significance, be entertaining and rewarding and relate to in-game mechanics. The use of language in the in-game text that does not exist in the game universe but does exist in the gaming community has a similar effect regardless of whether gamer-speak per se is used.

The following *WildStar* example does contain gamer-speak (*tank* [tank]), and has similar features as the previous example in the way non-standard language relates to the in-game mechanics involved with the achievement.

Figure 40: *WildStar* **achievement including gamer-speak in ST and TT – "No Need to Tank Me"**

PROBLEM₂

This achievement uses a similar linguistic device to that from Figure 39 in that the wordplay is established between the name of the enemy to be defeated, the "FCON Defense Tank", and the idiomatic phrase "no need to thank me". The title also relates to the relevant game mechanics involved in completing the achievement, in that the destruction of this specific enemy will mean that no player will have to tank (see 'Tank') it once it is destroyed. As a result, PROBLEM₂ can be described as a title with an idiomatic expression employing wordplay that relates not only to the enemy identified in the achievement's associated encounter, but also the game mechanics that take place during the achievement's completion.

SOLUTION₂

A French idiomatic expression (*Tant que ça durera* / [while it lasts]) allowing the inclusion of the name of the enemy "tank" has been used, resulting in *Tank que ça durera*. This SOLUTION₂ nets all the different references present in PROBLEM₂: the title is an idiomatic expression; the reference to the name of the enemy is retained; and the reference to the relevant mechanic is in place, since the destruction of the enemy mentioned in the description will mean that it is only in the fight for a short time, or "while it lasts".

ACT₂

The standard and gamer-speak systems influence the ST and TT differently in this case, and therefore in rendering SOLUTION₂. The localiser leverages the gamer-speak term to bridge this difference: since the gamer-speak term is the same in both

the SL and the TL, the localiser has relied on the name of the enemy containing the word "tank" in the TL to produce the desired wordplay, including the links to mechanics and enemy names. As a result, the localiser has used non-standard language in their rendering of this achievement text. This also necessarily relates to the localisation of the name of the enemy in other parts of the game, since the name will appear above the enemy itself, in other tooltips, in other places referring to the game mechanics, etc. Therefore, either the localiser or their colleagues working on the other parts of the text must maintain this non-standard language in other text types within the video game text. While we cannot know which part of the text causes and which is affected by this choice, the result is that a gamer-speak term as filtered into multiple different text types within the video game text. As mentioned in 5.3, Tank could be considered a borderline case of gamer-speak, as it is included in the in-game text, however, I argue for its inclusion drawing on its non-standard usage to refer to in-game roles and mechanics. This case is even stronger in French, where using an Anglicism encodes this term more than in English. Nevertheless, "Tank" can also be classified as a semantic shift in English from the original sense of an armoured military vehicle, and therefore I consider it gamer-speak despite its widespread inclusion in the in-game text both in English (because it has undergone a shift) and in French (because it is a loan from English gamer-speak). The interdependency of the different linguistic, textual, and mechanical systems here causes ACT_2 to engender a multifaceted and wide-reaching approach to maintain consistency and functionality of the game text.

ST	PROBLEM$_2$	SOLUTION$_2$	TT
Title: No Need to Tank Me Description: Destroy the FCON Defense Tank in the Siege of Tempest Refuge adventure	Achievement whose title uses the name of the enemy involved in a pun with a gamer-speak term (Tank / Thank)	Achievement whose title uses the name of the enemy involved in a pun with a gamer-speak term (*Tank* / *Tant que*)	Title: *Tank ça durera* Description: *Détruire le Tank défensif de la FCON dans "Le Siège du Refuge de la tempête"*

Table 39: PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ "No need to Tank Me"

The strategy in this example has been to retain the gamer-speak term: Tank / *tank* is used in both PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$. As a result, the relationship with the virtual events that take place when this achievement is completed has also been

retained, since the name of the enemy involved – "FCON Defense tank" / *Tank défensif de la FCON* – includes the gamer-speak term in both cases. The difference, however, is principally describable by (1) the way the pun is created in the SL and TL, and (2) the non-standard form in the TL enemy name that has been appropriated from gamer-speak. Here again, the integration of *Tank* (as with other gamer-speak terms appearing in the in-game text (see discussion of Figure 43) could be thought of as a secondarisation of the gamer-speak system by its appropriation into the standardised system.

In these examples from *WildStar*, achievement texts are rewarding for players in part because of an attempt at clever interplay between the achievement's title and its description, or the action needed to complete the achievement. In *WoW*, this approach is also present.

6.3.2 *World of Warcraft*

WoW achievements contain similar elements as the previous examples from *WildStar*: there is an image, a title, a description, a points score, and a date of completion. In addition, there is a tick box that allows the player to track their progress in the achievement. Figure 41 is an example of an achievement where the use of wordplay with the game's title is related to a type of in-game system (emotes) that is frequently replaced by gamer-speak in this study.

Figure 41: *WoW* achievement – "Make Love, Not Warcraft"

This is a PvP achievement, wherein a player must use the in-game system of "emotes", or virtual body language, immediately after a player of the opposing faction has been killed.

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PROBLEM₂

This example relies on the wordplay between the game's title and the expression in English "Make love, not war". This is achieved by the action required to complete the achievement: an out-of-character hug given to an enemy player that has just been killed. Among others, this achievement relies on the in-game mechanic system of emotes. The interest of these emotes is explained in the following sections.

SOLUTION₂

The title here has had the wordplay removed in translation. SOLUTION₂ includes the equivalent expression in French (*Faites l'amour; pas la guerre*), but since the game title is the same in the localised version as the English original, the wordplay is not available with this rendering. Therefore, the title relates to the game mechanics outlined in the description, but lacks the linguistic device of the original. All the images corresponding to achievement texts in the present corpus are the same in PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂, and the presence of the heart-themed imagery in this example relates to both the title and description.

In the description, the rendering of the emote system in the TL refers to the localised versions: the "/hug" emote is rendered as */serrer*. The emote system has these localised versions in place, meaning that when the player executes this command in the French version the result will be an equivalent in terms of gameplay experience, and the player has access to a version that feels as though it were an original. However, the English system of emotes is also available to French gamers: players can execute this emote in the French version by typing either */serrer* or */hug*. This difference between the experience offered to English- and French-speaking gamers allows for another potential interpretation of SOLUTION₂, as shown below.

ACT₂

We have no way of knowing why "/hug" has been rendered */serrer*, despite the fact that "/hug" works in both versions of the game. It appears that space limitations are not a concern, since the description in SOLUTION₂ spills onto a second line. Also, in PROBLEM₂ the text uses the verb form "emote" as though it were based on the verb "to emote". However, in SOLUTION₂ the localiser has rendered the verb form with *faire*. This verbalisation retains the word emote without giving it the status of

a verb. For example, other possible renderings could have been *faire un /serrer* or *emoter un /serrer*. Instead, the localiser has tailored the text to the widest possible audience. The word *emote*, which should be recognisable to more experienced MMORPG players, would invite the less-experienced to learn its meaning from this text by attempting the in-game command */serrer*.

This approach is in line with generating a SOLUTION$_2$ that looks and feels like an original, however in doing so it does not consider the parallel existence of the systems that operate in both the SL polysystem and the TL polysystem. Because this mechanic works when the player types it in English or in French, the TL system is different from the SL system, since the latter can use either */hug* or */serrer*. Because the English term is shorter, gamers may prefer to use the English version.[85] In this case, the system of emotes provides the bridge, since the commands that govern these are available in different ways in the SL and TL.

ST	PROBLEM$_2$	SOLUTION$_2$	TT
Title: Make Love, not Warcraft Description: Emote /hug on a dead enemy before they release corpse.	Achievement whose title relates to an idiomatic expression and the title of the game, and whose in-game contextualising events involve using the in-game emote system to hug a fallen enemy.	Achievement whose title relates to an idiomatic expression, and whose in-game contextualising events involve using the in-game emote system to hug a fallen enemy.	Title: *Faites l'amour, pas la guerre* Description: *Faire l'emote /serrer sur un ennemi mort avant qu'il ne libère l'esprit.*

Table 40: PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$: "Make Love, Not Warcraft"

Comparing PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ shows that the link with the game's title is lost in its localisation, due to the omission of this reference. Furthermore, despite being able to use the emote system with the same keystrokes in English and French, SOLUTION$_2$ refers to the additional standardised emote that can be typed to perform the same in-game virtual gesture. Although French gamers have access to both the English emote and the French emote, they are not informed of the English

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[85] An example similar to this is that of the private messaging system, where French player can use either */w*, or */wisp* to initiate a private message (see discussion of Figure 12), but */mp* does not work in the same way. It is worth noting that *mp* was found 18 times, and */w* was found 107 times.)

emote. Nonetheless, similar English emotes found elsewhere in-game (like "/w", and "/afk") are used by French gamers.

This example shows that the polysystems that influence achievement texts can complicate localisation, and arriving at SOLUTION$_2$ often comes at the cost of some linguistic devices. Figure 42 shows an example where PROBLEM$_2$ contains gamer-speak, but colloquial language is used in place of gamer-speak in SOLUTION$_2$:
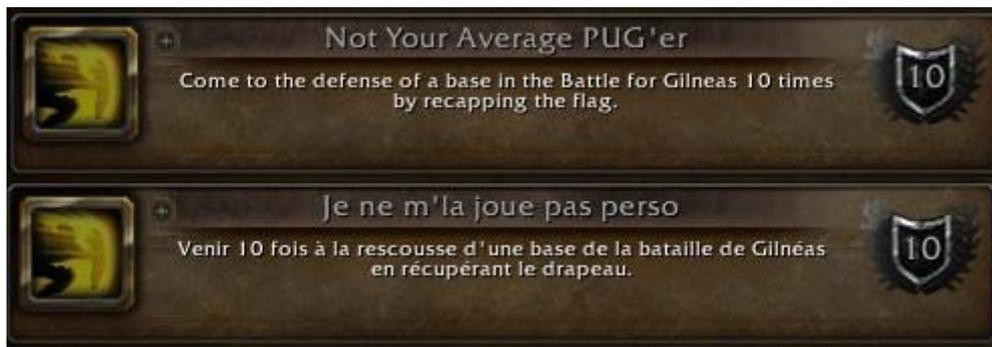
Figure 42: *WoW* **achievement – "Not Your Average PUG'er"**

This text comes from a PvP "Battleground", in which players vie for resources in a "king of the hill"-style game. There are three resource nodes, each of which contains a clickable "flag" which players must attempt to control while fighting off other players of the opposing faction.

PROBLEM$_2$

Like other achievements in this corpus, PROBLEM$_2$ in Figure 42 relies on the self-referencing of each of the visual and textual elements in the achievement text and the in-game events required to complete it to generate its meaning. In this case, the description is of a player adopting a repeatedly defensive approach in the "Battle of Gilneas" and defending flags after they have been assaulted by the opposing faction, here described using the gamer-speak term "recapping". The title "Not Your Average PUG'er" relates to this using gamer-speak. The acronym "PUG" stands for "Pick Up Group", and is usually used by English-speaking gamers to describe either a single player or a group of players filling out a group previously unknown to the individual using the term, typically found through the in-game matchmaking system or recruited via in-game messages. Since the matchmaking system does not

have any metric for matching experience level (except for item-level thresholds for different tiers of difficult content), the experience level of PUGs can vary radically. In addition, because of the ability to quickly group with unknown players from different servers, PUGs sometimes ignore some of the strategies that are usually adopted by a more coordinated team in such battlegrounds. As a result, many PUGs will not take a defensive role in this battleground, and therefore when a player is able to complete this defence-oriented achievement, the game rewards them by identifying their atypical gameplay (i.e., they are not an average PUG'er). Finally, the image shows a silhouette of a figure with a shield defending against a barrage of luminous energy, further reinforcing the defensive nature of this achievement.

SOLUTION₂

SOLUTION₂ does not contain gamer-speak in the title. Although French gamers tend to use the term *PU* or *pick-up* as an equivalent for PUG, these do not appear in SOLUTION₂. However, there is a nod to colloquial French with the construction *m'la* which imitates the contracted spoken version of *me la*. Also in this vein, the title clips the word *personnel / perso* [individual or self] to complete the idiomatic expression that indicates that the player is unselfish (I'm not playing it selfish). The title does relate to the game mechanics, in that the defensive approach places a higher value on teamwork and less emphasis on single-minded play. Since the achievement is rewarding the player for their defensive play, the title in SOLUTION₂ here is an effective rendering in that it states that the player is not playing selfishly. Interestingly, the rendering of "recapping" has been standardised with *récupérant* [recovering] the flag. Gamers sometimes use this construction, but also use others such as *tag* or *re-prend.*[86]

ACT₂

The localiser in this case has opted not to resort to French gamer-speak to translate these two instances of gamer-speak. The approach places more importance on the link with the game mechanics than with the gamer culture which is achieved in PROBLEM₂ by using gamer-speak. The localiser retains a cultural link to some

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[86] This study contains no data on this usage, since no PvP gameplay was recorded. Future study that considers gamer-speak usage in PvP scenarios (outside of the recruitment captured in the written data analysis in section 5.1.1) wold be beneficial to explore if the use of gamer-speak is similar.

extent by formulating the title imitating spoken French, but they have overlooked the use of an equivalent gamer-speak term that could be used in place of that used in PROBLEM$_2$.

ST	PROBLEM$_2$	SOLUTION$_2$	TT
<u>Title</u>: Not Your Average PUG'er <u>Description</u>: Come to the defense of a base in the Battle for Gilneas 10 times by recapping the flag.	Achievement whose title uses a gamer-speak acronym to allude to the playstyle required to complete a PvP achievement by being a better team player than is typically expected, and in its description of the mechanics involved.	Achievement whose title uses colloquial vernacular to explain the playstyle required to complete a PvP achievement by being a less-selfish player.	<u>Title</u>: *Je ne m'la joue pas perso* <u>Description</u>: *Venir 10 fois à le rescousse d'une base de la bataille de Gilnéas en récupérant le drapeau.*

Table 41: PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$: "Not your Average PUG'er"

The strategy applied to translate "PUG" could be thought of as generalisation, since SOLUTION$_2$ has the gamer-speak term substituted by colloquial language. Regarding "recapping", an omission strategy seems to have been applied, since TT contains a standardised term. As a result, SOLUTION$_2$ makes the meaning of what an average PUG'er is more explicit, emphasising the selflessness of the actions required to complete the achievement.

Where the example in Figure 42 has its gamer-speak terms removed or replaced by colloquial language, Figure 43 below shows an achievement where an alternative gamer-speak term was used in SOLUTION$_2$ to render an effective title-description relationship:

Figure 43: *WoW* **achievement – "The Faceroller"**

PROBLEM₂

This achievement relies on a gamer-speak term, "Faceroller", that refers to the easy nature of a piece of in-game content. To faceroll can mean either that a piece of content is so easy that a player can beat it by simply rolling their face over their keyboard, or that the content was so easy that the player dominated it completely, or "rolled over its face". In this case, the achievement requires players to defeat a certain encounter in a 5-man PvE dungeon by reacting to a certain mechanic in such a way that they can defeat one boss with their own hammer. The interaction between the title and the description here again is pivotal to the generation of meaning. Either the encounter is so easy that you can even defeat the boss with their own hammer, or you should be able to dominate the encounter to the extent that you can defeat the boss with their own hammer. Since this is open to interpretation, there are several possible ways to render it in SOLUTION₂. Furthermore, the description is vague, as it is not immediately clear to the player how they are meant to obtain the hammer from the boss and use it to defeat them. The image in PROBLEM₂ also shows a hammer, reinforcing its importance in this achievement.

SOLUTION₂

The title in SOLUTION₂ also contains gamer-speak. The origin of "pwn" is often debated, however one line of thinking states that it originates from a typo in a map designed for one of the *Warcraft* Real-Time Strategy (RTS) games (urban dictionary: online). According to this interpretation, the designer intended to write the phrase "you just got owned" but pressed the "p" instead of the "o", likely because they are next to each other on a QWERTY keyboard. In any case, the term has been taken up by gaming communities in many languages, and here we can see

that it is known in French to the extent that it figures in SOLUTION$_2$. The term serves as an equivalent for one of the potential interpretations of "faceroll", in that *pwn* means to completely dominate or conquer (ibid.). In this way SOLUTION$_2$ contains a gamer-speak term that can be interpreted with a similar meaning to that found in PROBLEM$_2$. SOLUTION$_2$ also contains an intertextual reference that is not present in PROBLEM$_2$: in *The Lord of the Rings* novels, part of the inscription on the ring of power reads "One ring to rule them all" [*Un anneau pour les gouverner tous*]. The localiser has used this structure and changed the ring for hammer [*marteau*], and the rule for *pwner*. As a result, French consumers whose repertoire includes *The Lord of the Rings* could recognise this reference that does not exist in PROBLEM$_2$. Finally, the translation of the description uses the standard form of *mode heroïque* [heroic mode], rather than adding a gamer-speak equivalent (*HM* or *hard mode*).

ACT$_2$

In translating this text, the localiser has chosen a gamer-speak term in the TL, and in doing so has reflected the use of gamer-speak in PROBLEM$_2$. However, this use of gamer-speak means that SOLUTION$_2$ assumes one of the two potential interpretations of the gamer-speak in PROBLEM$_2$. Furthermore, the localiser has added a reference to the *Lord of the Rings*. In this way, the localiser has (1) broken the fourth wall both with the use of gamer-speak and intertextuality, (2) retained the relationship to the meaning of PROBLEM$_2$ by suggesting that the player is dominating the encounter by completing this achievement, and (3) contextualised or justified the gamer-speak usage in the TL by inserting it into a recognisable construction previously used in popular culture. In the description, we would not expect the localiser to add gamer-speak where there was none in PROBLEM$_2$, despite having maintained the gamer-speak in the title.

ST	PROBLEM₂	SOLUTION₂	TT
<u>Title</u>: The Faceroller <u>Description</u>: Defeat Eadric the Pure in the Trial of the Champion with his own hammer on Heroic Difficulty.	Achievement whose title uses gamer-speak to refer to the flagrant domination of the enemy. The description explains that this is achieved by defeating them with their own hammer.	Achievement whose title uses gamer-speak to refer to the flagrant domination of the enemy: by defeating them with their own hammer. Additional intertextual reference in the title to a well-known quote from *The Lord of the Rings*.	<u>Title</u>: *Un Marteau pour le pwner tous* [One hammer to pwn them all] <u>Description</u>: *Vaincre Eadric le Pur dans l'épreuve du champion avec son propre marteau en mode héroïque.* [Defeat Eadric the Pure in the Trial of the Champion with his own hammer in Heroic Mode]

Table 42: PROBLEM₂ and SOLUTION₂: "The Faceroller"

Here, the influence of gamer-speak is clear: the total domination of the enemy is expressed through one gamer-speak term in the SL and another in the TL. This strategy could be thought of as a substitution: the gamer-speak term in this example has been replaced by a new one that might be more recognisable in the TL. Furthermore, this substitution strategy has resulted in a specification, including an addition of an intertextual reference. In this way, the supporting intertextuality and the additional relation to the hammer mechanic justifies the use of gamer-speak in the TT by adding intertextual context to situate the non-standard term. This addition could also be deemed as an example of compensation, where the localiser compensates for the loss of intertextual references in other parts of the localised text (e.g., as illustrated in Figure 41).

Use of gamer-speak and intertextuality in this study is frequently reserved for the achievement titles, since achievement descriptions tend to be more technical and provide instructions or directions for players. For this reason, and because only the title and corresponding achievement image appear on-screen when the achievement has been completed, these elements provide the textual reward for players, with their descriptions fulfilling a didactic function. Therefore, while the humour, wordplay, intertextuality, and breaking of the fourth wall rely on the mechanics of the contextualising virtual events that must be completed to perform

the achievement, it is the (often incongruous) title that is presented to players as the reward associated to this achievement.

In the example in Figure 43, a new gamer-speak term added an element of reward to SOLUTION$_2$: a reference to gamer culture. In contrast to the previous example, rather than substituting the PROBLEM$_2$'s gamer-speak term with a different one in SOLUTION$_2$, the gamer-speak term is simply retained:
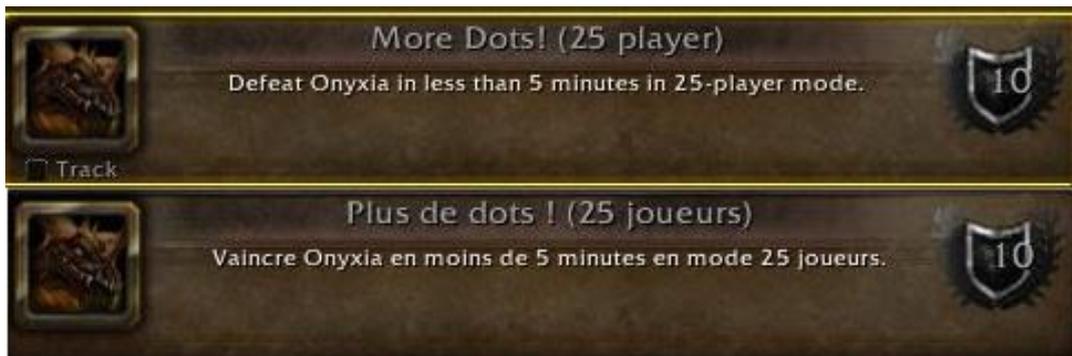
Figure 44: *WoW* **achievement – "More Dots! (25 player)"**

This achievement uses gamer-speak to make an intertextual reference to a viral YouTube video based on a raid fight against the boss "Onyxia". This boss was in the original version of *WoW*, and was re-vamped for the third installation, *Wrath of the Lich King* (WOTLK). In this new encounter, this achievement was introducedbecause of a video of players dying to the original boss.[87] In this video, the raid leader angrily shouts at the rest of the raid party to use more Damage Over Time effects (DOTs) in hopes of speeding up one of the phases of the encounter.[88]

PROBLEM$_2$

This achievement relies on the intertextuality of the YouTube video reference for its rewarding element. With this reference, those whose repertoire includes the relevant video will be reminded of the humour. Further, the nod to gamer culture

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[87] Several achievements were created based on popular YouTube videos of *WoW*, including references to the famous "Leroy Jenkins" (a player who comically ruined one raid by running through a room and "aggroing" or attracting the attention of lots of monsters. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLyOj_QD4a4), and others based on the video mentioned in this example.

[88] The video eventually became well-known in a remake version with comical animations created and played over the original audio. Remake: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtvIYRrgZ04

through this reference brings it into the in-game text, since both the gamer-speak term and the video exist outside the game universe. In this way, the game developers have broken the fourth wall by encouraging gamers during this raid encounter to imitate the players that figured in the referenced video.

The use of gamer-speak in the ST is not strictly speaking integral to the rewarding aspect of the text, except that it was in the original quote from the player in the YouTube video. The inclusion of gamer-speak, however, causes the PROBLEM$_2$ to be challenging for the localiser, since they ought to recognise the intertextual reference (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 15), but also relate it to the in-game event to which the achievement is associated. Since this achievement requires players to defeat the boss in a timely fashion, the reference relates to one strategy that enables players to do so. By applying more DOTs, the raid party speeds up one of the phases of the encounter where direct damage is more difficult. Because of the chronology of the text and its paratexts, we see that the developers have created this achievement, and suggested one of the potential ways of completing it, based on the fan-generated paratext. Because this paratext relies on a gamer-speak term, so too does the in-game text. The challenge for the localiser is not only to recognise the reference, but to consider the interplay between the reference, the gamer-speak term, and the accompanying in-game virtual events.

SOLUTION$_2$
For the title, the localiser has retained the gamer-speak term. French gamers use the term DOTs to identify this sort of damage as well, and therefore the text relates to the in-game virtual event and maintains the use of gamer-speak with similar effect as in PROBLEM$_2$. However, because the sentence itself has been localised, the intertextual reference has been altered. This SOLUTION$_2$, therefore, could be argued to have modified the effect of the text in the TL. The referenced video is not translated, and therefore there is no French version to look to for a pre-existing localisation. French gamers may, however, still understand this reference through the connection with DOTs and the Onyxia encounter, and because many will have watched the original video. This solution, therefore, still refers to gamer culture by the inclusion of gamer-speak, perhaps less convincingly so than in PROBLEM$_2$. By retaining the gamer-speak term and relating it in the same way to the relevant virtual

events, SOLUTION$_2$ strikes a balance between rewarding the player with a nod to gamer culture and relating the achievement title to the boss fight.

ACT$_2$

Since, as with theorycrafting paratexts and despite the influence of the *Loi Toubon*, the *lingua franca* of gamer culture entertainment is English, it would be difficult for the localiser to find an appropriate equivalent video in the TL. As such, the localiser does not have a readily-available option for a similar TL video or substitution as done in some of the other examples in this corpus (see Figure 29 and Figure 43). Further, we cannot determine whether the localiser has recognised the intertextual reference to the YouTube video, since the TT makes no visible reference to it. Therefore, retaining the gamer-speak term, the localiser has struck a balance that provides a nod to gamer culture and therefore an intertextual reward in the achievement title. Furthermore, since one of the ways players will be able to complete the achievement is by applying more DOTs to speed up the combat, the relationship to the achievement's virtual events is retained.

ST	PROBLEM$_2$	SOLUTION$_2$	TT
Title: More Dots! (25 player) Description: Defeat Onyxia in less than 5 minutes in 25-player mode.	Achievement whose title makes an intertextual reference to a popular *WoW*-related YouTube video wherein a player uses gamer-speak to coordinate their gameplay in the encounter taking place for this achievement.	Achievement whose title uses gamer-speak to illustrate one way in which this achievement can be completed.	Title: *Plus de dots !* [More Dots!] Description: *Vaincre Onyxia en moins de 5 minutes en mode 25 joueurs.* [Defeat Onyxia in less than 5 minutes in 25-player mode.]

Table 43: PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$: "More Dots!"

The alteration here is somewhat in contra to the previous example: rather than using an intertextual reference to justify the use of the gamer-speak term, the gamer-speak term has been retained at the expense of the intertextual reference in PROBLEM$_2$. In this way, there is both an omission strategy (regarding the reference to the YouTube video) and a retention strategy (regarding the use of *DOT* as a gamer-speak term) taking place. We can only speculate on the justification for this

approach. It could be that the link to the game mechanics is strong: more dots will make the encounter go faster, which will increase the chances of players completing this achievement. However, players without this gamer-speak term in their repertoire will not only miss out on the intertextual reference present in PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$, but also the gameplay hint in the title for how to complete this achievement. In this way, the retention of gamer-speak, while providing the target audience with an acknowledgement of their in-group code, represents a modification of the look and feel of the game resulting from the different status of TL gamer-speak (since it is not a direct quote of the YouTube video, and relies on the gamer-speak alone for its reference).

Once more, the localiser has retained the relationship of the achievement title with the in-game mechanics. The link with the game's narrative is also unchanged: the reference to the enemy is not altered (it could have been changed from *Onyxia* to the frequently-referred to *Ony*, for example).

6.4   Conclusions

My original expectation was that gamer-speak will be more present in the in-game text that relates to in-game mechanics (e.g., abilities and tooltips), than elsewhere. The reasoning was that gamer-speak is used frequently to communicate quickly to overcome quick-fire game challenges, or to display identity as experienced gamers to overcome these challenges. It was also based on the fact that gamer-speak exists outside the game narrative: any of the in-game texts that contain gamer-speak breaks the fourth wall and therefore goes beyond the game universe via intertextuality. In my corpus, however, gamer-speak occurs only in the ability text and quest titles in *WildStar*, and not in *WoW*, and only occurs in Achievements in both games.

In this study, gamer-speak in the in-game text tends to follow certain trends. These are: gamer-speak is found in the in-game text 1) where breaking the fourth wall does not detract from delivering the game narrative, 2) where it will not adversely affect the text's function (in particular by not complicating or confusing the didactic texts), and 3) where texts pertain to group play and coordination of

mechanics (e.g., "Not your average PUG'er" or "More DOTS"). Many other examples of in-game text in this data sample contain features of gamer-speak, but its use seems to be reserved for these specific cases. My conclusions related to these three criteria are explained below.

Abilities and Tooltips

Player ability text is used in two different ways. When read, its primary function is to deliver information on game mechanics. In addition, abilities must coincide with the game's narrative regarding the flavour they are meant to add to the characterisation (i.e., psychic abilities for an Esper in *WildStar*, and martial arts-related abilities for Monks in *WoW*). However, players must also be able to use in-game text when communicating. This is particularly important regarding player abilities, since players need to coordinate their movements and actions during group play. This second use of player ability text explains the tendency of players appropriating in-game text to fit this different function.

This distinction is essential when considering Aarseth's (2001: 21) textual machine, as described in sections 3.2.1, 5.3 and 6.3. Since video games as (cyber)text involve a significant role of the gamer in their generation of meaning, it can be argued that players participate in the creation of the text. Because communication is an integral part of group play, in-game text will influence and be influenced by the way in which gamers communicate.

My claim here is not, however, that gamer-speak should replace elements of the localised text in SOLUTION$_2$. Rather, I argue that the identification of the polysystem that includes gamer-speak calls for a re-assessment of how mechanics and text interact. Furthermore, the didactic function of ability text in *WoW* does not address the fact that players communicate using language that differs from that contained in the game universe. In effect, the didactic function lacks the ability to inform players about in-game communication probably because of a reluctance to incorporate information on gamer-speak. Some examples in *WildStar* could show a gradual evolution of the in-game text to include more gamer-speak. Since there are tips and hints elsewhere in the game text that use non-standard language and recognise the player as existing outside of the game universe, the didactic function

of ability text could extend further by incorporating another sub-section that would inform players on how to communicate about abilities with other members of the community. This additional didactic function would address the different status of the TC system, and would align with other TL paratexts such as theorycrafting and fansites.

Gamer-speak, however, does figure in some of the didactic text in this study. In *WildStar*, *PV* has replaced *Point(s) de vie*, *CF* has replaced *contrôle de foule*, and *bot* has replaced *robot*. These gamer-speak terms in the in-game text align with my original expectation in that the localised text uses shortening to render a more concise text that can be used by gamers in their in-game communication.

Because of the presence of gamer-speak in abilities and tooltips, *WildStar* players who are new to MMORPGs may have difficulty accessing this text. Several conclusions could be drawn from this. *WildStar* developers and localisers could expect that their target audience will be predominantly experienced gamers, and therefore the exclusion of less-experienced gamers will have minimal impact on text consumption. Alternatively, it could be that these mechanics are thought of as widely used in the gaming community, and therefore even the less-experienced will integrate these terms in their repertoires quickly through group play.

In either case, the presence of gamer-speak in the in-game text is interesting for two central reasons. First, it is evidence of the gradual secondarisation of gamer-speak. Certain terms are acquired by the in-game text universally, despite being non-standard (e.g., *tank*), some terms are included in some games but not others (*PV*, *CF*, *bot*), and many gamer-speak terms are yet to be included in the in-game text. Therefore, another explanation for the inclusion of some gamer-speak terms in *WildStar* that are not included in *WoW* in-game text is that because the game was published later, the gradual inclusion of gamer-speak into the central system has led to the text published later to allow for gamer-speak as a more standardised terminology. These terms being included in *WildStar* and not in *WoW* begs the question of how this pattern would apply to other MMORPGs. Furthermore, the additional didactic text proposed above would resolve potential difficulties of comprehension of TL gamer-speak.

For the localiser, the role of ability text and its functions leads to many of the challenges associated with this text type. In short, SOLUTION$_2$ shows three complications in game localisation that relate to gamer-speak. First, this text is consumed in two ways: it is read, and it is used to coordinate gameplay. Because of these two uses, the localisation of such text should account for its functionality in both cases. Second, the system of game mechanics is embedded in the game code and common to both the SC and TC systems. Therefore, "full localization" as understood by Chandler and Deming's (2012: 10) is never completely achieved, in the sense that the game mechanics themselves (at least in the case of MMORPGs) are rarely, if ever modified to fit the target locale. Third, because of the prevalence of English-based terms in French gamer-speak, in-game text containing such language could be confused for untranslated text (since the institution encourages the use of French over Anglicism wherever possible), thus creating an unnecessary reminder to the TC consumer that they are playing a localised game.

While abilities and explanations of abilities are frequently conducted with gamer-speak between players, I found there were none in the ST or TT examples in *WoW* abilities and tooltips. However, there are examples of intertextuality and wordplay devices that can break the fourth wall or offer some level of humour or linguistic interest beyond the support of the narrative and the explanation of the game mechanics. This suggests that strict adherence to the game narrative is not a requirement of this text type. However, the didactic function of ability names and tooltips is paramount, and therefore any ambiguity or lack of clarity limits the accessibility and functionality of these texts. Furthermore, intertextuality is used sparingly, and is limited to situations where there is a strong link to the game narrative or mechanics, so that a player without the relevant repertoire will still be able to understand the text's relationship within the context of the game universe. The limited use of gamer-speak by game writers and localisers (none in *WoW* and only for certain mechanics in *WildStar*) suggests that providing English and French-speaking gamers with means for communicating in-game is not a priority, despite the frequent use of gamer-speak in gamer communications around abilities. This may be due to a hesitation to break with the game narrative when writing in-game text, regardless of how that text will be used by gamers during gameplay.

Quest Titles

My original expectation was that quest titles would be the least likely forms to include gamer-speak, given that their primary function is to drive forward the game narrative. However, they were found to include one example of gamer-speak, as well as other features that depart from the narrative such as non-standard language, intertextuality, and wordplay.

As far as the localisation of quest titles is concerned, the re-appropriation of gamer-speak into the game universe is particularly striking. The secondarisation of the primary system of gamer-speak supports Even-Zohar's (1979: 226) identification of these two stages of cultural systems. One strategy that has been applied to non-standard language is the contextualisation through anchoring terms either to the in-game mechanics or narrative, or to an intertextual reference. By relating language that excludes certain consumers (like gamer-speak), to other recognisable aspects of the in-game text or intertextual references, localisers can render certain terms more accessible.

The localiser, then, must approach quest titles with the knowledge that there is a contextualising in-game event or action that accompanies any intertextuality or relationship with the game narrative. The interdependency of systems makes the rendering of quest titles demanding on the localiser, resulting in different translation strategies.

Achievements

As Strong (2017: 36) states, achievements "must contain a strong link to game mechanics, a didactic function, and make frequent intertextual or humoristic references" to be both functional and rewarding for players. Achievement titles emerge as the rewarding element, since they appear upon completion of the achievement, and because they tend to contain the intertextuality or the humoristic references. The didactic function is more-frequently included in the description, as that is where gamers can find the necessary information for completing the achievement. In both the titles and descriptions from this study the link to game mechanics is a common thread throughout all PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$, while intertextuality, humour, the rewarding aspect, and the didactic function are only

found in either the title or the description. This, in combination with the fact that achievement text can either align with or subvert the game's narrative, underlines the importance of the semiotic relationship with the game mechanics. This is not only because the intertextual and humoristic references rely on the game mechanics to gain meaning, but also because gamers must also have access to information relating to game mechanics in order to complete the achievement. Thus, the system of mechanics, common to both the SC and TC, influences video game localisation, even though it is shared and unchanged by the SL and TL. Unlike game mechanics, the narrative can either be subverted or maintained to different degrees in PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$ so long as they do not impede the functionality of the achievement text. Any alteration of the way in which the achievement relates to the game mechanics can have negative effects on the gaming experience, most notably by rendering the SOLUTION$_2$ incomprehensible or otherwise unable to fulfil its didactic function. In other words, both the didactic function and the rewarding nature of achievement texts rely in different ways on game mechanics.

Overall conclusions regarding in-game text

Gamer-speak can appear both in PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$. Contrary to my expectation that the appearance of gamer-speak would be dependent on text type, I found that examples of gamer-speak tended to be related to group play. After all, gamer-speak is created by gamers for use in group play, which is the focus of MMORPGs. Unfortunately, a player whose repertoire does not include gamer-speak is unlikely to achieve the same satisfaction in gameplay as fluent users. I suggest that the introduction of gamer-speak terms in the in-game text (ST and TT) would benefit new players, giving them a quicker entry into the culture of the game.

The inclusion of gamer-speak in the in-game text alters both how it functions, and its status. Gamers use it for practical reasons and to solidify the group identity. By referring to gamer culture, gamer-speak used in the in-game text breaks the fourth wall creating important implications for localisers. Localisers should also be aware of the rapidly-evolving status of the gamer-generated linguistic system, and their role in the rewarding aspect of achievement titles.

The relevance of gamer-speak to achievements is clear from these data. In line with (Strong 2017: 34-5), the relationship to the relevant game mechanics appears essential, the alignment with or subversion of the game narrative is retained, and some aspect of humour/wordplay is rendered in SOLUTION$_2$ if they are present in PROBLEM$_2$. The phenomenon of gamer-speak has direct relevance to the creativity and originality that Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 13) state is afforded to video game localisers. In this corpus, localisers handled gamer-speak by removing, retaining, or adapting it to fit within the mechanics, narrative, and gamer-speak systems in the TL. SOLUTION$_1$ for achievement titles, therefore, supports Mangiron and O'Hagan's (ibid.) notion of the heightened creativity afforded to video game localisers. However, the severe space constraints they describe do not play such an important role, since GUIs can be modified to accommodate longer TTs.

We have seen from this study that there are many examples of in-game text containing gamer-speak. There is also in-game text that shares the features of gamer-speak without including it. As a result, gamer-speak is an important consideration for MMORPG localisers. Understanding how gamer-speak is used by gamers during gameplay, and how it may be used by writers and localisers themselves, will incorporate this integral part of their target audience into their localisation approach.

Chapter 7   Gamer reporting and comparison of the translated text

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 address gamer-speak as it appears in in-game spoken and written conversations and in the in-game ST and TT. This chapter addresses a third data set and adds to the sample players who participate in general chat channels and in online video game forums. In these settings, the participants create and consume paratexts when they discuss the game and communicate about matters related to play. These settings are therefore a fertile environment for players to use and create gamer-speak.

7.1   Three respondent groups: raiders, general chat users, and forum users

As an initial matter, it is important to note that the respondents came from three groups that have similar profiles: "regular raiders", "players who post in the general chat channel", and "players who read video game forums". These three groups of players share three characteristics: they regularly invest time in gaming, they engage in activities that make use of video game paratexts (reading online forums, researching theorycrafting websites, etc.), and they engage with the game community. These gamer profiles are discussed below.

Raiders
The length of a raid is usually about two hours, and regularly-raiding guilds encourage participation in two to four raids per week. In addition, raiders must accumulate other items such as potions and buff items, as well as research boss fights and character class mechanics to optimise their performance. Thus, the raiders are likely to spend at least six to ten hours per week either gaming or on game-related activities, which constitutes a regular investment of time.

Raiders are also likely to engage in video game paratexts, because the in-game text alone does not sufficiently prepare most regular raiders to overcome the in-game challenges they face. To prepare themselves for in-game challenges, these players are likely to consult external websites, how-to videos, and online theorycrafting forums for more information, tips and strategies on how to overcome in-game challenges. As evidence of their participation in forums and general chats,

respondents used terms such as *BIS*, or the best item for a given equipment emplacement, which comes from the lexical field of theorycrafting.

Raiders necessarily engage with the game community, because raiding with a guild or other social conglomeration of players is a cooperative activity. They tend to have frequent exchanges with other raiders, in large part to coordinate gameplay. Moreover, they may have frequent exchanges because they all enter into the social contract and adopt the "lusory attitude" as described by Ensslin (2012: 32), which is the underlying willingness and 'faith' that gamers necessarily invest in gaming.

Players who post in the general chat channel
Players who post in general chat channels are commonly recruiting for guild members and high-level PvP content. The players who recruit others are usually 'guild-masters' or 'officers, which means that in addition to the regular raiding time commitments, they also spend time administering the guild, arrange social events and interactions between guild members, and may also manage a guild website and/or forum. Players who post to recruit for high-level PvP content are also regularly engaged in gaming; it takes roughly two hours of play alone to then use the actual PvP content they recruit. In addition, these players are likely to spend time accumulating appropriate equipment, researching PvP theorycrafting, and playing in un-ranked PvP matches. Advertising for player-to-player commerce is another reason to post in general chat channels. Also, players may have accumulated items that are very valuable, and prefer to sell them outside the in-game 'auction house' to avoid the 'tax' charged by game mechanics. In any case, gamers who engage in this sort of commerce have (1) spent enough time accumulating items that are valuable, and therefore either difficult or time-consuming to obtain, or inherently rare, and (2) know the game system well enough to have an inkling of the benefits of the general chat channels for commerce.

Players helping other players via the general chat channels are also likely to be more experienced players who have accumulated enough game knowledge through repeated gameplay and/or external game research, so they can help less-experienced players. It is reasonable to infer that these more experienced players

have taken part in more difficult content, which at the higher levels requires that players visit external websites and forums to optimise their characters and research game mechanics.

Thus, the players engaging in these activities are investing time in gaming, not only in play, and are also involved with video game paratexts by posting in the general chat channels. And by definition, they are engaging with the community.

While posting in the general chat does not itself require any knowledge of video game paratexts, of the players sampled, those who recruit for guild membership are necessarily involved in the social organisation of in-game social groups, and therefore are likely to use third-party platforms to organise and discuss guild organisation such as online forums or calendar management systems. Furthermore, nearly all guilds use some form of voice chat programme, which itself is a platform for creating video game paratext through player conversations. Players recruiting for PvP, as mentioned above, likely invest their time researching in-game mechanics and character optimisation via external video game paratexts.

Those involved with commerce cannot necessarily be linked with video game paratexts, however it is worth noting that, in *WoW*, there is a smartphone application that enables players to manage commercial activity in-game. In addition, *WoW* allows the use of certain third-party software programmes, known as "add-ons" to be used to monitor price fluctuations, profit margins, and viability of selling raw materials versus selling the crafted items they make. While we cannot be certain from this study whether the players posting about commerce in the general chat channels use these third-party software, the existence of such programmes indicates that there is a tendency to refer to paratexts to assist in in-game commerce.

Players who read video game forums
Players who participate in video game forums are by definition investing time beyond any of their in-game activity. These are players who have invested enough time in the game, such that the online forums are of interest and value to them, and they are willing to invest in forum membership, read game-related posts, and potentially write game-related posts. To ensure this was the case, a question in the

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survey asked respondents about the number of years' experience they had with MMORPGs. 85.56% of respondents reported they have played MMORPGs for more than 5 years, 9.03% for three to five years, 4.33% for one to three years, and 1.08% for less than one year.

By logical extension, players visiting and posting on video game forums are engaging with the community when they consume and create community-related video game content. Since video game forums are primarily spaces for players to discuss game-related topics with other gamers, it follows that engaging with the community is part-and-parcel of visiting video game forums.

As described, the three groups of respondents have similar characteristics in terms of their time spent gaming, their use of paratexts, and engaging with the community. Indeed, certain players likely fit into all three groups; it is possible that the same respondents are included in all three groups, and also possible that these respondents have also been observed in the voice chat and written chat samples. Figure 45 below shows an overview of the demographics of the respondents to the survey:
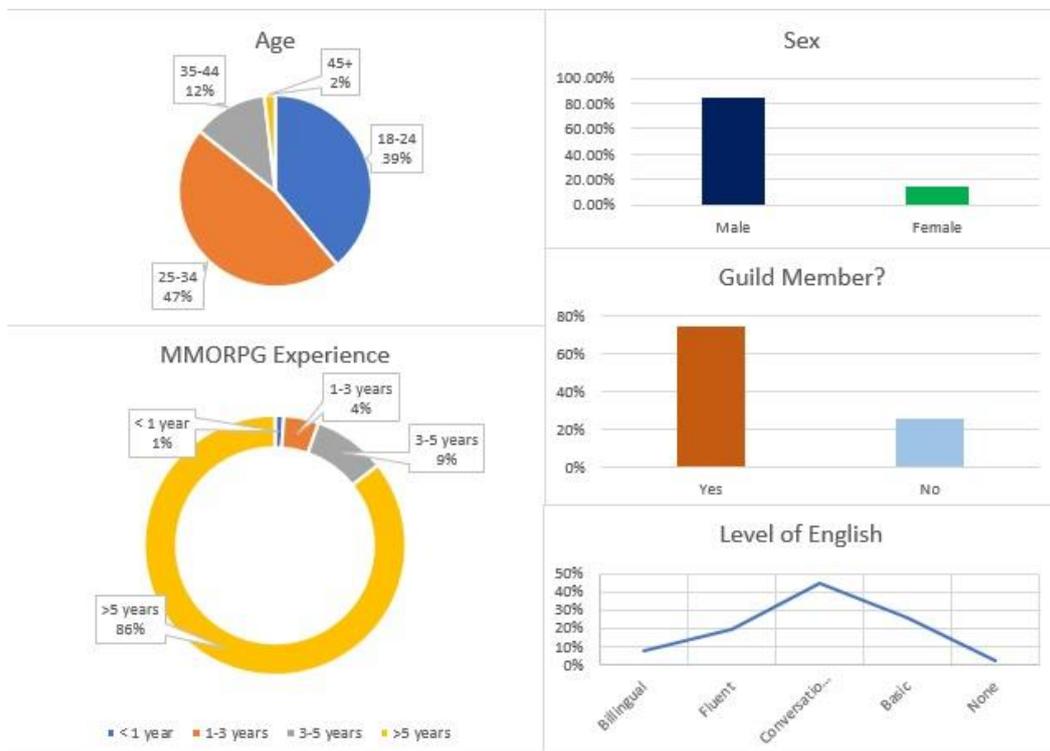

Figure 45: Survey demographics: age, sex, MMORPG experience, guild membership, and level of English

The above demographic overview shows that the typical respondent is: (1) between 18 and 34 years old; (2) is male; (3) has more than 5 years of MMORPG experience; (4) belongs to a guild or equivalent in-game social organisation; and (5) has a conversational understanding of English. These outcomes are in line with the expected population of gamers responding to online surveys about MMORPGs (Yee 2006).

This respondent pool was targeted with a view of obtaining more information on certain terms that could be, in line with Ensslin's (2012: 68) categorisation, either game-specific, genre-specific, or pertain to gaming in general.

7.2   Gamer survey: expectations of in-game exchanges

This survey was designed so that respondents (297 included in the final sample) could fill in a blank part of 25 sentences with a term of their choosing. Each sentence was designed such that it could be completed either with a gamer-speak term, or not. Figure 46 below is a breakdown of the overall statistical findings pertaining to part two of this survey:
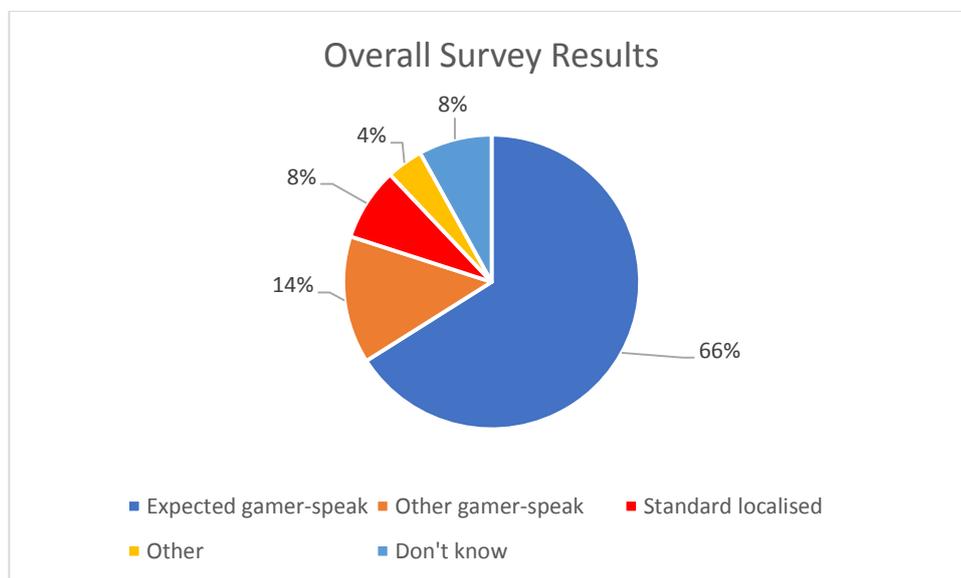

Figure 46: Overall survey results – gamer-speak terms[89]

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[89] These data have been simplified to whole numbers

This overall distribution shows that respondents in this survey expect to see or use gamer-speak terms in their in-game communications, since roughly 80% of responses contained either the expected gamer-speak term, or another gamer-speak term. In addition, only 8% of respondents inserted the standard term: as many as those who did not recognise or did not know the term that was requested. This stark difference between the expectation gamers have of gamer-speak usage in in-game communication is significant, since it shows another subset of the gaming population beyond those found in the other data sets that recognises and uses gamer-speak in in-game communication situations.

Since it is not possible to discuss all the questions included in this survey in detail (see Appendix 6 for the complete survey results), six of the terms targeted in the second section of the survey will be discussed in-depth. The gamer-speak terms that were expected to be used in these corresponding sentences were *AFK*, *AOE*, *Debuff*, *EDS*, *Journa(s)*, and *Heal*. These were selected to include (1) at least one term that was a loan, (2) at least one term that was a loan + a shift, (3) at least one term that was a shortening, but not a loan, (4) examples that showed both terms that were widely used and those that were less-widely used among respondents or were found to have pertinent alternative responses. Each of these examples is discussed and related to the in-game localised text below.

7.2.1 AFK

Q32: « *Je dois _____ BIO pendant quelques minutes, mais je reviens avant la fin des trash.* » ["I have to ____ BIO for a few minutes, but I'll be back before you finish with the trash."]

The first sentence asked respondents to fill in the blank with a term that is used to state to other players that they are no longer controlling their avatar. In English, the in-game term is "Away from keyboard", or "AFK". In the French localised version, this is replaced with *Absent*, or *ABS*. Figure 47 shows both localised versions as they appear in-game in *WoW* and *WildStar*:
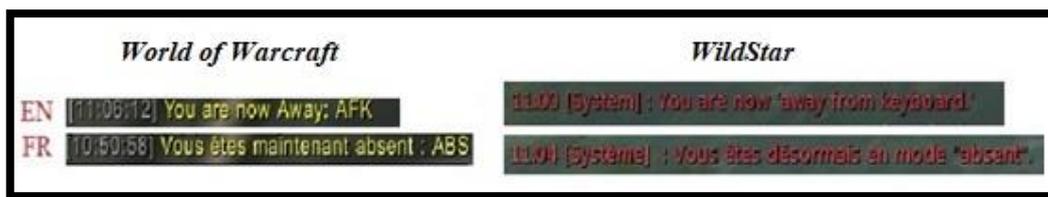
Figure 47: AFK & ABS – *WoW & WildStar*

Although the purpose of this chapter is not to discuss the localised text, it is worth noting that in *WoW* the acronym *ABS* is provided to French gamers, while in *WildStar*, no abbreviation is offered to English or French Gamers. In addition, in *WoW*, to enable the *ABS* status in the French localised version, the commands "/abs" and "/afk" both work, while in *WildStar*, the French localised version only recognises "/abs". Players can also go AFK / *ABS* by not interacting with their avatar for 5 minutes.

With this in mind, respondents were given a sentence which allowed them to insert the term they would use to communicate with other players. Figure 48 below shows the distribution of responses:
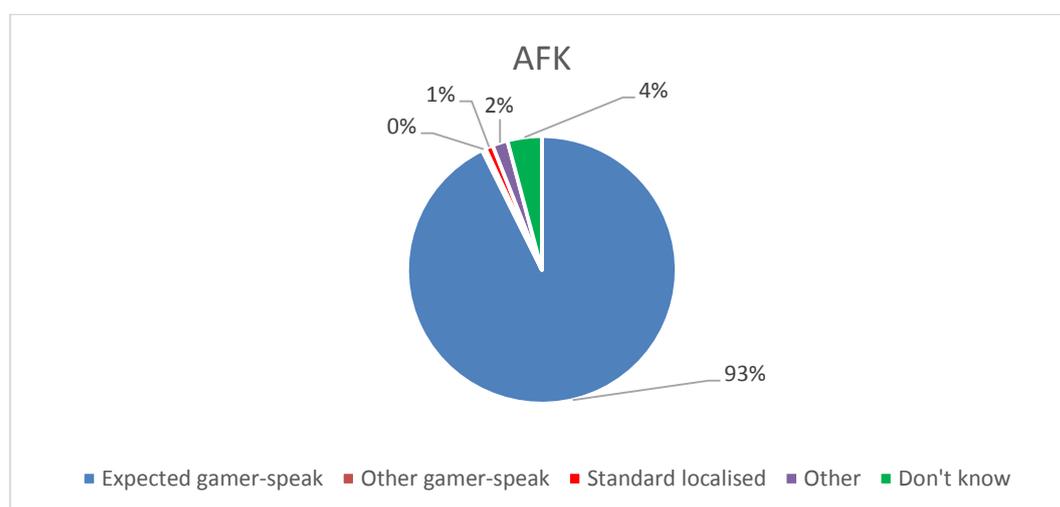

Figure 48: Survey result – *AFK*

This figure shows that the vast majority of gamers interviewed chose the expected gamer-speak term (AFK: 93%). In addition, this distribution bears out two of the hypothesised findings for gamer-speak in general, which were (1) its widespread use among French gamers; and (2) the widespread use of English loan words.

Two primary reasons could explain this result. First, because the term is related to an extradiegetic event that has strong links to the real world, the use of in-game localised text (*absent*) is not expected. Indeed, the need to communicate this status necessarily breaks the narrative immersion in an MMORPG, because the player must speak as the operator of their avatar and not from the point of view of the avatar itself.[90] Second, using this term has other secondary mechanics effects. For example, in *WoW*, players who are AFK during certain in-game content such as PvP are immediately removed from the event. This is an in-game system that has been implemented to avoid players joining a group and not contributing to their successful play. Therefore, being AFK brings with it the connotation that the player is not actively participating in gameplay, or "slacking". Furthermore, any other players trying to send private messages to AFK players will receive an automated response alerting them that the player is AFK. Similarly, on the BattleNet© launcher platform, which enables social connection with online friends playing other Blizzard® games, an AFK player's status will be set to "away". Thus, the preference for using the term AFK identified in the survey could be because going AFK has stronger links with the many interconnected in-game mechanics that accompany it, rather than the departure from the game narrative that it engenders.

This example raises other questions, however, about gamer-speak usage and the localised game text. First, players clearly prefer to use *AFK* in French when communicating with other players despite the availability of a localised option. In fact, only one respondent ($< 1\%$), a *WoW* player, chose the term *ABS*, despite this being an alternative equally concise and no less appropriate shortening for the purposes of gameplay coordination. In addition, players tended to be confident in their response, with 91% of respondents reporting they used the term AFK.

While the next example from this data set is another three-letter abbreviation, the usage results are somewhat different and defy expectations relating to the localised text.

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[90] As an aside, it would be interesting to observe how players who "role-play" in MMORPGs speak about issues such as being "AFK", "D/C", or "Lagging", since these are technical issues from the real world that do not exist in the context of the game narrative.

7.2.2 AOE

Q36: « Ne tuez pas ces petits mobs en monocible - utilisez les sorts _____ pour qu'ils meurent tous en même temps. » ["Don't kill all the little mobs single-target – use ___ spells so they all die at the same time."]

In this question, players added the missing word that describes an antonym of single-target damage. The standard version of this term in the in-game text is "Area of Effect", localised as either *effet de zone* in *WoW* or *à zone d'effet* in *WildStar*. Because of the heightened need for concision and quick-reaction when coordinating gameplay, and because of the discrepancy in length between the localised text and the gamer-speak alternative, it would be logical that *AOE* is preferred to the localised term. This has been corroborated by the survey results, since *AOE* is still a clear leader, with 86% of respondents opting for this term. However, as shown in Figure 49, the use of the standard localised term is much more significant than in the previous example (9% of respondents). This is contrary to any predictions in this research, since the in-game localised term offers no discernible practical advantage for in-game communication, and the link to the in-game narrative is weak, even in the localised text. Furthermore, the term *AOE* is a metonym for different individual abilities, and other data samples in this research suggest that metonyms might be one instance where gamer-speak is preferred (see discussion of Table 21):
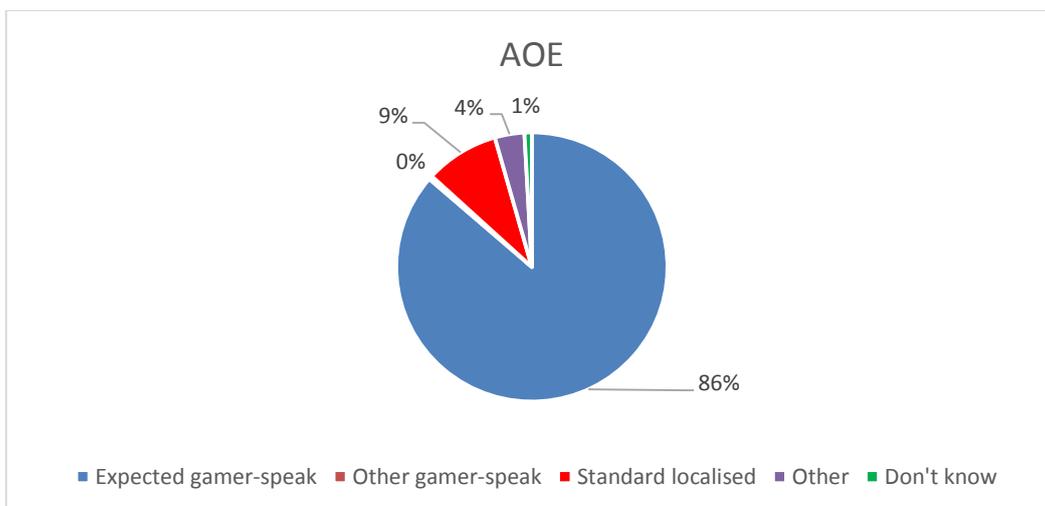

Figure 49: Survey result – *AOE*

There are several potential explanations for why *AOE* is used more than other available options. First, the classification used to determine which terms qualify as gamer-speak can account for this. *Zone* as well as *de zone* have been grouped into the "Standard localised" category, since they do not fit the present definition of gamer-speak. Furthermore, respondents who responded with two terms in the same response, once with the localised term and once with the gamer-speak term, were counted only for their first response, which was the standard version in each case. Finally, as was the case with as many terms as possible, the question was worded to allow for both the localised term and the gamer-speak term to be used. Because of this, the grammar in French required avoiding a construction that would use the apostrophe that figures between the article and a noun beginning with a vowel, since indicating that the term begins with a vowel would skew the results towards responding with *AOE*.[91] To allow for the possibility of standard and gamer-speak responses, the question was phrased in such a way that the shortened version of the localised game text was, for this response only, shorter than the gamer-speak term if the text were to be spoken. As shown above, the clause reads: "*...utilisez les sorts _____ pour qu'ils meurent tous en même temps*. / use _____ spells so that they all die at the same time". Therefore, *de zone* is easier to communicate over voice chat than *d'AOE*, or potentially *AOE*.

This response was also particularly interesting because it was the only case where the "other" category included the same or very similar terms: here, every respondent wrote either *multicible* or *multi* (8 respondents total, ~4% of total respondents to this question). While this construction is not strictly speaking gamer-speak, neither is it part of the localised in-game text. Although this is beyond the scope of this research, it could be that this term comes from another game universe, and that it could be classified as either gamer-speak from these games or part of the in-game localised text.

Another interesting finding is that 100% of respondents who responded with *AOE* state they use the term. While this gamer-speak shift term is preferred by

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[91] This is, in part, because players in this corpus were never found to abbreviate *Effet de zone* with *EDZ*.

gamers,[92] the significant use of terms based on the in-game text suggests that the localisation of text that will be used for communication can have some impact on gamer-communication. This is discussed further in the discussion of Figure 50. The following example shows another situation where the localisation of the in-game text can influence gamer-speak.

7.2.3   Debuff

Q26: « Je ne peux pas taunt le monstre là, j'ai toujours le / l' _____ qui réduit l'armure. » ["I can't taunt the monster now, I still have the _____ that reduces armour."]

The target term for this survey question is another metonym, meaning negative effects that are persistent and ongoing affecting a player's avatar. These effects have had different names in different games and genres ('status effects', in the *FINAL FANTASY* series, for example). However, in MMORPGs 'debuff' is the most widespread and well-known term. In French, this term has been localised differently in *WoW* and in *WildStar*: *Affaiblissement* and *Malus*, respectively. As shown in Figure 50, a total of 87% of respondents opted for the expected gamer-speak term *debuff*. This is in line with the predicted results for such a term based on the hypotheses in this study, given that it is a metonym, linked with many in-game mechanics, used frequently in communication between gamers during gameplay. Nonetheless, it is useful to pay attention to the other terms chosen by respondents, as they reveal some potential arguments for these choices.

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[92] AOE has been widened beyond its definition of the delineated zone in which an ability will have an effect to describe any abilities or effects that cause damage to multiple targets.
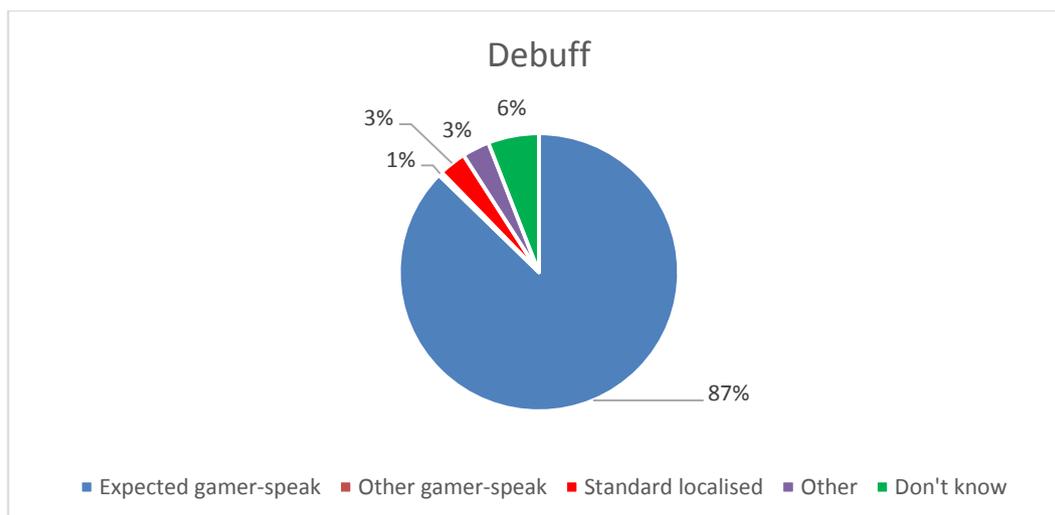
Figure 50: Survey result – *Debuff*

While only 3% of respondents selected the "standard localised" response, they all responded with the term used in *WildStar* (*malus*) and not in *WoW* (*affaiblissement*). This could indicate that *malus* is more appropriate use in gamer-communication than *affaiblissement*, probably because it is shorter and the same length as the gamer-speak alternative *debuff*. Another consideration that might explain these results is the chronology of these terms' developments: since *affaiblissement* has existed in the localised *WoW* text since its release, the French community may have adopted *debuff* at the time *WoW* was released, because *affaiblissement* was inappropriate (too long). Since *WildStar* came much later, and since *malus* seems to be used by some respondents, it could be that, while this term is more appropriate for gamer communication, it was introduced much later to the gaming community and therefore the use of *debuff* remains as the most popular term.

Despite the relatively small percentage of respondents who used *malus*, its use nonetheless suggests that a shorter localised term is more likely to be accepted and adopted that a longer term. This has implications for localisers as it suggests they could influence gamer-generated language by using terms that gamers are more likely to use. Further study would be interesting to determine a localisation strategy that prioritises gamer communication and to ascertain the impact of the localised text on the use of gamer-speak.

This impact would likely have effects beyond the adoption of this new lexis by gamers during gameplay, such as an altered perception of the game text, or a change in players' game experience. One difficulty in using gamer-speak in the in-game text is that, like other gamer-generated language, it can be genre- or game-specific, rather than pertaining to gaming in general (Ensslin 2012: 68). The next example shows a distribution of responses for a term that has decidedly different properties likely owing to its game-specificity.

7.2.4   EDS

Q33: « Dtf j'aime pas les _____ même si c'est la seule race du côté Horde qui pourra jouer chasseur de démons. » ["Anyway, I don't like ____ even if they are the only Horde race that can play demon hunter."]

EDS is a three-letter French acronym describing a race of humanoids in *WoW* that players can use to create their avatars: *Elfes de Sang* [Blood Elves]. The expectations for this term were: (1) it will not be as widely known because it is specific to *WoW*; (2) respondents will be more likely to respond with the standard localised version of this term because of the strong links with the game narrative, and because of its relatively limited use for coordinating in-game mechanics;[93] and (3) since respondents will respond to this question as though they are using the term during casual discussion rather than in-game mechanics coordination, the "other gamer-speak term" category will have a higher response rate, since other, longer terms will also be used.

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[93] One notable exception to this is in a PvP encounter called "The Eye of the Storm", where players must defend different points on the map. One of these points is named *Tour des Elfes de sang* [Blood Elf Tower], which is frequently abbreviated to *EDS* when players coordinate the attack/defence of this point. Since PvP encounters were not considered in this research, further study is needed to determine if this term is used more frequently in this instance.
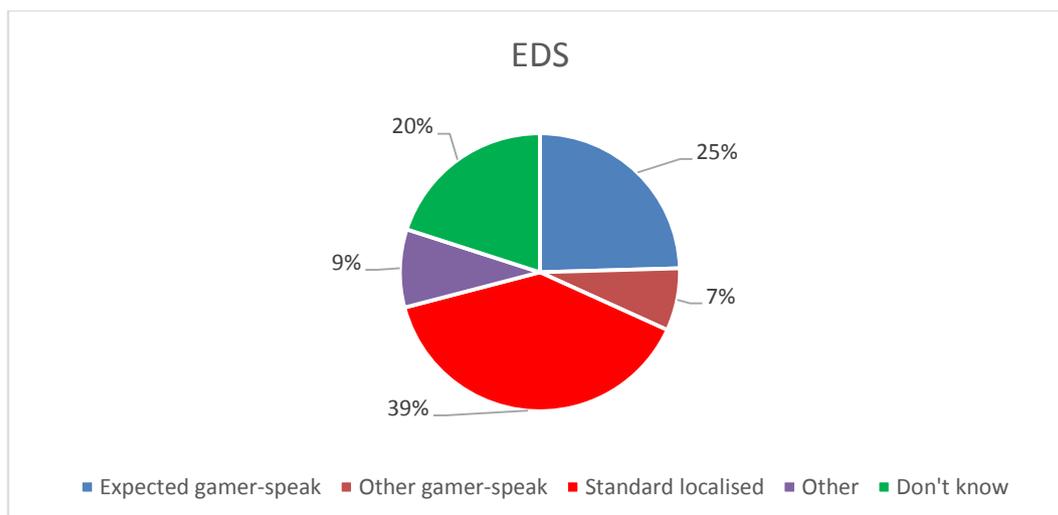
Figure 51: Survey Result – *EDS*

As expected, only 25% of the respondents used the gamer-speak term *EDS,* and nearly 40% of players responded with the full term as it is found in the localised game text (*Elfes de Sang*). Whereas other terms of a similar length would be more likely to be shortened or rejected, priority is given to the full term perhaps because race names contribute to the individualisation and characterisation of player avatars, and thus the link with the game narrative is stronger than the link with the game mechanics. In addition, this term is specific to *WoW*: there are no Blood Elves in *WildStar*, or any other MMORPG that was reported to be played by respondents. Furthermore, while this gamer-speak term is used for the coordination of one in-game PvP encounter, the survey question was framed so that it would not involve this context. This was partly to avoid excluding players who are less-familiar with PvP in *WoW*, but also because it would have added more context than was present elsewhere in the survey.

The game-specific nature of this term is reflected by the fact that a significant portion of respondents reported not knowing this term (20%). Another interesting response from this survey item was the use of other gamer-speak terms (7%), including a language like leet speak (see glossary definition of Leet (l337) Speak). Three respondents offered the response *Elfe200* [*Elfe deux cents*]. This is slightly different from the original version of leet speak, since rather than simply replacing letters with numbers, the respondent has used the numbers to create the phonic equivalent of the name in the localised text. In other words, when spoken, *Elfe200*

and *Elfe de sang* sound the same. This example is the only use of this kind of leet speak in gamer-speak from this sample; however, guild members belonging to the guilds included in this study reported, anecdotally, seeing other examples such as *so6* [*so six*] instead of *saucisse*, *cho7* [*cho sept*] instead of *chaussette* [sock; slang for weak], *p800* [*p-huit cents*] instead of *puissant* [poewerful] and *put1* [*pût un*] instead of *putain* [fuck]. This sort of wordplay with numbers exists in English as well, with "m8" instead of "mate", "l8r" instead of "later", and "b4" instead of "before". Strictly speaking, some of these terms do not fit my definition of gamer-speak, because they are common in other modes of online communication (Ensslin 2012: 170), and text messages. However, when they are used to replace in-game terms or game-specific terms, they become part of the language of gamer-speak.

This term also differs from previous examples because it is not derived from English. Whereas *AFK* was preferred over *ABS* in this survey, *EDS* was over three times as popular as the English derived gamer-speak alternatives respondents use (*belf*, *BE*, and *Blood Elf*). This raises two questions regarding gamer-speak use: (1) what causes gamers to derive gamer-speak from French rather than from English? and (2) to what extent can gamer-speak be thought of as "Anglicism"? The latter of these questions is of particular importance to this research, because it is one of the principal arguments against inclusion of gamer-speak in the localised text. Because of the adherence to the guidelines set forth by institutions like, in the French context, the *Académie Française* and the *Loi Toubon*, responses from industry professionals (see discussion of Figure 8) sometimes resist the use of Anglicism. Therefore, Anglicism in gamer-speak could be a barrier to its inclusion in the in-game text. Both questions are discussed further in 8.2 and 8.3.

Respondent confidence in this survey item was also notably lower than in other examples. While with most survey items, 90% or more of players reported using the term they chose, in this question only 69% of respondents reported using the term. However, 89% of the respondents that reported using the term responded with *EDS*. This result suggests that, in the respondent community, this term was not as widely used. However, *EDS* was widely used among those respondents who did know this term. In other words, this is an example of a game-specific term. Since this term describes a race that is specific to *WoW*, it follows that players of other

games would be less likely to use the term, since it would be irrelevant to communication outside of *WoW*. Therefore, while some gamer-speak terms are applicable and relevant to MMORPGs in general, others might be game-specific.

The following example, in relation to question 30 of the survey, shows the use of another gamer-speak term that has been derived from the French localised version.

7.2.5   Journa(s)

Q30: « Tout comme hier et avant-hier, j'ai mes _____ à faire pour monter ma réput. » ["Just like yesterday and the day before, I have my _____ to do to get more rep."]

Players undertake quests to gain experience and advance the storyline. Standard quests are usually one-off, with a linear narrative-style unfolding of events following a sequence. However, another convention in MMORPGs is to have quests that can be repeated regularly. One of these types of repeated quests is Daily quests. These quests are repeatable every day, and are similar in their mechanics to other in-game content that repeats regularly. Because of the non-linear, repetitive quality that daily quests engender, they are essentially different from traditional forms of narrative such as literature or films. As such, they reinforce the persistent world of MMORPGs, because they add the notion of routine into the virtual world that is typically lacking in other, more passive media.

This term is localised in French as *quête(s) journalière(s)* in *WoW* and as *quête(s) quotidienne(s)* in *WildStar*. Figure 52 shows the distribution of responses for this term.
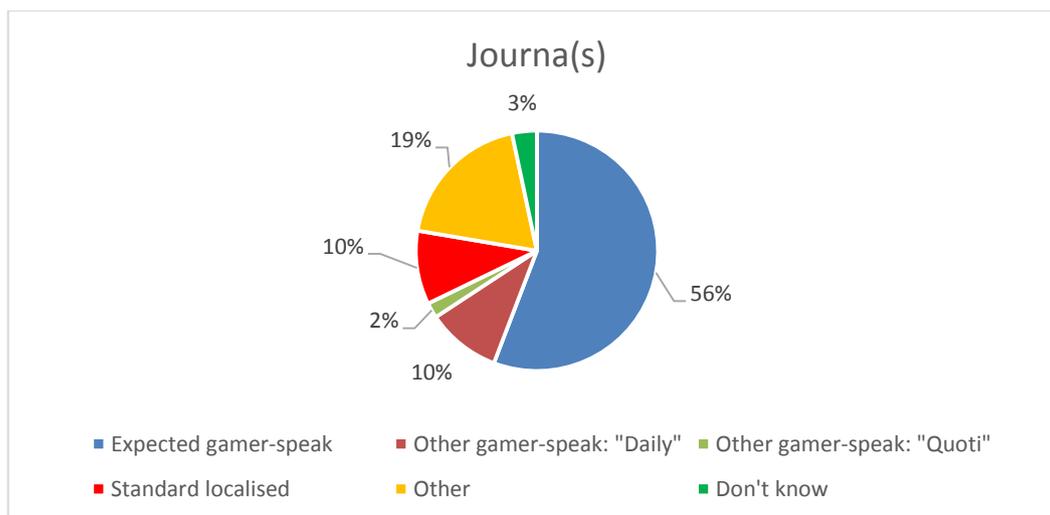
Figure 52: Survey result – *Journa(s)*

The expected gamer-speak term for this survey question, *journa*, is a shortening (clipped) of the localised term. This has been categorised as gamer-speak since it is only recognisable in the context of the in-game conversations as a result of its shortening and semantic shift. The shift that has taken place is the widening of the term *journalière(s)* [daily] to refer to *quête(s) journalière(s)* [daily quests]. Therefore, while non-gamers will understand the adjective *journalière*, they are unlikely to understand the noun *journa*.

While 56% of respondents opted for the expected gamer-speak term, the results were not as overwhelming as with other questions. One potential explanation for this is how this term is used in-game. Since the mechanics that relate to this term do not have a time-specific requirement, it may be that the motivation to shorten is not as strong as with other terms. Another explanation could be that more gamers selected the English-derived gamer-speak term *daily*. 10% of players responded with *daily*, a term that is only one letter shorter than *journa*, and the same number of syllables. Furthermore, since the mechanics do not encourage the use of a shorter term, the reasons for 10% of players using *daily* are not explained by a preference for concision. This raises the question of motivation for using the English gamer-speak term among those players, and reinforces my argument for one of the salient features of gamer-speak being the influence of English. In this case, the responses *journa* and *daily* show that terms can be derived from either French or English, and

both a French-derived and English-derived version of the same gamer-speak term can exist.

Not only can English- and French-derived gamer-speak terms exist, but so can multiple French-derived terms for the same concept. In this question, respondents offered a second, French-derived gamer-speak term: *quoti*. This is likely derived from the *WildStar* version of the localised text, *quêtes quotidiennes*. While only 2% of respondents used the term *quoti*, it shows that alternative versions of the localised text can influence the formation of gamer-speak. This does not necessarily mean that these players learned this directly from the *WildStar* localised text (since not all respondents who used *quoti* reported having played *WildStar*); however, it suggests gamer-speak can stem from multiple localised versions. In cases where multiple versions of the same term exist, further study would be needed to identify the reasons why one is preferred over the other.

The final term in this segment from the survey discussion is derived from English, and is one of the questions were respondents were most in agreement in their response.

7.2.6   Heal

Q20: « On est presque full. Ce qu'il nous faut maintenant, c'est un _____. » ["We're nearly full. What we need now is a _____."*]*

Players in the two games in this corpus can take on one of three roles: Tank, Damage Dealer (DD / DPS), or Healer. The first two of these roles have been discussed at length (see 5.1.2), and as this section discussion shows, *heal* shares some of the characteristics of *DPS* (as seen in the discussion of Table 20). The prediction for question 20 of the survey was that the gamer-speak term *heal* would be widely used by respondents, but there would still be a significant portion of respondents using the standard localised term, *soin / soigneur* [healing / healer]. This hypothesis is based on the following facts: (1) the term is used as a metonym to describe a game role (i.e., healers can refer to Restoration Druids, Mistweaver Monks, Holy Paladins, Holy and Discipline Priests, and Restoration Shamans in

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WoW, and heal-specialised Medics, Spellslingers, and Espers in *WildStar*); (2) it is used to coordinate gameplay during in-game encounters; however, (3) the localised in-game equivalent is no longer than the gamer-speak term.

The breakdown in Figure 53 below provides some additional insight into this term, as well as other game role metonyms, and into the formation of gamer-speak in general.
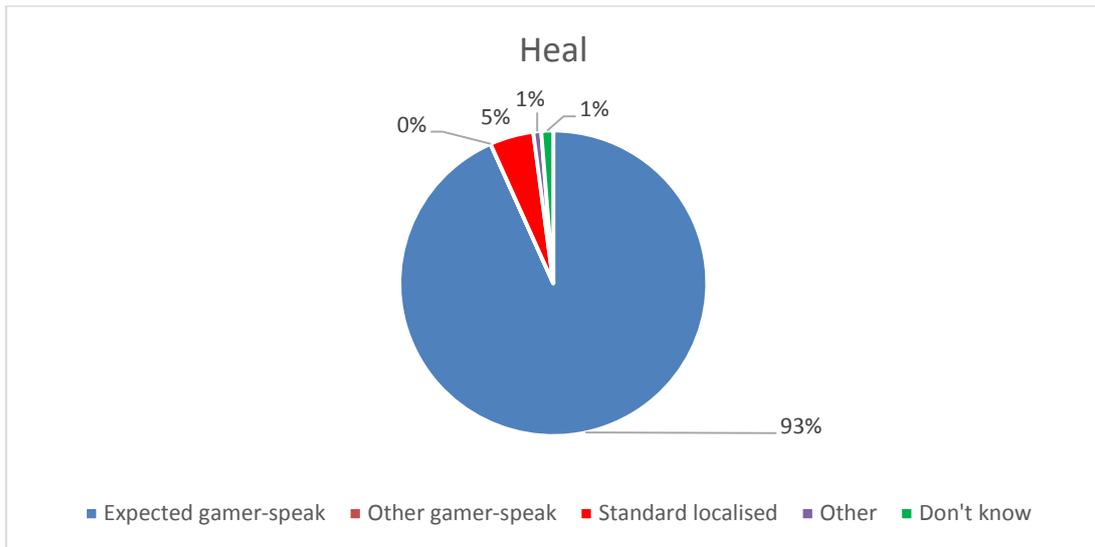
Figure 53: Survey result – "Heal"

The overwhelming majority (93%) of respondents inserted *heal* in the fill-in-the-blank sentence. Furthermore, 95% of all respondents reported using the term they responded with. This distribution is interesting for several reasons. First, the preference for the English standard term, which in turn can be considered French gamer-speak, is in line with other examples of other loan words taken wholesale form English (*kick*, *need*, *boss*, *farm*, *rogue*, etc.). In addition, this term is a metonym that includes different character class specialisations which implies that it has stronger links to the games' mechanics than it does to their narratives, since the individual flavour of each class and specialisation is abandoned for a term that allows them to be grouped together, which facilitates in-game coordination. Finally, this term is used not only to describe the character role, but like DPS, it can be used (via a semantic shift) to describe the output of this character class. That is, when someone needs to be healed or more healing is required, this gamer-speak term can be used e.g., *plus de heal!* [more healing!].

This final point has further implications for the formation of this gamer-speak term. Because of the different grammar systems in the English and French polysystems, the term "heal" is conjugated differently in English and in French. For example, in English, players might say "We need more healers in this group", and for the same sentence, French players could say either *on a besoin de plus de **heal** dans ce groupe*, or *on a besoin de plus de **healeurs** dans ce groupe*. This is reflected in the different formations in the responses to this sentence, which include *heal*, *healeur*, and *healer* in place of the noun form for a sentence to recruit players for group content. As such, the morphological rules for conjugation indicate that the term can both be taken wholesale from the English with *heal* and *healer*, or appropriated further into the French linguistic system through a semantic shift by the addition of the ending *-eur*. This sort of morphological adaptation is common in French in the pronunciation of certain nominative Anglicisms (*browseur*, *snipeur*, or indeed *gameur*).

This use of *heal* / *healer* / *healeur* in French can also be contrasted with other gamer-speak terms such as *DPS* or *tank*. In the case of *DPS*, since the acronym for the French and English standard versions are the same, there is no indication whether players are deriving their response on the English or the French. Furthermore, since Tank / *Tank* figure in the in-game text, it is difficult to point to the influence of English, since the in-game text justifies the use of *tank* in French. However, since *heal / healer / healeur* is always localised as *soin / soigner / soigneur*, we can say for sure that the preference for gamer-speak in this instance is based on an English-derived term.

This research suggests several potential motivations behind gamers using this gamer-speak term over standard ones. One logical explanation for the use of the English-derived term is improved concision. However, the localised French options *soin*, or *soigneur* are the same length as the Anglicised terms whether spoken or written. And yet, only 5% of respondents reported using the localised term. While low, this number is not insignificant, and could be due in part to the length of the terms. Another potential motivating factor could be that the term is a metonym that describes a gamer role, rather than a character-defining term that is used to differentiate character fantasy. Therefore, the link with the game narrative is not as

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strong as its link with the game mechanics. The weaker link to the game narrative means that gamers are less motivated to use a localised term over a gamer-speak term. Furthermore, since this term is used for recruitment, there could be a sociological motivation to use this term, since it would display the player's knowledge of in-game lexis and therefore indicate the player's experience. Finally, since the analysis of these terms is anachronic but their development has happened over time, it could be that previously-existing conditions in the linguistic systems were such that this term was originally accessible and preferable in its English-derived form.

7.3 Conclusions

The results from this survey reveal the tendency for players to use gamer-speak unprompted in in-game communications. Furthermore, they suggest several potential motivating factors for using gamer-speak, such as the practical advantages concision provides for gameplay, and the sociological advantages gained by appearing more experienced through gamer-speak use. Finally, they provide insight into how the localised text influences gamer-speak, and hints at certain chronological evolutions of gamer-speak formation and usage based on the localised text.

The survey shows that the respondent population tends to produce gamer-speak terms when prompted to complete sentences relating to gamer communications where a standard and gamer-speak term can be used (on average, 82% of all responses either used the expected gamer-speak term or an alternative gamer-speak term). This result alone is significant, since respondents in this survey, regardless of their age, sex, English level, game experience, whether they belong to a guild, or which MMORPGs they have played, use gamer-speak. Furthermore, all respondents used gamer-speak for multiple entries and not one respondent completed the survey with only standard terms. This not only shows the prevalence of gamer-speak among this segment of the gamer population, but also that there are motivations for using gamer-speak beyond the functionality of the game text, such as the sociological impact of using gamer-speak within the context of the hypersalient group identity.

In other words, since most of the respondents were experienced gamers (86% had >5 years MMORPG experience), this could be one explanation for their knowledge of gamer-speak. This correlation makes sense, since people who have never played MMORPGs will start with very little or no knowledge of gamer-speak. On the other hand, over time, gamers will be exposed to more gamer-speak, and because gamer-speak use appears to facilitate gameplay, they will gradually recognise and use more of these terms.

As discussed in Chapter 5, gamers use gamer-speak to facilitate conversation, but also to support their image as an experienced gamer. The data from this survey, however, are inconclusive in this regard, since level of experience did not correlate to usage or non-usage of gamer-speak. This could be because respondents were all relatively experienced, and further study of neophytes with limited gaming knowledge would be needed to learn more.

Another potential motivating factor for the use of gamer-speak is the lack of appropriate or usable terms in the localised text, or indeed in any standard language from the TL system. This can be seen primarily in situations where gamer-speak terms are shorter than standard French terms, or other terms found in the localised game text. These data support this, not only in the apparent preference for expected gamer-speak terms where the related mechanics are time-sensitive (*kick*, *pull*, *stun*, *kite*, *DOT*, *debuff*), but also in instances where some players use other alternatives, either from the standard localised text or other gamer-speak (*malus*, *zone*, *multi*). Despite this, some localised terms of equal length are used presumably during gameplay coordination (*heal / soin*), or during cooperative gameplay (*afk / abs*) where players still prefer gamer-speak terms. To explain the motivations behind these terms' use, further study is needed.

In addition, in the discourse of player communications, certain terms may have become prevalent because of previously-existing conditions that led to their use. For example, because *tank* has been established in the lexis of MMORPGs, the term is now practically canonised in the in-game text. Therefore, any future description of the tank role will likely use the term *tank* in French. Because of familiarity and the perpetuation of the dominant discourse through the desire to

appear experienced, some gamer-speak terms continue to be used despite their being no more appropriate than other localised terms[94]. Furthermore, some players might develop linguistic habits that are based in one game universe, and subsequently start playing a different game using those linguistic habits, referring to their existing repertoire. Their pre-existing tendencies will influence the way they interact with their new gamer community and the new universe, thus incorporating linguistic features that would not be explicable considering only specific game universes. Therefore, more research would be needed to evaluate whether the motivation for their use could be due to pre-existing conditions that have subsequently evolved over time, and as a result how this affects their consumption of localised texts.

Beyond the chronological evolution of gamer-speak terms and their contexts, the ongoing tension between ludology and narratology has implications for how gamer-speak is formed and used. Based on the discussions in this research, some text types adhere more closely to the game universe, and others depart from it. As a result, some text types have features that relate to establishing the game narrative, such as characterisation of individual classes. These features are thought of as more important from the point of view of the target audience when consuming the localised text, as breaking from the game narrative can negatively impact player experience. On the other hand, some text types require strict adherence to the game mechanics they are describing. Ambiguity that could result from strictly adhering to the game universe could negatively impact player experience in these text types. Because of this, gamers may prefer certain standard terms that refer to in-game text that has stronger links with the game's narrative, and have little or no impact on game mechanics.

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[94] For example, one capital city from *WoW*, "Undercity", was originally not localised in the in-game text. As a result, French players used the English name, since it was the only name they were offered in the in-game text. Later, the name was localised as *Fossoyeuse*, and despite this localisation, many gamers who had already come to know the city by its English name, did not use the localised name (wowwiki.com: n.d., online).

Chapter 8   Conclusion

This PhD thesis is aimed at identifying some of the salient characteristics of gamer-speak and reflecting on its importance to the localisers of MMORPGs. The summary of findings provided in 8.1 shows how the specific aims set at the beginning of this research (see 1.1) have been met. Findings are also related to broader notions of games studies, gamer culture, and translation studies. As shown in 8.2. below, this thesis fulfils its original purpose by expanding our understanding of the following concepts: (1) video games as (para)text; (2) immersion and embodiment; and (3) the ludology vs. narratology question

8.1   Findings pertaining to research questions

Salient characteristics of gamer-speak
The salient features of gamer-speak as observed in this research are:

- Gamer-speak is used frequently by French gamers. This is evidenced by the analysis of gamer communications and survey results.
- Gamer-speak is typically formed by Anglicisms, shortenings, or a combination of these. However, it can also be derived from standard French or the in-game localised text.
- Attending to non-linguistic parameters, gamer-speak can also be classified as gaming-related, genre-specific, or game-specific.
- Gamer-speak responds to practical and social motivations. The former is mainly shown by its general tendency to be shorter than standard forms. The latter is shown by the correlation between experience and gamer-speak use.
- Gamer-speak is used in the in-game text (in Achievements and Abilities and Tooltips in particular), however less-frequently than in gamer-communications. Different strategies (typically retention, omission, substitution, and addition) are applied to render examples of gamer-speak in French.
- Gamer-speak is frequently used in gamer-communication to refer to in-game mechanics (e.g., player abilities). However, because it clashes with

the game narrative it adds intertextuality because it clashes with the game's narrative.

- Gamer-speak displays the characteristics of a rapidly-evolving primary repertoire as defined by Even-Zohar (1979: 226). In line with this definition, it is more innovative, showing examples of creative language use and interference from other repertoires (mainly English gamer-speak, but also English in general), as well as dynamic and changeable. In this sense, the presence of gamer-speak in the in-game text and their integration into the gamer universe (e.g., *PV* and *Tank*) is evidence of its gradual secondarisation, (being appropriated into the secondary/central repertoire).

These findings reveal that the hypotheses of this thesis outlined in section 1.1 have been verified in most cases, and expanded upon in others. For example, while the analysis has revealed that Anglicisms are prevalent, it has also shown that the use of shortenings is significant.

The importance of gamer-speak to localisers of MMORPGs
The analysis carried out has shown that gamer-speak is an inherent challenge in MMORPG localisation, for the following reasons:

- Gamer-speak is ingrained in the TA. Localisers require comprehensive knowledge of the TC to provide the target audience with the look and feel of an original text (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 11), as well as an immersive and convincing personal experience (Bernal 2014: 40). Gamer-speak forms a part of this TC, and informs how localisers can render the MMORPG experience.
- The skopos of the localised video game text must account for gamer agency and gamer-speak. Gamers electing to use non-standard language to coordinate gameplay shows that the TL and the localised text lack some elements and features of gamers' linguistic needs
- Gamer-speak highlights end-user involvement in generation of meaning in MMORPGs. Beyond character selection and customisation, gamers show that, in their use of gamer-speak, they are implicated in text production and consumption.

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- The existence of gamer-speak, both in gamer communications and, to a lesser degree in the in-game text, represents a linguistic challenge with which MMORPG localisers will necessarily come into contact.

When facing such challenges, and rendering a convincing video game experience, the localiser is not alone. In this environment, both the target audience *and* the localiser are working within a polysystem that is necessarily influenced by the market, the institution, as well as by the SC and TC. The influences from different language systems complicate the localiser's task. Because their primary objective is to create a product that is optimally-appealing to the consumer, localisers should consider gamer-speak as a legitimate part of the ST and TT, and an appropriate repertoire to draw upon.

Part of the challenge comes from the fact that these tensions defy some of the existing notions of what makes a good localisation. Video game localisation is meant to offer the target audience with a text that gives a tailored experience that feels as though it were made in their language (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006: 11, Bernal 2014: 40). However, the existence of gamer-speak suggests that, at least in the games in this study, cooperative play and gamer communication can make this ideal of game localisation difficult to obtain. Because of the influence of the SL polysystem and the prevalence of SL paratexts on which the target audience relies, gamers will continually be reminded that they are not the main audience for which this text was created. Therefore, the theory relating to video game localisation must account for the dual narrative generation that video games provide: gamers' feeling the game was developed in their language may improve their consumption of the *récit enchâssé*, yet it may hinder their appreciation of the *récit vidéoludique*.

8.2   Implications of findings

Video games as (para)text

Video games differ from passive media because of gamer agency. But because consumption of video games requires gamers to watch, read, and listen, as well as play, video games take on a sort of dual textuality. These two purposes of the video game text bring about two narrative functions: the *récit enchâssé* and the *récit*

vidéoludique (Barnabé 2014: 17-18). These two levels of storytelling challenge our notion of text and paratext. In passive media, the events and outcomes of the narrative are pre-determined and contained within the page, film reel, digitally encoded video, or the like. In video games, some elements are akin to this sort of storytelling, with cinematic sequences, scripted dialogue, and written passages. However, they also have variable possible outcomes that depend on the choices made by the player. These choices determine the players' virtual experiences as they actively navigate the game's virtual events, and is referred to as *gameplay*.

In the case of MMORPGs, this gamer-determined narrative (*récit vidéoludique*) requires that players communicate, and consequently gamer communication forms a central part of it. Thus, gamer language becomes one of the variables that determines gamers' experience of the *récit vidéoludique*. In order to achieve successful gaming outcomes, gamers need a language that suits their gaming needs. This may require special or distinct terms that suit both their active and passive consumption of the localised text.

Enter gamer-speak. This study revealed that different groups of French-speaking gamers, with varying levels of game- and English-language experience, frequently use non-standard language when communicating in-game. Gamer-speak, defined here as gamer-generated language that has been modified or re-appropriated from standard forms to create non-standard lexical and morphological combinations in support of in-game communication, can be considered as having shifted from paratext to text, in at least one of our understandings of text, via the *récit vidéoludique*. As also shown in this study, use of gamer-speak is extended with its integration into some sections of the in-game text, therefore becoming a part of the *récit enchâssé*. This phenomenon suggests that the *récit enchâssé* and the *récit vidéoludique* are both evolving and mutually influential. Effectively, gamer-speak is gradually integrated into the secondary, standardised system through appropriation by the in-game text.

The importance of this for video game localisers is significant. Although localisers typically think of the text associated with the *récit enchâssé* as their primary text, the influence of the *récit vidéoludique* is undeniable. Since gameplay,

and therefore in-game communications, in the TC are influenced by the localised text, the decisions made by the localiser indirectly influence TC gamers' gameplay experience, since the options presented to them from the localised text shape the linguistic tools at their disposal for gameplay communication. Given the findings from this study, we might expand the definition of gameplay experience within the context of a game's "look and feel" in the TL provided by Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 14). Effectively rendering gameplay experience in each culture requires that the localiser consider the *récit enchâssé* as well as the *récit vidéoludique*, despite the former being the only text that is directly localised.

Immersion and embodiment

Together with the decrease in popularity of role-playing servers, the usage of, and motivations behind, patterns of gamer-speak are evidence that most MMORPG players do not immerse themselves linguistically in the video game narrative and game mechanics in the same way. In this context, we might expand Bernal's (2014) characterisation of immersion as contributing to a personalised experience (ibid.: 40), the suspension of disbelief (ibid.: 112), and the credibility or enjoyability of the experience (ibid.: 118), varying depending on the text type. This conceptualisation of immersion only considers the *récit enchâssé,* however, and should be expanded to account for the *récit vidéoludique*, as evidenced by the use of gamer-speak reported in this thesis. In other words, the significant mismatch in the language used in these two narratives indicates that immersion is experienced differently.

Since the enjoyability of the experience and the personalisation of that experience are reliant in part upon the use of gamer-generated language in the *récit vidéoludique*, the *récit enchâssé* may not be the primary delivery mechanism for immersion in MMORPGs. Likewise, the suspension of disbelief is challenged by the existence of gamer-speak, since its presence means that players are not embodying their avatars, and that the players are continually reminded they are playing a localised text (because of the prevalence of Anglicism). Thus, by using gamer-speak in their communication, players are clearly prioritising successful outcomes in the *récit vidéoludique* over their suspension of disbelief generated by the *récit enchâssé*. The rules or norms that gamers adopt during gameplay support

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this in-group code through the discourse of cool (Ensslin 2012: 109), and therefore exclude those who would role-play (at least on non-role-playing servers which account for the majority of gamers, and when not playing solo).

In MMORPGs, it is the depth and complexity of gameplay that seem to generate more immersion (as opposed to role-playing). This is reflected in the analysis of gamer-speak discourse, characterised by long periods of silence during boss fights while players tackle in-game challenges (revealing intense levels of concentration) and the widespread tendency towards concision in communication.

This insight into immersion in MMORPGs is important for localisers, since it informs how the target audience can consume the localised text, and may influence how translation strategies are applied to different MMORPG text types. Indeed, the way in which gamers appropriate the language of the localised text is an important indicator of the TT appropriateness. Most frequently, the examples reviewed in this study show that gamers preferred a gamer-speak alternative over the term referred to in the localised text (*kick* vs. *coup de pied*, *DOT* vs. *Dégâts sur la durée*, *need* vs. *besoin*, etc.) and therefore suggest that the former are better suited to player communication during gameplay simply because they are shorter, wider in meaning, easier to say, and/or enable them to play with international parners. The analysis has also revealed that the localised text influences how gamer-speak is formed and when it is used (*journa / quoti*, *AOE / Multi*), with some players favouring the localised game term over the commonly-used gamer-speak term (*AOE / Zone*, *Debuff / Malus*, *Heal / Soin*). These findings suggest that localisers should be familiar with gamer-speak and consider gamer communication when coming up with appropriate solutions.

I am not suggesting simply that more gamer-speak should be used more frequently in the localised text. While this might supply gamers with useful terms for in-game communication, it could also detract from the consumption of the *récit enchâssé*. Gamer-speak could, however, be included in the didactic portions of the ST and TT as a tooltip, for example, that would offer gamers frequently used gamer-speak terms to enable their in-game communication. Furthermore, localisers could endeavour to prioritise more shorter terms in their SOLUTION$_2$, since these will be

more likely to be taken up for in-game communication. In this sense, an analysis without value judgement and based on the "mutual give-and-take" (Even-Zohar 1979: 300) within a polysystem is needed, observing the relationships between the ideologies, societies, and languages that are contained within. The lexical choices of both localisers and gamers warrant ongoing analysis, as well as the give-and-take between the dual narratives in video games, and how it can inform decisions for maximising text appropriateness and immersion.

The Ludology vs. Narratology question

The analysis of gamer-speak undertaken here has implications for how to conduct video game text analysis. The existence of gamer-speak highlights the dual nature of narrative and meaning generation in video games. At first glance, it appears that players prioritise the challenges raised by the game's mechanics, since they tend not to role-play during raids and in the general chat channels. But this overlooks the fact that narrative is divided between the passive consumption of the localised text and the active playing of the game. Without a reliable measure of players' satisfaction with the narrative experience from reading, watching, and listening to the localised game text (i.e., the passive consumption), it is impossible to correlate the use of gamer-speak with the importance of gameplay versus narrative. Both purposes must be considered when analysing video games as text, thus continuing the debate regarding ludology vs. narratology.

Examination of the localised text in this corpus reveals that different text types favour either the narrative generated by active play or the narrative generated by passive consumption of text. All in-game text in this study is both based in the game's narrative and relates to the games' mechanics. However, some text appears to prioritise one over the other. Juul's (2011: 1) distinction between "real" and "fictitious" is particularly relevant to prove this point. The crux of the issue is this: if the localised text alters or interferes with the game's narrative, the consumption of the game's fictitious elements is disrupted; however, if the localised text interferes with the game's mechanics, there are "real" consequences that negatively impact the game experience. It is analogous to preventing pages in a book from opening, or causing a film's audio track to cut out, compared with delivering unconvincing dialogue. Both negatively impact the active and passive consumption

of the product, but the total inability to do so is decidedly more impactful than the distortion of content.

Game mechanics are important, not only because of their role in the active consumption of narrative, but also because of their relationship with localisation. The latter is significant for two primary reasons. First, since the mechanics themselves are the same for both the SC and the TC polysystems, the appropriateness of some in-game text renderings in the SL and TL might differ. Because of this, our notion of translation appropriateness for in-game text should consider game mechanics and its suitability for in-game communication. Second, using traditional text analysis methods associated with the narratology framework only applies to the *récit enchâssé*. Therefore, when analysing video games as text, localisers need additional tools and methods to enable their understanding of the *récit vidéoludique* as well, in order to have a holistic view of the video game text.

8.3   Potential future actions based on this research

Based on this research, I suggest that the practice of MMORPG localisation could benefit from additional post-production steps including ongoing systematic monitoring and analysis of TC gamer-speak and integration of frequently-used gamer-speak terms into some sort of culturalisation glossary within the game. These activities would benefit both the localiser and the target audience. The former would benefit from an increased knowledge of the TC, and be forearmed for facing difficulties that include gamer-speak and other references to gamer culture. The latter would benefit from increased exposure to potentially enriching linguistic options, as well as a guide for newcomers to rapidly integrate into the gamer subculture. Furthermore, this would be easily integrated into the current industrial workflow cycle as seen in Figure 9.

Worth noting, of course, is that the integration of such terms into the in-game localised version may have adverse impacts on the social functions of gamer-speak. Since the in-group code based on the discourse of 'cool' relies on the exclusion of some members of the community, gamer-speak would become less 'cool' once integrated into the discourse of power.

In addition to such integration, there is potential for factors related to gamer communication to become part of the assessment of translation quality. While the subject of quality and appropriateness is largely subjective, there is evidence in this research of certain linguistic preferences during gamer communications in certain contexts, and therefore in their shaping the *récit vidéoludique*. If we hold that this aspect of game narrative generation is essential to gamer experience, then the skopos of the localised text should include some consideration of this communication. This research has shown that ignoring the linguistic innovation that takes place during gamer exchanges limits the localised text. Given that MMORPGs rely on gamer feedback and are continually updated and altered based on the community opinion, these results could inform future approaches to video game development and localisation. If linguistic support were to follow a similar development as the GUI or character class balance,[95] this language could find its way into the in-game text in some sort of instructional text.[96] With this sort of text, players could benefit from an integrated in-game culturalisation guide and glossary of gamer-speak terms.

8.4 Potential future research on video game localisation

This research is necessarily limited and provides only an initial glimpse at gamer-speak and its relation to the localised text. Toury (2012: 5, emphasis in original) states that, to move Translation Studies beyond "superficial **descriptions**", and advance towards explanations, research must attempt to address function-, process-, and product-oriented descriptive studies. With this in mind, the aim of this research is to draw from different data sources, methodological approaches, and theoretical frameworks to offer an interdisciplinary discussion of these orientations. However, because the corpus analysed here points to examples to reinforce the arguments made, it is limited in Toury's (ibid.) understanding of the direction TS must take. Indeed, the brief statistical presentations here are an attempt to show some

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[95] The online forums are continually peppered with messages from the community offering suggestions for changes to gameplay that would improve the game. This has historically lead to some abilities being strengthened or weakened, or for the GUI to be updated to improve functionality based on gamer-generated addons.

[96] It should also be noted that typos or mistranslations in the localised text found by gamers are often reported via the online forums and subsequently integrated into the localised version. This is exemplified in the discussion pertaining to Figure 9.

impression of the wider linguistic behaviour of the gamer subpopulation. However, to assert any of these claims could be valid beyond the study sample taken here, research that includes a wider population would be needed. Because of the characteristics gamer-speak shows in this sample, to obtain a clearer and wider-reaching understanding of gamer-speak, it would be beneficial to include, in the first case, language pairs other than English and French. Since gamer-speak here is only studied in French, to extend the literature on how localisers handle gamer-speak when localising MMORPGs would benefit from studies that examine this phenomenon in other languages.

Beyond new language pairs, other MMORPGs beyond the two studied in this research could be studied to investigate if this practice is more widespread, and how the different linguistic contexts and different localisation approaches influence how gamer-speak is created in each of these different systems. Further, since cooperative gameplay takes place in game genres other than MMORPGs, based on this research I hypothesise that gamer-speak would be widely used in other gaming situations. While larger groups and fast-paced gameplay seem to be factors that encourage gamer-speak usage, since concision and social dynamics are important, these effects on how language is produced and used during the creation of the *récit vidéoludique* could inform video game localisers' understanding of how the localised text affects gamers' experience. Since end-user experience is paramount to the practice of video game localisation, the research in this field requires more investigation that focuses on this experience.

To this end, more comprehensive study is needed to relate gamer experience to language use and the localised text. The current literature lacks reception studies and studies that link the text and end-user satisfaction. Therefore, while gamer-speak could be indicative of aspects of the TT that are less-appropriate for players enacting the *récit vidéoludique*, study of player satisfaction with the text for conveying the *récit enchâssé* would be a useful measure to inform localisers of the appropriateness of the TT. With this, studies could be compared to gain a fuller picture of how video game localisation can best serve the end-user.

Another area that could be explored based on this research would be to develop the process-oriented aspect of DTS pertaining to this subject. Ideally, information from localisers or data collection during the localisation process would complement research of this type for a more holistic picture of the localisation process, with confirmation of the translation strategies used (since these are only asserted insomuch as they can be derived from the analysis of PROBLEM$_2$ and SOLUTION$_2$). Since the focus of this study was rather on the function- and product-oriented aspects of these translations, process-oriented research was not conducted. Nonetheless, there is scope for future research to examine some of the hypotheses that have come out of this study. For example, influences of the institution, market, and producer in the polysystem could be developed further to complete some of the analysis regarding PST. More complete information regarding the process could also reveal best practices in place that could be analysed and nuanced based on findings and outcomes.

The multimodality of the gaming experience is another aspect that this research has not fully taken into consideration. Since the gaming experience takes place simultaneously in the audiovisual, textual, and haptic modes, research into the localised text could be farther-reaching, incorporating studies into how the use of non-standard language such as gamer-speak relates to this multimodal textual experience.

The methodologies in TS are also currently still nascent regarding video game localisation. For this reason, it would be interesting to test the methodology applied here to other studies. Further development of this sort of methodology would be undoubtedly beneficial, and the approach adopted in this study as well as the classifications applied to gamer-speak could be nuanced and shaped to better our research into this area of TS, since the complexities of gamer-speak reveal some difficulty in TL classification of such terms.

Finally, with the arrival of new technology, further study is needed in the field of video game localisation in general and gamer-speak specifically. This is for two primary reasons: first, new technology shapes how games generate meaning, and thus the requirements for localisation. With advances such as augmented reality,

virtual reality, toys-to-life, and force-feedback technology, new landscapes of narrative are being created that require new approaches in localisation. Likewise, these new landscapes might open new possibilities for gamer-generated language and gamer-speak. Since typed chat platforms encourage concision because of the preference for using fewer keystrokes, virtual reality, for example, could influence gamer-generated language in new and unexpected ways. Second, advances in technology shape methodological approaches in video games research. Current reception studies, for example, would benefit from the use of physiological instruments able to measure cognitive and biological markers such as neurological response, galvanic skin test results, and pupil dilation to assess levels of excitement and concentration during gaming. These markers could subsequently inform the effectiveness of the localised text to be rewarding or motivating for players, and to provide further information on the translatability of game experience for the TA.

This research is an initial examination of a phenomenon that is important to the theory and practice of video game localisation. Gamer-speak illustrates the current situation of the TC polysystem, highlights some potential shortcomings of the TL to suit gamer communication, and adds complexity to the discussion of the localisation process. Gamer-speak is thus an important aspect to incorporate into the localiser's knowledge base, and research into gamer-speak contributes to our understanding of how video-games generate narrative, reward players, and cause players to feel immersed in the game universe. Therefore, this study should serve as a call to action: gamer-speak exists in many languages, across many games, and has all the hallmarks of a primary linguistic system, with potential implications for improving the quality of the localised text (and therefore the ROI for game developers), and to further our understanding of video games as text.

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FINAL FANTASY XI (Square Enix: 2002)

FINAL FANTASY XIV (Square Enix: 2014)

Grandpa (Jim Swift: 2015)

Guild Wars 2 (NCsoft: 2012-Present)

Hitman Absolution (Square Enix: 2012)

Island of Kesmai (Kesmai: 1985)

Katamari Damacy / 塊魂 (Namco: 2004)

Mud (Trubshaw & Bartle: 1978)

Rift (Trion Worlds: 2011)

Second Life (Linden Lab: 2003)

Spacewar! (Steve Russel et al.: 1962)

Star Fox / Star Wing (Nintendo: 1993)

Star Wars: The Old Republic (Electronic Arts: 2011)

Tetris (AcademySoft: 1986)

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Appendix 1

Loans (Anglicisms)							
GS-Term	**Raid1 *Wow***	**Raid2 *Wow***	**Raid1 WS**	**Raid2 WS**	***WoW* Written**	**In-game Text *WoW* - FR**	**In-game Text WS - FR**
Sprint		2					
Flask	3	5					
Log(s)	1	1	3				
(De/Re) Buff	16	8	6	10	6		
Heal /Healer	11	21	37	51	73		
(De) Pack	4	6	17	26			
Soak	22	7					
Roll		1					
Rand	10	14	2	3			
Skin		4		3	1		
Hunt	3	4		1	15		
Fight		3	1	3			
Release		5					
Up	1	2	1	3	3		
Mob	6	3	19	15			
Pull	11	22	66	90	6		
Aggro	4	3	26	15			
Switch	15	11	4	6			
Focus	1	6	5	8			

Boss	18	21	42	40	19		
Wipe	3	1	8	1	2		
Vanish		2	2	1			
Rogue	12	4	2		18		
Add(s)	7	8	4	16			
Kick	51	18	94	110			
Taunt	3	2	22	22			
Bump		2	4	5			
Clean	1	1	3		9		
Tank	26	19	33	52	31		2
Need	5	8	4	18	25		
Fury		1					
Loot	6	5	8	6	2		
Link	6	1			2		
Trash	11	11	2		1		
Reroll		7	1		3		
Go	11	4	71	79	9		
War	2	2	7	15	14		
Vanilla		2		3	1		
Chan		1					
Down		3		4	2		
Slack	1	4		1			
Greed(y)		1		2			
Pickup	3	1					
Stuff	1	4	2	10	20		

Target		2	1	2			
Fear	2	1					
Fail	5	2	6	7	1		
Stun	2	1	2	4			
Timeur		1					
Addon	1	2		3	2		
Progress		1		2	3		
Lock					1		
Sap		2					
Monk	3	1			2		
Farm		1			2		
Grip	8	2		1			
Wisp / Whisp / /wisp	2	3			35		
Background		4					
Lag		1		3	1		
Kite		1		1			
Cast / caster / casteurs)	3	1	1	4	9		
Level		2		1			
Fat		2	2	3	3		
Try		1	2		2		
Trade	1	1		3	5		
Recount		1					
Root		1					
(De) Stack	2		22	14			
Reset	4			2			

Full	2		1		2	
Main	2				2	
Trinket	3		2	3		
Dispel	5		3	8		
Jump	1			1		
Gold	1		1	1	1	
Burst	1		1			
Strafe	4					
Stop	2		5	9		
Lead	1			1	1	
Cooldown	1					
Random	1					
Set			2	4		
Tag			7	10	2	
Cleave			19	13		
Token			11	11		
Skill(é)			6	7	1	
Mute			2	1		
Datascape			3	3		
Tick			3			
Warrior			1			
Skip			2	1		
Event			1	4	5	
Dash			4	6		
Zerg / Zergling			3		2	

Item							
Item			3	6			
Achievement			1	1			
Ninja			3				
Craft				1	4		
Rush				2	3		
Apply				4	1		
Kill				1			
Medic			5	6			
Tips				1			
Me				1	75		
Stance			3	4			
Mate				1	10		
Middle				1			
Drop				1			
Snare				3			
Avoidance				2			
Crush				2			
Uncrushable				3			
Macroter				2			
Miniboss			4	3			
Swap				1			
Interrupt				1			
Last				1	4		
Sneak				1			
Deeps				3			

Cap				4	2	2	
Roster					62		
Feral / Féral					7		
Seek					26		
2s / 3s					4		
Priest					1		
Send					3		
Range	1				1		
Twink					1		
Gear					1		
Moonkin					2		
Drood					9		
Push					2		
Useless					1		
Game / Gameplay					2		
Hellfire Citadel					2		
Chain					1		
Fast					1		
Arena					2		
Frost					4		
Mount					1		
Player					1		
Spell					2		
Same					1		
Team					3		

Low						1		
Pwn							1	
Ganke								1
TOTAL	333	295	628	808	584	3	3
TOTAL:							
2654							

Shortenings							
GS-Term	**Raid1** *Wow*	**Raid2** *Wow*	**Raid1 WS**	**Raid2 WS**	***WoW* Written**	**In-game Text** *WoW* **- FR**	**In-game Text WS - FR**
AOE	2	2	4	4			
TP	3	19	23	20	3		
CaC	19	19	2	3	10		
Fracas		1					
(G) CD	5	3	2	6			
BL	13	13					
spé (1 / 2)	2	24	2		8		
PROC	11	22		2			
Rez	3	9	27	18			
P (1, 2, 3)	16	7		1			
GG	2	3	6	7	1		

FFA		1					
Démo / Demo	3	13			14		
Plus (+) 1 , 2	13	10	5	14	13		
BIS	2	5			1		
Héro		1					
Stat		3		4			
Déz	2	16		4			
Enchant [E]		5			4		
AFK	3	2	1	3	1		
Opti	3	1		2			
Compo(s)		3			1		
DPS	19	10	30	41	56		
BC		1		9	4		
pal(a)	1	2			9		
DBM	1	1					
TDM		1					
PV		2	1	4			31
DOT		5		1		2	
BR	1	1					
Instant		3	1				
Cham / Sham		1			17		
Strat		1		2			
MP		1		1	18		
BOK		1					
(Dé / Re) Co	7	1	16	16	6		

DK	10	3			20		
DH		2					
Cata		2					
DKP		1			1		
PO	1	1	1		50		
AH		1			2		
Détourne	1	3					
ILVL / Ilevel / lvl	1	3			57		
Promot[e]		2					
Invite	1						
Exec	2						
ML	1		3				
PL	2		3	8	33		
PA	1						
Prio	4						
GM	3		1		16		
MOBA	1						
BDG	2		1		4		
RP	1						
Gob	2						
Zerk	1						
CC	1						
Disci	1				13		
TS	1		2	1	18		
Pot			1	5			

Def				4	6			
Pat				3	2			
(Anti) - CF				2	9	1		6
Hydro				3				
Arca				2	2			
Ingé				2	7			
LQE				1	3			
Grap				3	8			
Plat				11	5			
IRL				5	2			
Répa				1				
Évac				2	11			
Casu				1	3	2		
RL				1	1	1		
WoW					2	2		
T (1, 2, 3)					2	1		
SD					1			
AP					3	1		
Perso					1			
HV / HdV					1	18		
PP					1			
FPS					1			
Fut					5			
Bot					2			15
DS					4			

Régen					3		
Off					1		
MM					1	39	
Élém					3	4	
Absorb[E]					1		
LQR						1	
V2 / V3 / 2c2 / 3c3 / 2s / 3s /2vs2						68	
HFC						10	
NM						50	
HM						84	
PVP						34	
"/w" ; "/ w" ; "w /"						107	
PvE						37	
LF						14	
XP / EXP						38	
EDS						1	
CR						14	
SP						12	
(R) BG						16	
Equi						5	
Oggri						1	
Ret						2	
DP						9	
Cita						20	

Com / Comm					4		
HL					21		
Transmo					23		
WOD					2		
FM					4		
WOTLK					1		
CM					1		
Archi					2		
HC					2		
Joa					4		
Amélio					2		
Cali / Calli					4		
Dj					2		
LFR					1		
TDC					4		
DTC					1		
MOP					1		
Alchi					3		
HF					4		
SoO					1		
TCG					2		
Cab					1		
FDR					1		
WTS					2		
Ctrl					1		

BRF					1		
Réput / reput					1		
Pex					1		
TOTAL	168	231	173	267	1069	2	52
TOTAL:							
1962							

Shifts						In-game Text *WoW* - FR	In-game Text WS - FR
GS-Term	**Raid1** *Wow*	**Raid2** *Wow*	**Raid1 WS**	**Raid2 WS**	***WoW* Written**	**In-game Text *WoW* - FR**	**In-game Text WS - FR**
(Re / De) Pop	9	11	17	32			
Distance / Distants / Dist	6	9			20		
ping-pong		1					
Carpette			1	1			
TOTAL	15	21	18	33	20	0	0
TOTAL:							
107							

Composites							
GS-Term	**Raid1_*Wow***	**Raid2_*Wow***	**Raid1_WS**	**Raid2_WS**	***WoW*_Written**	**In-game Text *WoW* - FR**	**In-game Text WS - FR**
Rez Bot		1					
Heal Bot		1					
Rage Quit		3					
Cham Heal		1					
Monotarget		1					
Monocible		1					
Multicible	1						
Slash Trade	1						
Rez Battle	1						
Raid Off	1						
Monotank				1			
Multiaggro				2			
Soft Cap				1			
Threat Meter				2			
Body Pull			1	1			
One Shot			3				
Raid Lead			1	2	1		
Master Loot				4			
Hard Mode			1	1			
Push To Talk				1			
TOTAL	4	8	6	15	1	0	0

TOTAL:							
34							

Blends							
						In-game Text **WoW - FR**	**In-game Text** **WS - FR**
GS-Term	**Raid1 *Wow***	**Raid2 *Wow***	**Raid1 WS**	**Raid2 WS**	***WoW* Written**		
Brez	2	2			1		
Chamélio	2	3					
Chamélem		1					
Gkick			2				
Palatank				1			
Hpal					10		
Dpriest					1		
Rsham					1		
Rdrood					1		
Destrolock					1		
TOTAL	4	6	2	1	15	0	0
TOTAL:							
28							

New Creations							
GS-Term	**Raid1** *Wow*	**Raid2_** *Wow*	**Raid1 WS**	**Raid2 WS**	*WoW_* **Written**	**In-game Text** *WoW* **- FR**	**In-game Text WS - FR**
Flood	1				1		
QQ					1		
Hor2					1		
Mago					5		
Popo					6		
[number] i					6		
Fufu				2			
TOTAL	1	0	0	2	20	0	0
TOTAL:							
23							

Borderline Cases		
Term	**Gamer-speak?**	**Explanation**
Tank	Y	Anglicism included in the in-game text. Usage in this context unknown to non-gamers.
JcJ	N	Not an Anglicism, found in in-game text in both *WoW* and *WildStar*.
JcE	N	Not an Anglicism, found in in-game text in both *WoW* and *WildStar*.
PNJ	N	Not an Anglicism, found in in-game text in both *WoW* and *WildStar*.
IRL	N	Anglicized acronym not included because of its widespread use outside the gaming context.
Me	Depends	Terms including this word have been included in instances where it was used as Anglicism, as it is in the direct object form in an anglicised construction of "send me a private message" (e.g., *wisp me*) but not when it was used in the French word order (*me wisp*).
Bot	Y	Included because of its widespread usage to refer to illicit software programmes that enable gamers to automate their avatars and therefore gain an unfair advantage.

Appendix 2

Realm	Day1	Day2	Day3	Day4	Day5	Day6WE	Day7WE	Day8	Day9	Day10	Day11	Day12	Day13WE	Day14WE	Day15	Day16	Day17	Day18	Day19	Day20WE	Day21WE	Day22	Day23	Day24	Day25	Day26	Day27WE	Day28WE
Arak-arahm (PvP)	*36*						*0*														36					0		
Arathi (PvP)		38					278													*0*					*4*			
Archimonde (PvP)			*136*				*274*														329			0				
Chants éternels (PvE)				14			0													*0*			*431*					
Cho'gall (PvP)					*28*		*4*														327	0						
Dalaran (PvE)							239	129												*0*	*413*							
Eldre'Thalas (PvP)						*337*			*0*										6		0							
Elune (PvE)							296				0							*0*			*0*							
Garona (PvP)						*21*										200					356							
Hyjal (PvE)							601					273			*280*						*324*							
Kael'thas (PvP)													*0*	*33*		75												193
Illidan (PvP)											177			65			*0*										*67*	
Marécage de Zangar (PvE)									*43*					*261*				84										105
Nazzras (PvP)											181			292				*18*									*146*	
Ner'zhul (PvP)								*84*					*24*				34											260
Rashgarroth (PvP)				20										172										*0*			0	
Sargeras (PvP)			*0*										*141*	278														61
Vol'Jin (PvE)			0																					*13*			5	
Temple noir (PvP)		*215*											*14*												26	0		
Ysondre (PvP)	413													0													*0*	

Key:
	AM	Alliance	Day 1 = 10 Oct 2015
	PM	Horde	

Each number is a word count for the 15-minute segment

TOTAL	9032

316