



Fan translation of games, anime, and fanfiction

*Boris Vazquez-Calvo, Southern Denmark University and
University of Santiago de Compostela*

Leticia Tian Zhang, Pompeu Fabra University

Mariona Pascual, Autonomous University of Barcelona

Daniel Cassany, Pompeu Fabra University

Abstract

Fan practices involving translation open up opportunities to explore language learning practices within the fandom (Sauro, 2017). We examine how three fans capitalize on fan translation and language learning. We consider the cases of Selo (an English–Spanish translator of games), Nino (a Japanese–Catalan fansubber of anime), and Alro (an English–Spanish translator of fanfics). A corpus was built consisting of 297 minutes of interviews, 186 screenshots of language learning events from online sites, and 213 minutes of screencast videos of online activity. Drawing upon the conceptual framework of new literacy studies (Barton, 2007), we set four themes to present fans’ literacy practices and language learning: (a) fan translation, (b) understanding the original text, (c) writing and preparing the translation, and (d) tools, resources, and collaborative online practices. Results indicated that the three informants encountered an open space for agency, creativity, and identity building and reinforcement through fan translation. Their translations provided content and represented the generators of the semiotic fabric in their fandoms (Gee, 2005). As fan translators, they learned language in multiple ways, such as peer-to-peer feedback, autodidacticism, and creative uses of Google Translate. Future research may attempt to transfer knowledge from digital wilds into formal education.

Keywords: *ICT Literacies, Language Learning Strategies, Virtual Environments, Fan Translation*

Language(s) Learned in This Study: *Catalan, English, Japanese, Spanish*

APA Citation: Vazquez-Calvo, B., Zhang, L. T., Pascual, M., & Cassany, D. (2019). Fan translation of games, anime, and fanfiction. *Language Learning & Technology*, 23(1), 49–71.
<https://doi.org/10.125/44672>

Introduction

Reading books or manga, watching TV series, or playing video games are widespread cultural and literacy practices (in a broad, multimodal sense of literacy). *Harry Potter* (book series), *Sailor Moon* (anime series), and Pokémon (video game) are some examples, perhaps more targeted at and consumed by those interested in fantasy, magic, and alternate worlds. Individuals with a strong allegiance to cultural products such as these often engage in practices that surpass mere cultural consumption. This is more apparent in the case of fanfiction. Fanfictioners write spin-off stories on their favorite book series and share them in online communities. Thousands of other fans read and comment on fanfiction stories. Exacerbated by the Internet, fanfiction writing has truly become a digital practice on a global scale. This type of fan engagement online occurs, to some extent, in any fan community related to any literacy practice. We refer to such online engagement as *digital literacy practices*.

Digital literacy practices have received greater attention, with a particular attachment to the sociocultural and ethnographic views from new literacy studies (NLS). This article is concerned with fan literacy practices online and how young people capitalize on those fan practices to learn language in a more-or-less

conscious manner. We are interested in activities involving some sort of translation process, since this is an open field and a rich context to explore language learning practices and opportunities (Sauro, 2017). Fan translation is a literacy practice involving individuals who translate for fun, prompted by a concrete fan activity of their liking. We assume that when fans translate, they learn as a result of the inherent onomasiological process of translating and their numerous online interactions. Fan translation, particularly its language learning aspect, is a particularly underexplored field (Muñoz Sánchez, 2009; O'Hagan, 2009).

This study is framed in Catalonia, where socioeconomic conditions generally guarantee technological access. In this context, young people frequently learn to use technologies informally through vernacular practices, in parallel to academic life and from very young ages. For instance, recent studies show that gaming is the fastest growing cultural industry in Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016). Fan literacy practices cover many contexts: for example, videogames (Gee, 2007), fanfiction (continuing or reimagining stories other people have written about), fandubbing (the translation and voice-over of scripts in audiovisual materials), fansubbing (the translation of subtitles made by fans; Zhang & Cassany, 2016), and scanlation (the scanning and translation of manga made by fans; Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016). Each individual, or fan, materializes their fan universe in their own way, normally with some support or collaboration from a fan community or by communicating with other fans. Agency is a key factor, which is materialized in a set of skills characterized by multitasking and *prosumption* (a portmanteau term of *production* and *consumption*). In this process of self-discovery through personal passions and hobbies, interaction with a community nearly always plays a central role. Fans use and learn language by constructing identity, appropriating specific discursive genres, and giving context-bound meanings to signs in the fan universe. In this study, we examine specific events of language learning through fan translation practices, a rich context for sociocultural, digitally mediated communication. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How do fans capitalize on their fan practices to learn language?
2. How does translation serve fans in developing language and cultural knowledge as part of their language learning process?

Theoretical Framework

To analyze fan translation, we draw on the perspectives of participatory culture and NLS.

We understand fan translation as being the translation of any kind of products (e.g., movies, TV series, books, manga, games) that is translated by fans for fans. It is one of the most relevant manifestations of participatory culture, which refers to a culture “with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices” (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushtoma, Robinson, & Weigel, 2009, p. 3).

Participatory culture is concerned with groups of people (i.e., fans) who are passionate about certain cultural activities and products (Jenkins, 2006). It has been amplified thanks to digital technologies (Jenkins et al., 2009; Jenkins, Mizujko, & Boyd, 2015), with online fandoms (kingdoms of fans) providing potential learning opportunities—in some cases, these are considered *affinity spaces* (Gee, 2005) with. In contrast to a *consumer culture* consisting of a passive audience, a participatory culture exhibits fuzzy frontiers between consumption and production. Fans adopt new roles, construct a dialogue around their interests, and create, modify, interpret, curate, or distribute cultural products in multiple formats, such as is the case with fandoms centered around video games (Vazquez-Calvo, 2018). Fan activities shape fans' identities and lifestyle and lead them to engage in various social practices (e.g., fan translation).

Fan translation is essentially participatory reading and writing in a multimodal, sociocultural sense. The theoretical lens of NLS underlines that literacy practices are social, cultural, and context-bound and focus on both dominant (institutional, official) and vernacular (daily, informal) literacy practices (Barton, 2007). Current studies attend to how technologies and the Internet impact literacy practices and how written texts

are consumed, produced, or distributed online, coining the term *digital literacy practices* (Barton & Lee, 2013; Gillen, 2014; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Fan translation is a digital literacy practice, where reading and writing are bound by specific contexts (online affinity spaces), having highly-specialized topics (e.g., video games, literature, cinema, TV series, etc.) and highly-specialized target audiences (e.g., gamers, anime fans, Harry Potter fans, etc.). In those online spaces, fans set guides and ways of acting both within the community (i.e., net-etiquette) and in relation to broader concepts (e.g., copyright). Through literacy practices, they build cultural products (e.g., fan translations) and knowledge (e.g., language learning discussions).

Previous Studies

Fan practices have recently attracted attention within the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Explorations on how language learners construct multilingual identities through digital translanguaging (e.g., Schreiber, 2015), interact on online spaces such as YouTube, foster intercultural awareness (e.g., Benson, 2015), and engage in collaborative writing practices on Wikipedia (e.g., King, 2015) have been covered in a 2015 special issue of *Language Learning & Technology*. All such studies underscore “the need for language teachers and learners to understand and take into account digital literacies: the modes of reading, writing, and communication made possible by digital media” (Hafner, Chik, & Jones, 2015, p. 1). We continue this line of research by looking at translation as a fan-made practice relevant for language learning.

In a meta-study analyzing the state of art of online fan practices and how these interact with CALL, Sauro (2017) identifies genres (fanfiction, fansubbing, scanlation), practices (debating, moderating, spoiling), and themes of interests (identity building and empowerment) covered by recent research in fan literacy practices. The author emphasizes that fansubbing and scanlation “are a rich area for exploration of language learning in the wild, but also represent a source of inspiration for the development of technology-mediated fan-inspired language teaching activities or fandom tasks” (Sauro, 2017, pp. 137–138). Besides these studies, within NLS, translation (and the language learning it implies) as an activity conducted by fans has received little attention.

Within translation studies, we have identified studies looking into translation as a user-generated activity (O’Hagan, 2009) under two categories: (a) translation as a fan activity (fan translation of games, fansubbing, fanfiction) and (b) not-for-profit activities (translation of software into local languages). Regarding the fan translation of games (fan-made audiovisual translation of retro games from the 80s or 90s which had not been translated at the time), a few studies highlight the *hacking* of videogames (i.e., altering the code of a game to introduce or modify text, images, and other items; Muñoz Sánchez, 2007, 2009). These studies present the community and describe the technical process of hacking. However, they do not report contact between members of the community, the translating process (how the transfer between languages and cultures is done beyond the technical aspects), or the learning processes and social and cultural relationships within the community.

Regarding fansubbing, fansubbers normally translating Japanese anime (Díaz-Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006) often work in well-organized groups, collaborating through social media and instant messaging apps. One administrator supervises the translation, production, and distribution processes as staff members play specific roles such as translators, editors, timers, encoders, and so forth (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2016). Communities of lesser-spoken languages (Catalan, for instance) are understudied.

Fanfiction holds a longer tradition in research from discourse studies, new media literacies, and language learning, focusing on themes of transculturality and construction of identities (Black, 2006). Fanfiction brings together people from across the world who passionately enjoy reading fiction and who share their thoughts, feelings, and positions about it. Fanfictioners learn language implicitly, since they gain access to *realia* through reading and writing (Black, 2005, 2009) or achieve self-taught critical literacy (Edfeldt, Fjordevik, & Inose, 2012; Strmel, 2014). The activity of translating fanfiction has not yet received attention.

Altogether, recent studies underscore the influence fan-made translation has into professional contexts, where technology-savvy fansubbers use methods for cross-cultural communication and exchange. This challenges both how we think about subtitling and the process of audiovisual translation itself (Ortabasi, 2007). However, fewer studies focus on the context of language teaching and learning, where learners' vernacular practices are often overlooked or marginalized. With the internet now seen as a "worldwide literacy practice environment" and an "informal language learning environment" (Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou, 2004), language learners go beyond access to original texts by engaging in diverse forms of multilingual digital literacy practices such as fan translation. We explore this phenomenon in the contexts of the fan translation of games, fansubbing, and the translation of fanfiction.

Methodology, Participants, and Corpus

This is a qualitative study employing virtual ethnography (Hine, 2015). We draw on data from three cases representing the fan translations of games, anime, and fanfiction. Each case focuses on the data provided by one representative of the fandom. We underpin our data on two main sources: (a) informants' discourses and (b) the online observation of language practices in the contexts of their fandoms, how fans conduct such practices, and what learning they extract from them.

Ethical considerations regarding confidentiality, anonymity, and the fair treatment of data has been given in accordance with the Association of Internet Researchers (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Our research standards were approved by the Committee for Ethical Review of Projects at Pompeu Fabra University. Specific actions taken included the following:

- applying a 2-factor authentication process as an extra layer of security in storing data in the university's servers;
- prioritizing information without personal data;
- anonymizing personal data, regardless of the nature thereof (names, nicknames, aliases, photographs, etc.), so as to preserve informants' real and virtual identities;
- distorting multimodal objects in a manner that image search engines could not retrieve such data; and
- disregarding third parties' data that could appear during the online observation or the interviews, whenever such third parties had not consented otherwise.

Participants

First, we contacted informants online with an informal, private chats about their activity and with a presentation of the research project via email or private message in the fan communities. Three fans agreed to participate:

- Selo was a fan translator of videogames. He was a 30-year-old male living in Cerdanyola del Vallès (Catalonia) at the time we interviewed him for the study. He spoke Catalan and Spanish natively, and he was a learner of English (B2).¹ He translated from English into Spanish and kept up two blogs and four forum threads where he published his translations. We contacted him through ROMhacking.net, an international gaming community where gamers uploaded hacks and translations.
- Nino was a fansubber of anime. He was a 20-year-old male living in Sabadell (Catalonia) at the time we interviewed him for the study. He spoke Catalan and Spanish natively, and he was a learner of English (B2) and Japanese (A2). He translated from Japanese into Catalan and had a personal website where he published one finished project (a subtitled anime) and where he had another in process. By the recommendation of another potential informant unable to participate, we contacted him via Animelliure.net, an online forum where fansubbers talked, discussed, and uploaded anime in Catalan.
- Arlo was a fan translator of fanfiction. She was a 26-year-old female living in Molins de Rei

(Catalonia) at the time we interviewed her for the study. She spoke Catalan and Spanish natively, and she was a learner of English (B1). She translated fanfiction from English into Spanish and she had four completed translations that received feedback regularly. At the time of her interview, she was translating four additional stories with weekly updates. We contacted her through FanFiction.net, a well-known worldwide site for fanfiction writers.

Instruments and Corpus

Interviews

We conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant in Spanish or Catalan covering the informants' sociolinguistic background, fan practices, literacy and technological habits, roles within the communities, perceptions regarding what they do online, and how and why they do what they do. When needed, we conducted secondary interviews to clarify doubts after our online observations. We selectively transcribed and translated these interviews.

Observations

We conducted non-participant observation of each participant's activities online by keeping an annotated diary log with screenshots. The observation lasted for two months, devoting an average of one hour every three days, depending on updates. We observed fan practices (translating videogames, anime, or fanfiction) and related activities on online sites (ROMhacking.net, Animelliure.net, FanFiction.net, and other forums, blogs, or social media sites with fan-related activity the participants had provided). With screenshots during the observation, we could see both the products and the reception of the informants' fan activity (i.e., translations published online and corresponding responses, comments, and interactions centered around the translations made by our informants and other fans in the fandom).

Screencast Videos

During the observation, informants agreed to provide screencast videos of their fan activity. These showcased the full translating process, from the moment that the informants decided to translate a text until it was published.

Table 1. *Corpus of Data*

Informant	Fandom	Languages	Interviews		Observations		Videos
			N	Minutes	Screenshots	Words Transcribed	Minutes
Selo	Games	Eng to Spa	1	60	55	720	79
Nino	Fansub	Jpn to Cat	2	110	61	800	91
Alro	Fanfiction	Eng to Spa	1	127	70	1,000	43
Total			4	297	186	2,520	213

The heterogenic corpus of data (see Table 1) allowed us to triangulate informants' discourses, researchers' observations, and recorded practices. We analyzed data following content analysis (Kohlbacher, 2006; Marying, 2000), to unearth recurrent trends and topics and establish possible relationships between them and our research questions. We adapted the constituent parts of a literacy practice (roles and functions, norms and behaviors, activities and practices, contexts and environments; see Barton, 2007; Barton & Lee, 2013) to the nature of fan translation. The emerging categories were (a) roles and functions (reader, commenter, translator, editor, beta-reader, beta-tester), (b) norms and behaviors (giving criticism, responding to criticism, positioning regarding authorship of fan-made translations), (c) activities and practices (discussing language transfer items [e.g., spelling, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, sociocultural items], discussing translation strategies [e.g., foreignizing, domesticating], using dictionaries, using translation software), and (d) contexts and environments (personal blogs, local or national forums,

international sites, repositories). For the screencast videos, we used the same categories, although new ones emerged accounting for the process of translating: decoding, translating, transliterating, proofreading, testing, patching, publishing, advertising, curating, and drafting subsidiary documents (e.g., glossaries, ReadMe documents, copyright disclaimers).

For the purposes of comparing the three cases, we reduced data under four themes relevant for language learning: (a) fan translation, (b) understanding the original text, (c) writing and preparing the translation, and (d) tools, resources, and collaborative online practices. We discuss each of these four themes in greater detail below.

Findings

Fan Translation

Common Features

Our fans translated for three different fandom communities, but the three cases shared common features: (a) direct translations, (b) amateur activity, (c) literacy practices, (d) collaborative activity, and (e) uses of digital resources. Each of these features is described below.

(a) Since there was a need for cultural content and products in local languages, fans translated from foreign languages into their L1s:

There was a boom of fan-made translations into Spanish in the early 2000s, but they are not stored anywhere. They were on the translators' sites, which do not exist anymore. Romhacking.net is international and multilingual, but with few translations in Spanish. I publish there to centralize downloads. (Interview with Selo, December 17, 2016)

(b) Fan translators received no money for their efforts and were not professional translators. However, the skills acquired in formal contexts could be transferred into fan translation and vice versa. Gains were measured in enjoyment, giving and receiving from the community, and learning:

There is a legal vacuum regarding licenses. Theoretically, if not licensed and not commercialized in your country, you can translate anime, because you are giving people access to content, which otherwise could not be accessed, but of course this applies whenever you do not generate any money out of it. (Interview with Nino, July 14, 2017)

(c) The fan translations were essentially socially and culturally situated reading and writing, where fans negotiated, for instance, what a good translation was:

On Facebook there's a group to talk and get involved, there are memes and laughs all along. For instance, you post "I'm looking for a good fanfic or translation", and everybody goes in to reply and comment. (Interview with Alro, June 26, 2017)

(d) The fan translations were a collaborative process, either for solo translators or groups of translators. Our three cases were solo translators, but the impact and reception of their translations online provided them with feedback:

You write something for yourself. You upload it to see whether people think you are doing it OK... I've never received negative feedback, and I have received thousands of reviews. I'm feeling ecstatic. But if I ever had some negative feedback, I wouldn't go sour... They feed you. The way they analyze your chapter is your pay. (Interview with Alro, June 26, 2017)

(e) The fan translations involved extensive use of digital tools for reading, writing, and curating translations. For technical activities (e.g., graphic editing, extracting texts from games, subtitling), fans used highly-specialized software. For language doubts, they frequently used Google Translate with multiple languages (e.g., English, Spanish, Catalan, Japanese) and for different purposes (reading comprehension, dictionary

of synonyms, translation of a word or a sentence, conversion between Latin and Japanese alphabets, retranslation using English as an intermediate vehicular language; see Vazquez-Calvo & Cassany, 2017). When curating and publicizing translations, they use specialized social networks and communities, such as ROMhacking.net (for games), Animelliure.net (for subtitles), or FanFiction.net (for fanfics).

Anything you don't know, you can easily find on the internet. There are forums for help, the Aegisub page [subtitling program], and there are instructions. (Interview with Nino, July 14, 2017)

Specificities of the Three Cases

Each case externalized the translation activity differently in relation to fans' (a) motivation to start translating, (b) experience and workstyle, and (c) language combination. Each of these features is described below.

(a) Nino recently became a fan translator, while Selo and Alro had more experience:

Selo had been a gamer his whole life. When he was a child, his limited English was not enough to understand scripted dialogues and texts of some games he wanted to play. His translation activity was thus motivated by the need of expanding the lifecycle of his gaming experience, replaying games he had already played when younger, or discovering games he did not know before. Once he had a better command of English, he could understand the texts and he believed that other gamers in the Spanish-speaking gaming community would appreciate that too. He argued that Spanish was underrepresented in the world of fan translation of games, namely ROMhacking.net, a fact corroborated by other fans in his forums:

Last year I went online [to ROMhacking.net] to see if there were new translations for NES in English, Spanish, or Portuguese, and of these last two there were just a few; now it's a pleasure to go there and see. There's been more activity in this last half year than in the last ten years [smiley]. (Quote from a fan's comment online giving value to Selo's work in the community)²

Nino watched anime dubbed in Catalan since he was a child. He was a fan of Japanese anime and had consumed many fansubs in Spanish. When he found out that there were fansubs in Catalan made by amateur translators, he "couldn't believe it" (interview with Nino, July 14, 2017) and decided to join them.

Alro expressed emotionally-attached and sociocultural motives to translate. She started translating Harry Potter fanfics from English to Spanish 10 years before the time of this study, when she was 16 years old, and she became one of the most celebrated Spanish translators on FanFiction.net. She began translating because she felt that Spanish conveyed emotions and intensity more passionately than English. After asking for permission from fanfic authors, she decided to post the translations. Following her debut, she continued translating other stories from English, so "the story [could] reach more people" (interview with Alro, June 26, 2017).

(b) The participants' experiences as fan translation and the way they conducted their practices differed according to each case:

Selo started translating games in early 2016, but by September 2017 he had already translated 204 games, his most successful translation topping 1,660 downloads. He became one of the most prolific Spanish-speaking translators of games on ROMhacking.net, and his forum threads were being proposed for highlights and merits within the forums. He was a solo translator, because "not everyone in a group is equally committed and you must be very patient" (interview with Selo, December 17, 2016). However, he sought other fans' approval in online forums. In the online forums, Selo and other gamers conducted prolific discussions on translation and language, discussed below.

When translating, Selo followed the typical workflow of other fan translators. This included language (translating, proofreading) and technical tasks (decoding the text from the game, graphic editing, playing the game for testing, creating a patch for the new translation to be mounted into the game file). Selo designed and used his own software to decode the text and substitute it in a simpler way (see [Figure 1](#)). In order to translate a game with around 200 words, he would spend about 79 minutes.

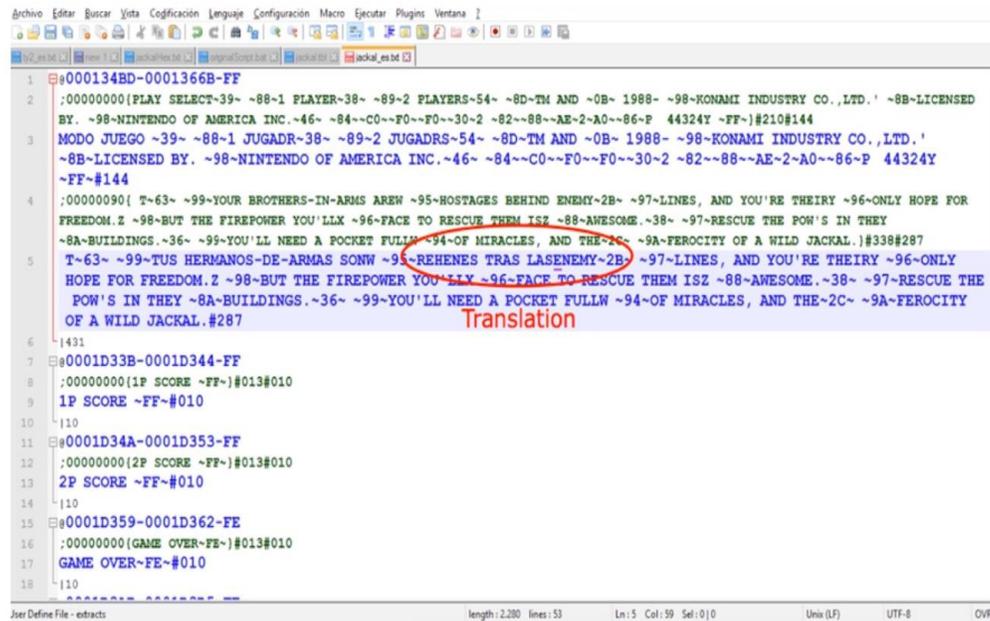


Figure 1. Selo translating with his software³

Nino started as a solo fansubber in 2016 after having been a fansubber in a larger community. This let him select the anime he liked and a comfortable pace of work. For example, for a specific anime filled with puns and witticisms, he could spend two hours translating only 10 lines. In his words, “This is about dedicating many hours and love to it; I want it perfect” (interview with Nino, July 14, 2017).

Nino was responsible for every task usually distributed among a fansub group, including linguistic production (translating, proofreading) and technical editing (typesetting, synchronizing, and encoding the final document). To alleviate such a workload, he used the timed script of Spanish subtitles for the same anime and added Catalan ones using the subtitle editor Aegisub (see Figure 2). This saved him time when synchronizing the subtitles.

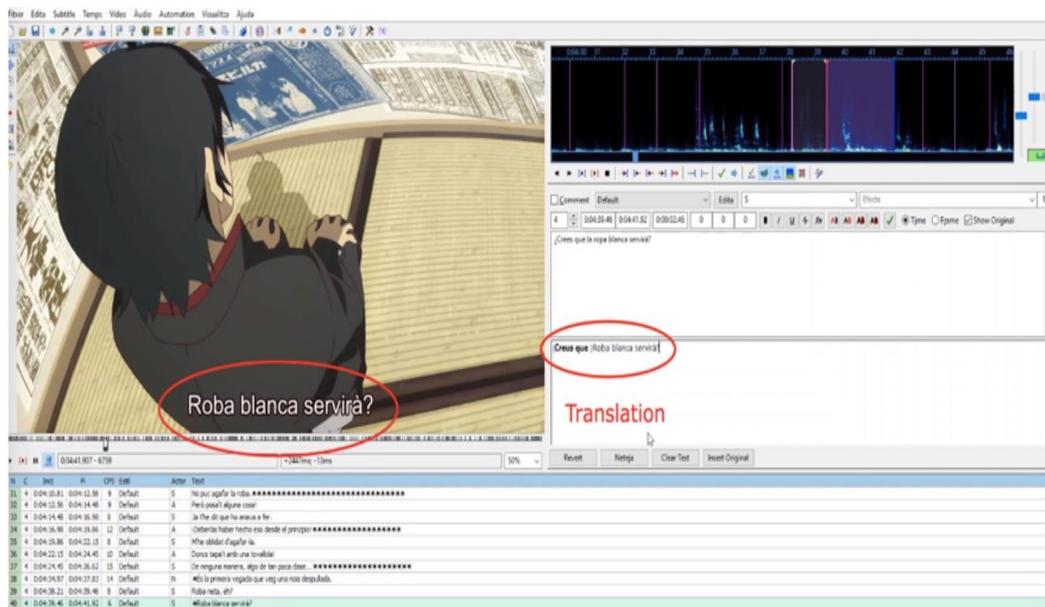


Figure 2. Nino translating with Aegisub

Alro worked concurrently on multiple projects. As of September 2017, she was translating four fanfics. She translated almost daily, devoting one to four hours each day. Before translating any fanfic, she messaged the English fanfic author, who set the conditions (e.g., not publishing outside FanFiction.net, mentioning the fanfic's original author in the summary of the fanfic or the beginning of each chapter, and adding links to the original fanfic). Contrary to Selo's and Nino's audiovisual translation, Alro was not constrained by the length of her sentences. Writing and translating fanfiction did not require advanced technical skills and FanFiction.net provided an easy interface where no subtitling or hacking skills were needed. Alro could thus focus on providing idiomatic and pragmatic solutions in Spanish.

It took Alro about 40 minutes to translate 600 words. FanFiction.net offered a user-friendly interface to both process and upload the text. Before doing so, Alro would go through the process of (1) translating a sentence with Google Translate in order to understand all the words, (2) checking for contextual mismatches, and (3) adapting the translation to a more idiomatic Spanish. At the time of the study, she had two stories on the top 25 most-reviewed Spanish fanfics out of 54,300, and one translation that placed fifth among the most favorited translations.

(c) Selo and Alro translated from English into Spanish. The games Selo translated were available in Japanese and English, but he did not know Japanese and had to rely on the English versions. He translated into Spanish so that a wider community of potential gamers could benefit. In the case of Alro, the original fanfics were in English, and she decided to translate them into Spanish. Both spoke Catalan as a mother tongue, but their language of daily communication was Spanish.

Nino translated from Japanese into Catalan. Previous years of watching anime provided Nino with basic knowledge of Japanese. He was able to pick up some words, syntactic forms, and courtesy expressions. With the Internet, he learned how to read hiragana and recognize some katakana on his own—kanji characters remained difficult for him. He also learned romaji (romanization of Japanese, or the application of the Latin script to write Japanese). This helped Nino translate. As a fansubber, he practiced and improved his Japanese, but in a stress-free environment.

Understanding the Original Text

Selo, Nino, and Alro developed different practices to understand the original text.

In order to prepare the text for translation, Selo had to decode it out of the game. He extracted it so that he could modify it as a .TXT file. If possible, he inserted new characters in Spanish (e.g., ñ, á, é, í, ó, ú, ¿, ¡). Afterward, he read and translated the text simultaneously. In the process of reading the original text through the screencast videos, we observed that Selo had some comprehension problems. He misinterpreted the sense of some prepositions and grammatical structures in English, because he applied two criteria over other types of doubts or linguistic units: (a) productivity (to produce as many translations as possible) and (b) consulting semantic doubts (i.e., the meanings of unknown verbs, nouns, and adjectives). To solve such doubts, Selo mostly relied on Google Translate (see [Figure 3](#)).

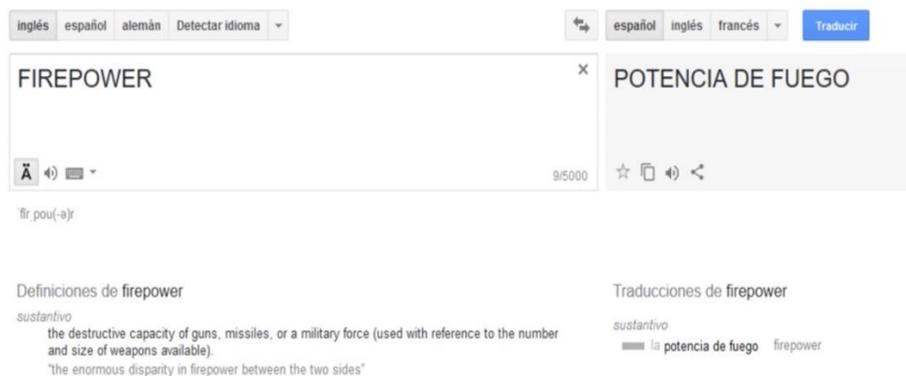


Figure 3. Selo using Google Translate to solve semantic doubts

After having read and translated the text, Selo played the game and re-read his own translation in context: he experienced the game with the screens and narrative adapted to the local language. This allowed for further verification if needed, as well as the double-checking of possible unintended graphic modifications needing further polishing.

Nino made a great endeavor to comprehend the original text. Despite the Spanish or English versions being available as reference, he attempted to retrieve every word from Japanese to ensure a fair understanding. For each script line, he played the correspondent fragment several times, and transliterated every word into romaji (see Table 2).

Table 2. Nino Transliterating Romaji

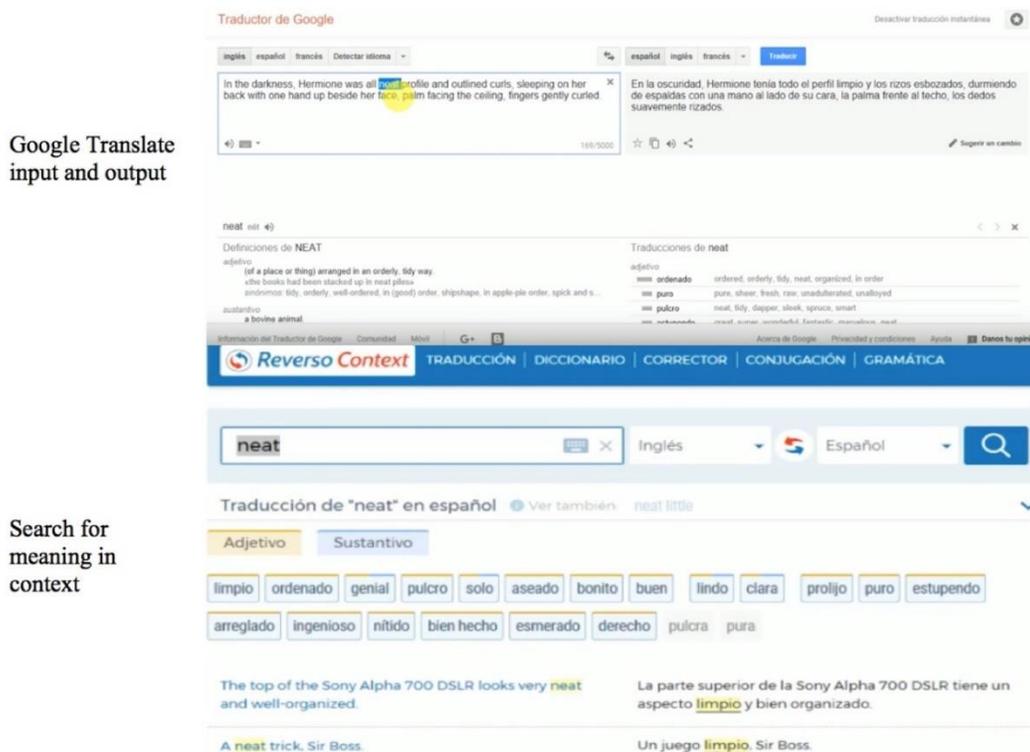
Text	Transcription
Original Subtitle	<i>Solo tengo bragas y sujetadores con estampados.</i>
Verbatim Translation	<i>I only have panties and bras with patterns.</i>
Transcription	<i>Garamonoshikamotte inai.</i>

To understand the transliterated romaji, Nino used Google Translate and two Japanese–English dictionaries (Tangorin and Jisho). In the first example (see Figure 4), the romaji was automatically converted into hiragana and kanji by the translator. After confirming that 柄物 (*garamono*) means *patterned cloth* in the dictionaries, Nino could make sense of the whole sentence. In soundless scenes with only written Japanese (signs), Nino could make sense of the whole sentence. In soundless scenes with only written Japanese (signs), he manually drew the kanji in the translator as in the last example in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Nino using Google Translate to understand romaji, hiragana, and kanji

Similarly, Alro translated one sentence at a time with Google Translate. She opened two documents: the original work and the translation. With the version from Google Translate, she compared the source and the target texts. She corrected the sentences in Google Translate, with an emphasis on language choice and collocations. She double-checked specific expressions or new words with Reverso.net or Linguee.es. In Figure 5, she entertained doubts about a specific word, and she was not satisfied with the Google Translate suggestion: *neat* as *limpio* (*clean*). *Limpio* did not suit the context in which it was used, and she then opted for *nítido* (clear, defined): *En la oscuridad, Hermione tenía el perfil nítido* (*In the darkness, Hermione had a neat profile*).



Google Translate
input and output

Search for
meaning in
context

Figure 5. Alro using Google Translate and Reverso.net to understand meaning in context

Reading texts in fan translations was quite a challenging process. It could encompass the transliteration between different writing systems (see Table 2 and Figure 4), the decoding of meanings of words and phrases (Figure 3), reading words in their *cotext* (the linguistic elements before and after a sentence or a term; see Figure 5), and reading texts in their multimodal contexts (the frames around communicative events that provide resources to interpret them; e.g., scripts of games, subtitles, images). In order to fulfill this comprehension task satisfactorily, the three fan translators relied on Google Translate to solve their problems. In Google Translate, they encountered a multifunctional, multi-language, and versatile resource with multiple affordances.

Writing and Preparing the Translation

The fan translators also adopted different translation and revision strategies.

Selo's translations were limited by the number of characters used in the original text. Consequently, he chose words very consciously (e.g., using synonyms or paraphrasing for concision; see Figure 6).

Original script

Sentence being translated: “But the firepower you’ll face to rescue them is awesome”

```
4 :00000090[ T~63~ ~99~YOUR BROTHERS-IN-ARMS AREN ~95~HOSTAGES BEHIND ENEMY~2B~ ~97~LINES, AND YOU'RE THEIRY ~96~ONLY HOPE FOR
FREEDOM.Z ~98~BUT THE FIREPOWER YOU'LLX ~96~FACE TO RESCUE THEM ISZ ~88~AWESOME~38~ ~97~RESCUE THE POW'S IN THEY
~8A~BUILDINGS.~36~ ~99~YOU'LL NEED A POCKET FULLW ~94~OF MIRACLES, AND THE~2C~ ~9A~FEROCITY OF A WILD JACKAL.]#338#287
```

Translated script

First attempt: “La potencia de fuego a la que te enfrentarás es enorm*” [Unfinished due to lack of space]

Verbatim translation “The firepower you’ll face is awesom*”

```
5 T~63~ ~99~TUS HERMANOS-DE-ARMAS SONW ~95~REHENES TRAS LA LINEA~2B~ ~97~ENEMIGA Y TU ERES SU ~96~UNICA
ESPERANZA. Z ~98~LA POTENCIA DE FUEGO A X ~96~LA QUE TE ENFRENTARAS Z ~88~ES ENORM~38~~97~RESCUE THE
POW'S IN THEY ~8A~BUILDINGS.~36~ ~99~YOU'LL NEED A POCKET FULLW ~94~OF MIRACLES, AND THE~2C~ ~9A~FEROCITY OF
A WILD JACKAL.#287
```

Translated script

Second attempt: “La potencia de fuego que te encontraras es enorme”

Verbatim translation “The firepower you’ll find is awesome”

```
5 T~63~ ~99~TUS HERMANOS-DE-ARMAS SONW ~95~REHENES TRAS LA LINEA~2B~ ~97~ENEMIGA Y TU ERES SU ~96~UNICA
ESPERANZA. Z ~98~LA POTENCIA DE FUEGO QUEX ~96~TE ENCONTRARAS ES Z ~88~ENORME.~38~ ~97~RESCUE THE
POW'S IN THEY ~8A~BUILDINGS.~36~ ~99~YOU'LL NEED A POCKET FULLW ~94~OF MIRACLES, AND THE~2C~ ~9A~FEROCITY OF
A WILD JACKAL.#287
```

Figure 6. Selo translating and paraphrasing to reduce the number of characters

Selo reinserted the translated text chains into the same location they were in the English game file. He paid attention not to delete or move any character related to the internal coding of the game, mistaking it as translatable text. Afterward, Selo played the game and proofread for possible spelling and translation mistakes.

He also paid attention to unintended graphic modifications. Later, he created a patch of the game with the translation to execute it. He drafted a ReadMe document where he gave instructions on how to embed the translation in the game. In the document, he left a copyright mark of the original game and a credit mark to his work (see Figure 7). Selo had a ReadMe template he filled out for every game. After completing this, the translation was ready for publication and download.

```
1 Jackal
2 Traducción al Español v1.0 (09/01/2017)
3 (C) 2017 ██████ Translations
4
5 ---
6 TdC
7 ---
8
9 1. Sobre Jackal
10 2. Notas del Proyecto
11 3. Fallos Conocidos (o: Bugs que no son bugs)
12 4. Instrucciones de Parcheo
13 5. Créditos del Parche
14
15 -----
16 1. Sobre Jackal
17 -----
18 Jackal es un shooter, para 1 o 2 jugadores simultaneos.
19
20 -----
21 2. Notas del Proyecto
22 -----
23 Esta traducción y hacking es completamente original.
24
25 -----
26 3. Fallos Conocidos (o: Bugs que no son bugs)
27 -----
28 Ninguno que yo sepa, si encuentras alguno puedes mandar un correo a ██████
29
30 -----
31 4. Instrucciones de Parcheo
32 -----
33 El parche está en formato IPS, recomiendo usar LunarIPS.
```

Figure 7. Selo drafting a ReadMe document

In Nino’s case, although Spanish and Catalan shared many words, he deemed the Spanish version unusable, since commercial translations were usually “way too adapted” and “the original meaning [was] lost” (interview with Nino, July 14, 2017). If the translations were made by fans, “the first thing you notice is their spelling mistakes,” not to mention that many of them were “translated directly from English” or “adapted too much” because it was easier. However, Nino maintained in romaji everything he considered “untranslatable” (or meaningless if translated) and provided explanations in a document he called *Vocabulari i explicacions* (similar to a glossary) on his fansub website (Figure 8). In Nino’s words, he explained terms or phrases regarding Japanese culture, together with grammatical constructions, wordplays, and anything that “helps the viewers comprehend profoundly the story” and “a bit more about the characters” (interview with Nino, July 14, 2017). For easy reference, every word also had a timestamp of when it appeared.

Time	Terms in Japanese	Explanation in Catalan
Temps	Vocabulari	Explicació
05:45	Senjougahara	(戦場ヶ原) Senjougahara significa "camp de batalla" i és una àrea de Nikko, a la prefectura de Tochigi. Però també pot referir-se al lloc on es va dur a terme la batalla entre els déus del mont Nantai i els del mont Akagi
05:59	Hitagi	Hitagi s'escriu 肥田木 en kanji, i obres públiques, 土木. Encara que comparteixin el kanji d'arbre (木), el nom de la Senjougahara s'escriu en hiragana (ひたぎ). Per tant... ah... no ho sé... 〵(ツ)〵
07:17	Golden Week	Dies festius del 29 d'abril al 5 de maig
12:03	Yoroshiku sa	Yoroshiku (よろしく): Jo no ho podria explicar millor del que s'explica aquí Sa (さ): Partícula utilitzada gairebé sempre per homes, serveix per indicar èmfasi al final d'una frase. També es pot utilitzar com una de les maneres de fer servir la partícula yo (よ), com en aquest cas, que s'utilitza per suavitzar una ordre o una advertència. Per tant, la Senjougahara, l'utilitza per fer entendre que l'Araragi s'ha de prendre el yoroshiku com una ordre

Figure 8. Nino’s glossary

Before uploading the subtitled anime, Nino revised the text as many times as possible, marking doubtful translation solutions with brackets and notes, which could be seen only by the translator and not by final viewers. In the example in Table 3, the final subtitles in Catalan differed from the Spanish one by adopting a similar negative grammatical construction as in Japanese, しか...ない (*shika nai*; *no more than*), and avoiding the affirmative sense given in Spanish.

Table 3. Nino’s Self-Revision Process

Text	Transcription
First Translation	<i>Només tinc calces i sostenidors amb estampats (I only have panties and bras with patterns)</i>
Nino’s Notes	<i>{treure “amb” i comprovar la concordança amb estampats?} (remove “amb” and confirm the concordance with patterns?)</i>
Second Translation	<i>No tinc calces ni sostenidors sense estampats (I have neither panties nor bras without patterns)</i>

When Alro was translating, she worked with a word processor and Google Translate. She copied one sentence at a time into the translator and searched for the correct, pragmatic interpretation. She compared the source and the target texts. She corrected the sentences in the interface of Google Translate, with an emphasis on language choice and collocations. Her second sources of reference were Reverso.net or

Linguee.es, where she verified specific expressions to achieve a discourse closer to the original Spanish translations. Thereafter, she textualized the translated sentences herself, providing pragmatic translations with the sense of the original texts (see Table 4).

Table 4. Alro's Textualization Process

Text	Transcription
Original Text	<i>Draco took this as his que to attempt a tentative, verbal nudgey</i>
Google Translate Output	<i>Draco tomó esto como suyo para intentar un tentativo, verbal codazo (Draco took this as his to try a tentative, verbal elbowing)</i>
Alro's Textualization	<i>Draco tomó esa acción para intentar un tentativo empujón verbal (Draco took that action to try a tentative verbal push)</i>

Finally, in the text processor interface from FanFiction.net, she revised the text, searching for typing errors. With the publication, she also added a disclaimer note. This included a statement to avoid copyright infringement, language reflecting her admiration to J.K. Rowling and to the original fanfictioner, instructions to locate the original fanfic in English, and the purpose of her own work: "I only translate the story so it can reach to more people" (Figure 9).

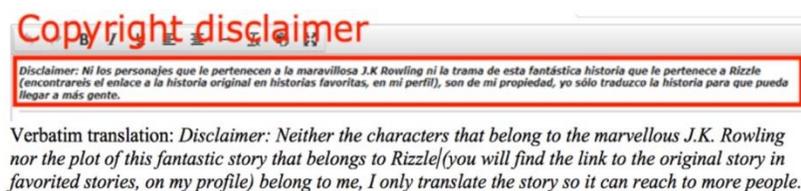


Figure 9. Alro's disclaimer note

In order for a fan-made translation to be ready for publication, the translators had adapted text to the technical specificities of their mode, such as by following character limits and synchronizing scripts and subtitles with the right moment in each scene (particularly relevant in audiovisual translation of Selo's games and Nino's anime). Such adaptations entailed paraphrasing strategies in the target language and a using digital resources critically. The fan translators departed from the information provided by Google Translate and other resources, but it was crucial for them to read such information critically and adapt it to their needs, based on previous language knowledge (e.g., Nino's self-revising process shown in Table 3 and Figure 4 or Alro's search for pragmatic meanings in Figure 5). Fan translators also had to ensure the right interpretation of culturally bound terms, especially in the case of distant cultures, such as Japanese and Catalan (e.g., Nino's glossary of terms in Figure 8). They guaranteed that their translation met the internal ethical standards in their communities (e.g., Selo's and Alro's copyright disclaimers in Figure 7 and Figure 9). Additionally, the fan translators ensured that potential readers and users could fully understand how to use and read their translations (e.g., Selo's ReadMe document in Figure 7 and Nino's glossary of terms in Figure 8). Finally, the three fan translators we observed gave a different consideration to the original text, leading to different translation strategies. Limited by technical constraints, Selo adopted a word-for-word translation strategy with some paraphrasing and meticulous language choice (see Figure 6). Embedded in a distant culture, Nino adopted a foreignizing translation strategy, with items in Japanese that were then further detailed in the glossary. Scrupulously maintaining all the flavor of Harry Potter's worlds, Alro adopted more of a communicative translation strategy, searching for the adequate pragmatic meaning in order to evoke similar effects in the Spanish-speaking audience as those in the English-speaking one, as seen in Figure 5 and Table 4.

Tools, Resources, and Collaborative Practices Online

We found differences and similarities across cases regarding the use of online tools and resources.

Selo relied on Google Translate for comprehension and translation purposes. He revised his translations by testing and playing the game, but since his objective was to enlarge the corpus of games available in Spanish with a rapid production of translations, he called for help online. In a first attempt, he did so in the ReadMe document (Figure 7): *Known mistakes. None as far as I know. If you find any you can write at [email]*.

Selo compiled all the files (patches, translations, and ReadMe files) into a .zip file, ready for publishing. He first uploaded the final file on ROMhacking.net. On August 8, 2016, he decided to maximize his call for help. He started publicizing his translations on four separate forum threads. In so doing, he followed a systematic way of advertising the translation, which was indicative of a sophisticated digital literacy and a marketing goal to make translations attractive to fans. In this advertising process, he made an initial statement with the title of the game and some review on the quality and characteristics of the game (e.g., genre, experience, graphics, narrative, intertextuality in reference to literature or other games). He attached screenshots (main or start screen, in-play screen, screen with texts translated). He finally provided the link for download. Once the translations were uploaded, they were open to public scrutiny. In one comment on a forum, Selo stated that “translating [was] not as time consuming as ‘managing’ translations”. This was because he took time in replying to every comment, curating the content he created for the fandom.

Out of the 55 screenshots of Selo, 31 were fans’ comments on his language and translation and Selo’s subsequent replies. In those 31 screenshots, fans adopted the role of *beta testers*: they tested the game and highlighted possible graphic and language problems prior to or after online publication (requesting a new version of the translation). The comments were either conceptual ($n = 10$) or practical language issues ($n = 21$) regarding Selo’s linguistic transfer from English into Spanish. For instance, gamers suggested that Selo be less attached to the original text, but he justified that character limits hindered his creativity. Language discussions covered a variety of topics, such as spelling, grammar, lexicon, syntax, and pragmatics. Selo replied to every comment, accepted changes, or justified his solutions. He offered some background documentation (e.g., Wikipedia, dictionary entries). We present one example in detail (Figure 10).

Original script in Spanish:	Verbatim translation:
A este lo juego de vez en cuando, venga esa traducción!! :)	This one, I play it sometimes, let’s see the translation!! :)
-----Actualizado-----	-----Updated-----
"Blinky captivo en el planeta verde,"	"Blinky captive in the green planet,"
-----Actualizado-----	-----Updated-----
"Bucky escapo a la armada sapo por un pelo..."	"Bucky escaped Toad warships by an inch..."
Al no tener acentos quizás es mejor que sea:	Since it has no graphical accents, maybe it is better to say:
"Bucky escapa de la armada sapo por un pelo..."	"Bucky escapes Toad warships by an inch..."
-----Actualizado-----	-----Updated-----
"Luchan par salvar el aniverso de los sapos"	"They fight to save the aniverse form toads"
Esto es un desastre oiga, que me devuelvan el dinero!!	This is a disaster, I’m asking for a refund!!
-----Actualizado-----	-----Updated-----
Pero esto qué es, pero esto qué es!?!?!	But what is this, but what is this!?!?
"un transporte que llevaba la tripulación a la honrada fue atacado"	"a transportation carrying the crew to the Righteous was attacked"

Figure 10. Fan’s comment revising language chunks

With jokes and puns, the fan’s comment in Figure 10 stressed *captivo*, *aniverso*, and *honrada* as possible mistakes, and proposed a tense change. In Figure 11, Selo accepted the change of the tense as an improvement, so that he could avoid making a spelling mistake due to the lack of the character *ó*. Selo also explained that *aniverse* (a fictional world with anthropomorphic animals) and *aniverso* (Spanish) were terms of the game and manga series according to Wikipedia. This applied to *Honrada*, too, a proper name of a spaceship (the *Righteous*, in English). Selo also offered a dictionary entry regarding *captivo* from the Spanish dictionary, *Diccionario de la lengua española*.

Original script in Spanish:	Verbatim translation:
<p>"Blinky <i>captivo</i> en el planeta verde," No te gusta <i>captivo</i>? <i>captivo</i>, va</p> <p>Del lat. <i>captivus</i>.</p> <p>1. adj. desus. cautivo.</p> <p>"Bucky escapo a la armada sapo por un pelo..." Al no tener acentos quizás es mejor que sea: "Bucky escapa de la armada sapo por un pelo..." En esta tuve que hacerlo porque no me sobraba ni un caracter.</p> <p>"Luchan par salvar el <i>aniverso</i> de los sapos"</p> <p>Esto es un desastre oiga, que me devuelvan el dinerol! No conozco la terminología de la serie, dicen <i>ANIVERSE</i>, tiene una traducción mejor?</p> <p>Pero esto qué es, pero esto qué es!?!?</p> <p>"un transporte que llevaba la tripulación a la <i>honrada</i> fue atacado" Igual que antes, no se la terminología, lo mire en la wikipedia y era la traducción del nombre de la nave.</p>	<p>"Blinky captivo in the green planet," [Selo's reply: Don't you like <i>captivo</i>? <i>captivo</i>, va</p> <p>From Latin <i>captivus</i>. 1. Adj. archaic. cautivo.]</p> <p>"Bucky escaped Toad warships by an inch..." Since it has no graphical accents, maybe it is better to say: "Bucky escapes Toad warships by an inch..." [Selo's reply: In this one, I had to (<i>write without graphic accents</i>), because there were not a single space left.]</p> <p>"They fight to save the aniverse form toads" This is a disaster, I'm asking for a refund!!</p> <p>[Selo's reply: I don't know the terms in the series, they say <i>ANIVERSE</i> (in English), does it have a better translation?]</p> <p>But what is this, but what is this!?!?!?</p> <p>"a transportation carrying the crew to the Righteous was attacked" [Selo's reply: Same as before, I don't know the terms, I saw it on Wikipedia and that's the translation for the spaceship.]</p>

Figure 11. Selo's response to a fan's comment on language chunks

The fan in Figure 11 learned that *captivo* was actually a word in Spanish, though he argued that it might sound odd in the fantasy-based game. Indeed, *captivo* was archaic Spanish and not fit for a futuristic context with spaceships and aniverses. This way, Selo and the fans collectively learned the importance of language choice according to cotext, context, and the function of the original text (*captivo*). They realized that there was a choice to make when dealing with terms created by the authors (*aniverso*–*aniverse*, *Honrada*–*Righteous*). In this realization, they exhibited that fan translators were concerned not only with linguistic codeswitching, but also with sociocultural features and documentation skills. Furthermore, Selo and the other fans minimized the impact of character limit on misspellings by changing the tense in Spanish. Therefore, they demonstrated that they cared for proper spelling, even if their comments were drafted informally, with lax punctuation, spelling, and grammar: *Al no tener acentos, quizás es mejor que sea: 'Bucky escapa de la armada sapo por un pelo...' (Since we don't get graphical accents, maybe it's better to say: 'Bucky escapes the army toad by an inch...')*.

Moving on to the case of Nino, he aimed to "bring more anime available in Catalan" (interview with Nino, July 14, 2017) and offset his limited knowledge of Japanese by utilizing online language resources skillfully and creatively. As illustrated earlier, he used Google Translate as a versatile device for changing between romaji, hiragana, and kanji, practicing strokes of kanji and back-translating (when Nino transliterated incorrectly, he put the Spanish in the translator to check the original Japanese). Keeping the Japanese flavor in his translation, he built a glossary for every episode after thorough Internet-based research (e.g., Wikipedia, blogs on learning Japanese). He repeated his revision process after publication to incorporate changes whenever he spotted any errors as a viewer. Unlike Selo, Nino did not rely on a specific fan community for feedback. Rather, he aspired to capture Catalan fans' attention on language correctness. With accumulated experience in translating and the assistance of Softcatalà (a Catalan spelling and grammar checker), Nino became conscious and sensitive toward Catalan spelling, grammar, and lexicon. He realized that mistakes with diacritical marks (e.g., à, é, ç) and Castilianisms (i.e., unjustified uses of Spanish words) were common among Catalan speakers. Nino hoped that his subtitles could raise awareness in this sense:

I do not want to sound arrogant or anything, mainly because I do not come from language studies, but I consider that my Catalan, especially thanks to the subtitling experience, not only has improved but is much better than the average level of [Catalan] people. (Interview with Nino, July 14, 2017)

Similar to Selo, Alro gave importance to receiving feedback. In her disclaimer note, she motivated readers to give feedback. *Turncoat* was Alro's most commented story, with 1,630 comments. It placed 20th (out of

54,300 Spanish fanfics) in the most-reviewed Spanish fanfiction rankings. Most of the comments praised Alro's work and referred to whether the fans liked the story plot, rather than to the quality of the translated text. Comments were geared toward socializing over fanfiction and reinforcing Alro's identity as a fan translator, instead of language proofreading. Occasionally, there were comments on Alro's spelling and mastery in translating, including her idiomatic style in Spanish, avoiding calques from English (e.g., the overuse of personal pronouns):

Besides, I have to say that your work is really good, from spelling to the dealing of pronouns, which is one of the most common mistakes made by translators; the excessive use of them, ignoring that in Spanish verbs are conjugated differently and denote the subject, and all of this considering that your mother tongue is not Spanish. Seriously, congratulations. (Quote from a fan's comment online praising Alro's translation and language)⁴

Notwithstanding the lack of more comments on language, Alro stated that she learned a great deal thanks to her role as a fan translator:

I'm more confident now. I watch English TV-series and understand what they say. I remember having a hard time speaking in English, but now I'm confident I could engage in a conversation, although speaking English, that's still very hard for me. (Interview with Alro, June 26, 2017)

Selo, Nino, and Alro shared, to some extent, the idea that “no one knows everything, everyone knows something, all knowledge resides in humanity” (Levy, 1997, p. 217). The fans in this study both gave to and took from the community. For example, by publicizing his translations (Figure 10, Figure 11), Selo inadvertently created a real forum for language learning and co-construction of meaning. Being the moderator of the forums, he could ban users—although he chose not to. Even though he received fairly critical comments, he redirected the dialogue to receive constructive language feedback. He responded to such comments and offered documentation and language information. For such justifications online, he used official dictionaries instead of Google Translate, demonstrating that he was aware of the concept of the authority of particular resources online. While Selo kept vivid discussions on language and translation online, Nino showed an interesting allegiance and promotion of Catalan. With his subtitles, Nino hoped to set an example of good Catalan to potential viewers, whose Catalan might have been influenced by Spanish, the dominant language. Similarly, Alro's fanfic translation represented an open space for her creativity, and the numerous comments, reads, and likes she received represented a reinforcement of her identity as a fanfictioner and fan translator.

Implications, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research

From the previous findings, we can extract some implications for language learning regarding our research objectives.

Capitalizing on Fan Practices

Young people conduct a wide spectrum of fan practices (e.g., games, fansubbing, fanfiction, etc.), and some of them require highly-sophisticated literacy. Fan literacy practices as vernacular and ordinary practices are not a sign of an incomplete or transitional literacy (Lyons, 2007, p. 29). The sophistication in fan practices is proven by a full workflow, presented in the three cases of this study, and expands the concept of literacy beyond coding and decoding texts.

Digital literacy practices and fan translation, in particular, require technological, communicative, and sociocultural skills. In order for fans to render successful, adequate translations, they need to interact on three levels: they interact with the machines (e.g., coding, programming, editing, searching language items), with the texts (e.g., translating language and cultural items), and with others (e.g., curating their products, replying to fans' comments). Moreover, we consider that fan practices contrast with formal writing and genres “less because of an inadequate mastery of correct writing by those who engage with it, but because of the nature of communication and social interaction in the given context” (Barton & Papen, 2010, p. 10).

This is why it is essential to comprehend the fandom communities where such practices unfold. This comprehension involves ascertaining roles, functions, norms, behaviors, and implications of the fan practices for the fans.

Selo, Nino, and Arlo encountered an open space for agency, creativity, and identity building in their respective fandoms. They were part of a group that valued their work: a work driven by inner motivation and personal likes. Their fan translations kept the fandom going and filled the fandom with valuable content. In other words, they were the “generators” of the semiotic fabric in their affinity spaces (Gee, 2005, p. 218). In this sense, our study extends previous research on fan translation of games with a focus on technological skills (e.g., decoding, hacking; see Muñoz Sánchez, 2007, 2009) by looking into the socioculturally embedded practices around it. It also extends previous studies focusing on fansubbing that treat this activity as a static phenomenon centered on the textual features of amateur outputs or the stages and technologies involved in the production and distribution processes of fansubs (e.g., Li, 2015). Our study clarifies the dynamic process of fan translating and the learning it encompasses.

Language Learning and Fan Translation

In relation to the language learned through translating, results indicated three different yet complementary ways of manifesting informal language learning and a great deal of “silent learning” (Romero, 2004, p. 218).

Firstly, Selo sought ways for collaborative learning by asking people to proofread his translations. Inadvertently, by becoming beta-testers and playing the games before they were published, fans became self-directed co-learners of English and Spanish. In dialogue with Selo, they highlighted numerous translation problems relating to the economy of language, pragmatics and register, lexicon and creativity, and spelling.

Secondly, Nino greatly favored autodidacticism. With less interaction with readers or colleagues in the translating practice, he could overcome considerable difficulties brought by typologically distant languages of Japanese and Catalan. This was supported by a creative use of technologies, where Google Translate was used as a kanji drawing board and writing system convertor. Nevertheless, he had the readership in mind when building up his glossary of Japanese culture-bound terms.

Lastly, with fewer technological skills needed, Alro epitomized the cultural mediator, adapting all the language to the specificities of Spanish. She understood that her fandom valued pragmatic adaptation and creativity, provided that fanfiction readers establish a bond with plots and characters. This was interesting because it gave us the key to support the notion that translation strategies, which result in language learning, changed in relation to whether the link holding the affinity space together was a practice or a product. When the practice was the link (e.g., playing games or watching anime in a local language), then there was greater concern to transfer the text accurately, with less creativity or free adaptation. This was also driven by the fact that audiovisual translation was framed by technical limitations that constrained creativity. When the product was the link (e.g., reading Harry Potter fanfiction) and no technical limitations were observed, there was a more creative adaptation. Further studies may explore the previous assumption in depth.

The three cases showcase language learning events in different but relevant ways so that teachers may utilize fan practices in their classes according to pedagogical objectives (economy of language, transfer of cultural items, creativity). Fan translation as a pedagogical tool expands the repertoire and affordances of *bridging activities*, a pedagogical model of “guided exploration and analysis of student selected or created digital vernacular texts originating in Web 2.0” (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008, p. 558). As a hands-on activity, fan translation allows for two lines of in-class work. Language teachers can either (a) recognize and explore vernacular practices to learn what they already know or (b) export and apply fan translation or some of its components. Practical examples include employing fan translation tasks so that students show the skills learned outside the school, profiting from the contexts of the different types of fan translation (audiovisual, game-based, or creativity-oriented contexts), teaching and analyzing fans’ translation strategies to comprehend and transfer meaning (word-for-word, phrase-for-phrase, meaning-based translation, multiple

uses of automated translation, other documentation resources), or fostering a critical use of language resources (machine translation and dictionaries).

Therefore, students as fan translators can not only explore and analyze, but also practice their translating, proofreading, commenting, and curating—all while retaining a high level of agency. The analysis and creation of translated scripts and stories in games, series, and fanfiction may prove as beneficial as previous research has demonstrated regarding the creation, analysis, and enactment of fan-made (spoken) dialogues of (written) stories (Marone & Neely, 2017). Fan translations can also provide additional language-based tools for language assessment (e.g., pragmatic accuracy, discourse adequacy, translation strategy, translation errors), given that curricular integration and assessment of fan practices remain a line of research (Godwin-Jones, 2015). Fan translations may also help debunk some teachers' misconceptions on translation as a detrimental activity for language learning (Pym, Malmkjaer, & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, 2013). Rather than a philological, word-for-word, code-switching activity, translation (including fan translation) is profoundly pragmatic, culturally embedded, and full of choices and agency on the part of the translator or learner.

In the era of ubiquitous learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), there is a call to deepen our knowledge on what learners of all ages do outside the classroom with consequences on personal, social, professional, and academic levels. A clear line of research can be how the literacy and language learning happening outside the classroom may be transferred into schools, potentially by exploring the dimensions of location, formality, pedagogy, locus of control (Benson, 2011), and trajectory (Chik, 2014) to offer a sound basis for routine pedagogical processes.

However, there are also some limitations. In out-of-class contexts, we cannot determine in exact terms who learns what or up to what extent they learn what they learn. Selo, Nino, and Alro did learn language, but in a rather implicit way. We cannot conclude that they transferred such learning of language items outside their fan practices. We also cannot conclude that some learning occurred in all the readers, users, and consumers of the games, forums, subtitles, glossaries, and stories produced by our fans. In this sense, we suggest larger groups of informants, and potentially extended periods of observation, to corroborate whether and to what extent digital literacy practices, such as fan translations, impact fans' lives on personal, social, academic, and professional levels. Other studies may also want to explore using mixed methods, where learning analytics can extrapolate and generalize results. Finally, this is a very new, underexplored field with great potential for future research. We think there is a need to redefine good practices on how to recruit participants and collect and treat data in Internet-based research within Applied Linguistics.

Acknowledgements

This research has been partly funded by the postdoctoral grant *Videogames as an academic and vernacular literacy practice* (ED481B-2017/007, Government of Galicia, Spain) and by the research projects ICUDEL (EDU2014-57677-C2-1-R, Ministry of Economy, Spain) and *Fandom in Spain* (3rd call, Queen Sophia Center for Youth and Adolescence, Spain).

Notes

1. The informants are familiar with the *Common European Framework of Reference*, that measures language competence in the EU on a 6-band scale: A1, A2 (basic user), B1, B2 (independent user), C1, C2 (proficient user). Here we report informants' self-reported competence in the foreign languages they use for amateur translating.
2. Although we have screenshots of additional fans' original comments, we present a transcribed and translated version of text-based comments online from other fans other than Selo, Nino, and Alro. This is to simplify the presentation of findings.
3. We have made all efforts possible to offer high-quality images, but these are not direct screenshots

from fans' online activity. Therefore, some might be slightly blurry. In fact, we distorted screenshots before storing them, so that the image files in our databases could not be searchable in image search engines. This is because some might have contained third-party information or even sensitive data from our informants. That is why we chose to use screenshots of screenshots on word processors where we could easily add comments, indications, or translations.

4. Although we have screenshots of additional fans' original comments, we present a transcribed and translated version of text-based comments online from fans other than Selo, Nino, and Alro. This is to simplify the presentation of findings.

References

- Barton, D. (2007). *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language* (2nd ed.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Barton, D., & Lee, C. (2013). *Language online: Investigating digital texts and practices*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Barton, D., & Papen, U. (2010). *The anthropology of writing: Understanding textually mediated worlds*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Benson, P. (2011). Language learning and teaching beyond the classroom: An introduction to the field. In P. Benson & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Beyond the language classroom* (pp. 7–17). London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Benson, P. (2015). Commenting to learn: Evidence of language and intercultural learning in comments on Youtube videos. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(3), 88–105.
- Black, R. W. (2005). Access and affiliation: The literacy and composition practices of English-language learners in an online fanfiction community. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(2), 118–128. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.49.2.4>
- Black, R. W. (2006). Language, culture, and identity in online fanfiction. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 3(2), 170–184. <https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2006.3.2.170>
- Black, R. W. (2009). Online fan fiction, global identities, and imagination. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 43(4), 397–425. <https://doi.org/10.2307/27784341>
- Chik, A. (2014). Digital gaming and language learning: Autonomy and community. *Language Learning & Technology*, 18(2), 85–100.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). Ubiquitous learning: An agenda for educational transformation. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Ubiquitous learning* (pp. 3–14). Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Díaz-Cintas, J., & Muñoz Sánchez, P. (2006). Fansubs: Audiovisual translation in an amateur environment. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 6, 37–52.
- Edfeldt, C., Fjordevik, A., & Inose, H. (2012). *Fan culture as an informal learning environment*. Paper presented at the Next Generation Learning Conference, Falun, Sweden.
- Gee, J. P. (2005). Semiotic social spaces and affinity spaces: from the Age of Mythology to today's schools. In D. Barton & K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice* (pp. 214–232). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gee, J. P. (2007). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

- Generalitat de Catalunya. (2016). *Estadístiques culturals de Catalunya*. Retrieved from http://dadesculturals.gencat.cat/web/.content/sscc/gt/arxius_gt/Estad-cultural-Catalunya-2016.pdf
- Gillen, J. (2014). *Digital literacies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2015). Contributing, creating, curating: Digital literacies for language learners. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(3), 8–20.
- Hafner, C. A., Chik, A., & Jones, R. H. (2015). Digital literacies and language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(3), 1–7.
- Hine, C. (2015). *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, embodied, and everyday*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Fans, bloggers, and gamers: Exploring participatory culture*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H., Clinton, K., Purushtoma, R., Robinson, A., & Weigel, M. (2009). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. Chicago, IL: The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.
- Jenkins, H., Mizujko, I., & Boyd, D. (2015). *Participatory culture in a networked era: A conversation on youth, learning, commerce, and politics*. Cambridge, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- King, B. W. (2015). Wikipedia writing as praxis: Computer-mediated socialization of second-language writers. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(3), 106–123.
- Kohlbacher, F. (2006). The use of qualitative content analysis in case study research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(1), article 21.
- Koutsogiannis, D., & Mitsikopoulou, B. (2004). The internet as a glocal discourse environment. *Language Learning & Technology*, 8(3), 83–89.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2011). *New literacies: Everyday practices and social learning* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Levy, P. (1997). *Collective intelligence: Mankind's emerging world in cyberspace*. Cambridge, UK: Perseus.
- Li, D. (2015). *Amateur translation and the development of a participatory culture in China? A netnographic study of The Last Fantasy fansubbing group* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.
- Lyons, M. (2007). *Ordinary writings, personal narratives: Writing practices in 19th and early 20th century Europe*. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.
- Markham, A., & Buchanan, E. (2012). *Ethical decision-making and Internet research: Recommendations from the AoIR ethics working committee (version 2.0)*. Retrieved from <http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>
- Marone, V., & Neely, A. D. (2017). Understanding orality through online fanfiction. *Writing & Pedagogy*, 9(1), 197–213. <https://doi.org/10.1558/wap.27007>
- Marying, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2), 1–10.
- Muñoz Sánchez, P. (2007). Romhacking: Localización de videojuegos clásicos en un contexto de aficionados. *Tradumàtica*, (5), article 3. Retrieved from <http://www.raco.cat/index.php/Tradumatica/article/view/75766>
- Muñoz Sánchez, P. (2009). Video game localisation for fans by fans: The case of romhacking. *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, 1, 168–185. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jial.1.07mun>

- O'Hagan, M. (2009). Evolution of user-generated translation: Fansubs, translation hacking and crowdsourcing. *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, 1, 94–121.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/jial.1.04hag>
- Ortabasi, M. (2007). Indexing the past: Visual language and translatability in Kon Satoshi's Millennium Actress. *Perspectives*, 4(4), 278–291.
- Pym, A., Malmkjaer, K., & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, M. D. M. (2013). *Translation and language learning: The role of translation in the teaching of languages in the European Union*. Luxembourg City, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2782/13783>
- Romero, M. E. (2004). Cultural literacy in the world of Pueblo children. In E. Gregory, S. Long, & D. Volk (Eds.), *Many pathways to literacy: Young children learning with siblings, grandparents, peers, and communities* (pp. 208–220). New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.
- Sauro, S. (2017). Online fan practices and CALL. *CALICO Journal*, 34(2), 131–146.
<https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.33077>
- Schreiber, B. R. (2015). “I am what I am”: Multilingual identity and digital translanguaging. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(3), 69–87.
- Strmel, M. (2014). Magical me: Self-insertion fanfiction as literary critique. Scripps Senior Theses, paper 486. Retrieved from http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/486
- Thorne, S. L., & Reinhardt, J. (2008). “Bridging activities,” new media literacies, and advanced foreign language proficiency. *CALICO Journal*, 25(3), 558–572.
- Valero-Porras, M. J., & Cassany, D. (2016). “Translation by fans for fans”: Organization and practices in a Spanish-language community of scanlation. *Textos Universitaris de Biblioteconomia i Documentació*, 37, article 1. <https://doi.org/10.1344/BiD2017.38.17>
- Vazquez-Calvo, B. (2018). The online ecology of literacy and language practices of a gamer. *Educational Technology & Society*, 21(3), 199–212. Retrieved from https://www.j-ets.net/ETS/journals/21_3/18.pdf
- Vazquez-Calvo, B., & Cassany, D. (2017). Aprender lengua con el traductor automático en la escuela secundaria: Un diálogo necesario. *Calidoscòpio*, 15(1), 180–189.
<https://doi.org/10.4013/cld.2017.151.14>
- Zhang, T. L., & Cassany, D. (2016). Fansubbing from Spanish to Chinese: Organization, roles and norms in collaborative writing. *Textos Universitaris de Biblioteconomia i Documentació*, 37, article 4. Retrieved from <http://bid.ub.edu/en/37/tian.htm>

About the Authors

Boris Vazquez-Calvo is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Southern Denmark, Denmark, and the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, developing the project [Gaming as literacy](#).

E-mail: boris@sdu.dk and boris.vazquez.calvo@usc.es

Leticia Tian Zhang is a predoctoral researcher at Pompeu Fabra University, Spain, developing a thesis on danmu, fansubbing, and fandubbing practices among Chinese and Japanese young speakers.

E-mail: leticiantian.zhang@upf.edu

Mariona Pascual is a predoctoral researcher the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, developing a thesis on children at risk of developing writing difficulties.

E-mail: mariona2p@gmail.com

Daniel Cassany is a professor of discourse analysis at Pompeu Fabra University, Spain, currently leading the research projects [ICUDEL](#) and [Fandom in Spain](#).

E-mail: daniel.cassany@upf.edu