

Translation Aesthetics in the Chinese Translation of *League of Legends* Dialogues

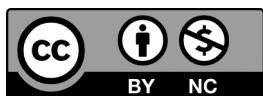
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Abstract: With the rapid development of the big data era and information technology leading new industries, e-sports have flourished over the past decade, with numerous competitive games emerging rapidly and setting up servers in China. Since its release in 2009, *League of Legends* has quickly become one of the most popular electronic games globally. As of 2024, the number of registered players worldwide has exceeded 100 million, with active player numbers also remaining at a high level, gaining enthusiastic support from a broad base of Chinese players and gradually becoming an important part of leisure and entertainment. Consequently, the localization of *League of Legends* has intensified, and the domestic demand for translations of game character backgrounds and dialogues has surged, along with higher requirements for translation quality.

This paper, from the perspective of translation aesthetics, analyzes and illustrates, through examples, conducting a study on the Chinese translation of some dialogues, hoping to improve the translation quality of game localization.

Keywords: Translation Aesthetics; *League of Legends*; Game Localization



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1 Introduction

Video games, as a focal topic in all walks of life, are leading new development trends. In the West, game translation research has gradually deepened, forming two major research perspectives. The first type of research perspective focuses on the role of translators, emphasizing the subjectivity and creativity of translators (Miguel B M, 2008), and advocating interactive cooperation between machine translation and translators to improve work efficiency (Hansen D & Houlmont P Y, 2022). The second research perspective focuses on translation strategies for game texts, pointing out that with the rapid development of the industry, early translation strategies may no longer be applicable to modern game translation (O'Hangan M & Mangiron C, 2013).

In contrast, China's research on game translation lags. Some researchers have drawn on Professor Hu Genshen's ecological translation theory framework, such as Ma Mingcong (2021), who verified the guiding role of ecological translation theory in-game text translation, emphasizing that translators need to adapt to the ecological environment

of game translation. At the same time, some scholars have begun to pay attention to the aesthetic nature of game translation, such as Jiang Zidong (2021), who researched the title, hero stories, and dialogues of *League of Legends* from the perspective of translation aesthetics.

Integrating the above literature, China's game translation research has not yet reached a prosperous stage, and the research perspectives are relatively conservative. Therefore, the author of this paper believes that there should be more interaction between the field of translation and the electronic game industry to promote in-depth development of game translation research in China.

2 Translation Challenges and Purpose of Game Dialogues

2.1 Purpose of Translation

League of Legends is a hero combat-style competitive online game in the DOTA genre, carefully developed by the American company Riot Games and operated in mainland China by Tencent Games. Since its launch in China in 2011, it has gained the favor of numerous players. Its main purpose is to entertain the public and generate commercial profits. Up to 2022, the overseas revenue of Chinese games has exceeded 100 billion yuan for two consecutive years, and the value brought by games is ten or even a hundred times that of other traditional industries in China. To promote the development of this type of e-sports game in China and maintain Chinese players, the requirements for dialogue translation have also increased. Video games form a virtual world composed of visual and audio signs, including narrative, music, and computer graphics (Bissell T, 2010). These virtual elements are designed to interact with players, so the translator must first consider the player's gaming experience and figure out how to vividly and vividly transform the dialogues so that players can more clearly feel the characteristics and fun of each character. The translation of game dialogues is to recreate language in different cultural contexts and backgrounds, allowing Chinese players to feel similar emotional experiences as local players.

2.2 Translation Challenges

Many scholars have mentioned that the difficulty of translation does not lie in not being able to translate Chinese into foreign languages but in translating foreign languages into Chinese. "Speaking Chinese well" is not an easy task. Chinese grammar is concise and flexible, with a rich vocabulary and an expression that pursues implicitness and rhetoric. Therefore, the difficulty of translating English into Chinese is more apparent in-game dialogues. Game texts are often complex and disjointed, lacking logic and context, and this lack of context and background often leads translators to be at a loss for how to transform them. Game translation is not as simple as people think; on the contrary, it is rich in a large number of strange hero or equipment names, and even things that have never appeared in daily life also need to be translated into terminology. It is not only necessary to change the style of the lines according to the type of character but also to show the local flavor of the English lines to Chinese readers. Therefore, if one only achieves correctness in vocabulary and grammar, it is far from enough for the requirements of game dialogue translation.

3 The Possibility of Combining Translation Aesthetics and Game Dialogue Translation

In 1750, the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten proposed the concept of translation aesthetics, marking the systematic study of aesthetic objects. Baumgarten integrated early views on beauty, combining ideas originally scattered in the fields of poetics, epistemology, rhetoric, and linguistics into a new scientific field, establishing a solid theoretical foundation for aesthetic research and making it the subject of discussion as an independent discipline.

The discussion of aesthetics has had a profound impact on Chinese translation theory. Xi Yongji was the first to combine translation and aesthetics in his work *Comparative Study of Translation Aesthetics*. He used the unique experience and perception methods of Chinese culture to discuss aesthetic factors in the translation of literary works from three aspects: linguistic beauty, imagination beauty, and style beauty (Xi, 1992), inspiring subsequent translation research methods. Following Xi Yongji, scholars such as Liu Miqing and Mao Ronggui further enriched and developed the theoretical foundation of Chinese translation and aesthetics. Based on the characteristics of the Chinese language, there is a natural connection between Chinese translation and aesthetics (Liu, 2005).

At the theoretical level, the introduction of aesthetics provides a new perspective for the study of game localization translation, transcending the traditional strategic analysis framework and opening up new paths for the development of interdisciplinary research. In addition, aesthetics has expanded from the field of literary translation to become closer to daily life, and the combination with various types of applied translation helps to accumulate rich case analyses, thereby promoting theoretical innovation and development.

At the practical level, guided by aesthetics, the quality standards of game localization translation can be significantly improved. Translation work should not only accurately convey the information of the original text but also display artistic charm and aesthetic value. In other words, a game translation that follows aesthetic principles helps to cultivate players' aesthetic abilities, allowing them to enjoy a higher level of aesthetic pleasure during the gaming experience. Finally, translated works with aesthetic value are not only loved by players but also a win-win result for game developers and localization studios. In summary, the combination of translation aesthetics and game dialogue translation is of great significance and value in both theoretical research and practical application.

4 The Embodiment of Translation Aesthetics in Dialogue Translation

4.1 The Beauty of the Formal System

Liu Miqing believes that the aesthetic system of aesthetic objects can be divided into two major categories: one is the beauty of the formal system, and the other is the beauty of the non-formal system. The beauty of the formal system can be seen as a collection of aesthetic symbols. Specifically, the category of form includes aesthetic information in rhetoric, vocabulary, phonetics, and other aspects (Hao, 2022).

4.1.1 Rhetoric

(1) Repetition

For example, the original text: Deftly, I travel.

Translation: 我随影而来，随影而去。

The literal meaning of this line is “我灵巧地旅游”. “旅游” is usually not paired with adjectives like “灵巧” and this direct translation may seem confusing to Chinese players. In dealing with the word “旅游”, the translator cleverly used the strategy of domestication, adopting the two characters “来去”, which is both appropriate and poetic.

This line describes a hero named Akali, who is an elusive warrior skilled in rapid movement and surprise attack tactics. She can use the power of shadows to hide her figure, sneak in the smoke, and quietly kill the enemy. Therefore, this line is actually a refined summary of Akali’s character traits. Although the original text does not directly mention “shadow”, the translator skillfully used the word “影” multiple times in the translation, cleverly echoing Akali’s image and skills. Many Chinese idioms express the close connection between shadows and body movements, such as “随影而行” and “如影随形”. “我随影而来，随影而去” not only shows the inseparable connection between Akali and her weapons and moves but also adds a mysterious atmosphere. This translation allows Chinese players to experience the intangible nature of Akali more deeply when using her, experiencing a more vivid and fresh gaming feeling.

(2) Pun

For example, the original text: Ignorance is fatal.

Translation: 无知者，在劫难逃。

The original meaning of this sentence is “无知是极其危险的”, which seems plain when translated directly. In *League of Legends*, this line comes from the character Zed, and it is clear that the translated expression has a deeper meaning, cleverly combined with the game mechanism, making the translation more profound and aesthetically pleasing.

In the game, Zed’s combo can leave a mark on enemies when they are down to half health, then temporarily leave the battlefield. Enemies might mistakenly believe that Zed has retreated and that they are safe, only to find out a few seconds later that Zed’s ultimate ability triggers, delivering a fatal blow.

“无知者” here refers to opponents who are completely unaware of Zed’s skills, position, or intentions. In the game, unfamiliarity with these details often leads to players being caught off guard by Zed’s sudden attacks, ultimately being unable to escape their fate. This translation is not only a profound interpretation of the original sentence “无知是极其危险的” but also an accurate grasp of Zed’s character traits. It foretells an inescapable destiny and cleverly uses the dual meaning of the word “劫” to create a subtle wordplay. This translation not only combines Zed’s skill characteristics and game strategies, perfectly fitting with Zed’s stealth assassination gameplay style, but also turns an originally plain warning into something profound, full of layers and artistic charm. It deeply reveals the potential dangers of ignorance, shaping a more three-dimensional and vivid image of Zed, reflecting the translator’s deep understanding of the game culture and character traits, and making this line of dialogue a highlight in the game.

4.1.2 Phonetics

For example, the original text: Kaboom!

Translation: 喀，嘣！

In *League of Legends*, the term “Kaboom” originates from the line of the character Tristana, who is known as the “Yordle Cannoneer”, an expert sniper. Tristana’s image is playful and cute, small in stature, lively and agile in action, holding a heavy cannon that contrasts sharply with her small size. Despite her small size, her in-game setup is that of a warrior who never fears any challenge, symbolizing military expertise, unwavering courage, and boundless optimism. The difficulty in translating this line lies in the fact that “Kaboom” is a coined word in the game, an onomatopoeic term with no specific dictionary meaning. However, considering that this is what Tristana says when firing her small cannon weapon, the translator transliterated it as “喀，嘣！” which not only successfully simulates the sound of the cannon firing but also retains the unique charm of the original word. These two simple Chinese characters perfectly reflect the dynamic and sound effects of the game, adding a sense of rhythm and musicality, allowing Tristana’s liveliness and cuteness to be reproduced in the Chinese context and allowing Chinese players to experience vividness during the game.

4.2 The Beauty of the Non-formal System

The beauty of the non-formal system is mainly reflected in “emotion” and “ambition”, “meaning” and “image” (Hao, 2022).

4.2.1 Emotion

For example, the original text: A sword’s poor company for a long road.

Translation: 长路漫漫，唯剑作伴。

If this line were translated literally, it might become: “在漫长的道路上，只有一把剑可怜地陪伴着我。” Such a translation lacks artistic beauty. This line comes from the character Yasuo, who was once a highly praised genius apprentice, the only swordsman who mastered the art of wind swordsmanship. However, a misunderstanding made him bear the guilt of a murderer. In order to reveal the truth, he embarked on a journey alone with his sword, facing his former peers, experiencing deep loneliness and despair on this path to find the real culprit.

Yasuo’s background story resonates strongly with players, and his frequent appearance in the game also proves his popularity. Therefore, how to transform this line into Chinese so that players can deeply feel sympathy and compassion for Yasuo is a question that translators need to think deeply about. “长路漫漫，唯剑作伴” draws on the verses from Qu Yuan’s “Li Sao”, which are familiar to Chinese middle and high school students. It depicts a young person with great dreams, facing a long and arduous road, still persevering and taking pride in hardship, complementing the background story and allowing Chinese players to appreciate the emotional depth behind the line. Although “唯剑作伴” omits the word “poor”, the use of the word “唯” profoundly expresses Yasuo’s loneliness and desolation. In addition, this translation takes the form of a four-character idiom, which is not only well-matched but also harmonious in rhythm, fully reflecting the charm of traditional Chinese culture. The author believes that such a translation cleverly conveys the emotions of the original line.

4.2.2 Imagery

For example, the original text: Know the loom, be the stone.

Translation: 命数如织，当为磐石。

This line comes from the character Taliyah, which can be understood as“了解织布机，做一块石头”。However, through the translator’s linguistic transformation, it reflects an imagery expression that intersects with traditional Chinese culture. The original “Know the loom, be the stone” uses the two images of “loom”（织布机）和“stone”（石头）to construct a profound philosophical artistic conception, conveying the themes of destiny and firmness. “命数如织，当为磐石” also uses imagery comparison, with the two elements of“织”and“磐石”that have Chinese cultural characteristics, preserving the artistic conception of the original text.“命数如织” borrows from the traditional Chinese weaving culture, comparing destiny to a carefully woven fabric, which not only echoes Taliyah’s respect for ancient knowledge and tradition in her background story but also fits with the philosophical thinking about destiny and divine will in Chinese culture. “当为磐石” corresponds to the praise of firm and steady qualities in traditional Chinese culture, and the image of the“磐石” often appears in ancient Chinese poetry, used to metaphorically describe an unshakable will.

Through such translation, the image of the character Taliyah is more enriched; she is not only a symbol of strength but also an embodiment of wisdom and firmness. This translation perfectly integrates Chinese and Western cultures, making the character Taliyah more three-dimensional and deeply rooted in people’s hearts.

5 Conclusion

Online game localization is a complex task involving the cultural and linguistic adaptation of original game content, interfaces, dialogues, and other elements to meet the needs of players from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the gaming experience, language plays a crucial role; it not only affects the interaction between players and the game but also is a key factor in ensuring the success of video games in the international market. *League of Legends*, as a globally popular multiplayer online battle arena game, has significant practical significance in the study of its game dialogue translation.

This paper aims to explore the translation strategies of *League of Legends* game dialogues with the dual goals of entertaining the public and making a profit. The research found that most of the game’s dialogues not only accurately convey the original intentions but also pay attention to aesthetics during the translation process, avoiding issues such as simple wording, loose structure, and vague imagery.

Although the gaming industry, as an emerging field, is rapidly rising and bringing significant economic benefits to the country and society, the field of game translation is relatively lagging, lacking unified standards and specifications, and there is also a relative scarcity of professional talent. This paper aims to raise awareness among readers of this issue in the hope of jointly promoting the progress and development of the field of game translation.

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