

Languaging and Playable Museums: The Case of *Father and Son*

ABSTRACT

The role videogames play in creating new experiences for museum visitors has attracted considerable scholarly attention in the past decades, but the linguistic dimension of «the playable museum» (Viola and Giulierini, 2018) is still a neglected research area. In order to foster debate on the topic from the perspective of Game Linguistics (Ensslin, 2012; Ensslin and Balteiro, 2019a), this paper presents a pilot corpus-assisted case study which explores the language of the original English version of *Father and Son* (TuoMuseo/MANN, 2017), the first videogame in the world published by a museum.

KEYWORDS

Game Linguistics; Game Localization; Playable Museum; Game Tourism; *Father and Son*.

ABSTRACT

Negli ultimi decenni, il ruolo dei videogiochi nella creazione di nuove esperienze per i visitatori dei musei ha attratto una notevole attenzione accademica. Al contrario, la dimensione linguistica del videogioco museale (Viola e Giulierini, 2018) è un'area ancora inesplorata. Al fine di stimolare un dibattito sul tema dalla prospettiva della Linguistica videoludica (Ensslin, 2012; Ensslin e Balteiro, 2019a), l'articolo presenta uno studio di caso pilota di tipo corpus-assisted che indaga la versione originale inglese di *Father and Son* (TuoMuseo/MANN, 2017), il primo videogioco al mondo pubblicato da un museo.

KEYWORDS

Linguistica videoludica; Localizzazione videoludica; Videogioco museale; Turismo videoludico; *Father and Son*.

1. Introduction¹

This paper aims to foster debate on the linguistic dimension of videogames

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¹ The research for this article has been carried out jointly by the two authors: in writing, Silvia Cavalieri has dealt with sections 5, 6, 7; Silvia Pettini has dealt with sections 1, 2, 3, 4.

in tourism, focusing on the language of those interactive experiences which fall into the emerging phenomenon of game tourism, and which are commonly referred to as playable museums (Viola, 2018; Viola and Giulierini, 2018). In particular, this paper presents a pilot corpus-assisted case study which examines the English original version of *Father and Son* (TuoMuseo/MANN, 2017). The reason for selecting this title lies in its representativeness and uniqueness: *Father and Son* is the «first videogame and gamification experience elaborated within a museum context» (Giulierini, 2023: 31), that is the first videogame in the world, released at global level, designed for and produced by a museum, namely the National Archaeological Museum of Naples (MANN hereafter). In the words of the museum's director, Paolo Giulierini, this project also «led the MANN to become Italy's first museum to conceptualize, develop and export a museum videogame» (Giulierini, 2023: 31). As such, *Father and Son* is the first title of its kind to clearly represent an example of playable museums and, by extension, of game tourism, which is meant as a new form of media tourism based on both virtual and real tourist experiences aimed at encouraging players around the world to visit the places where these educational and marketing tools are set (Di Raddo, 2021; Solima, 2018; 2021a; Viola, 2018). Thus, game tourism represents a new form of creative tourism which, like its predecessors, e.g., literary tourism and film tourism, is having significant economic impact on the tourist sector (Viola, 2018). According to Tourism Italia (2021), thousands of people in their thirties tend to spend their holidays in the places connected to their favourite games and this tendency is expected to grow rapidly. For instance, as regards the Italian context, among more than one hundred videogames partially or completely set in Italy (see IVIPRO), *Assassin's Creed 2* (Ubisoft, 2009) clearly shows the influence of games on traditional tourism: in 2010, the year after the game's international launch, the small Tuscan village of Monteriggioni recorded an increase of 7% of visitors and of 16% of overnight stays, and ten years after, in 2016, 11% of visitors explicitly declared they had travelled to Monteriggioni «thanks to the game» (Dresseno and Barresi, 2017).

In this light, it comes as no surprise to learn that game tourism is attracting considerable multidisciplinary academic attention in tourism-related fields, while the more properly linguistic and textual manifestation of the phenomenon represents a neglected research topic. Indeed, no studies have been carried out so far from the perspective of Game Linguistics (Ensslin, 2012; Ensslin and Balteiro, 2019a), the lens through which the most important linguistic features of *Father and Son* will be examined in this paper.

For these purposes, in the framework of the use of gaming and gamification in museums as a tool for audience development, in Section 2 the concepts of game tourism and playable museum are briefly introduced in order to contextualise this paper case study *Father and Son* in Section 3. In Section 4 and 5, the theoretical perspective of Game Linguistics is outlined together with the major aspects of the methodology used to serve as the background to Section

6, which presents the findings of the pilot corpus-assisted analysis of the original English game. Lastly, Section 7 puts forward some preliminary conclusions and new avenues for future research.

2. Videogames and Tourism: Playable Museums

The global outbreak of COVID-19 has affected every vital segment of societies globally, but one of the major challenges has been faced by the travel and tourism industry, which has found in the digital transformation the way to overcome the pandemic, thus acknowledging the importance of technological advancement for its future.

Digital technology is revolutionising tourism since it introduces possibilities to enhance travellers' experience and brings a range of unprecedented interactivity opportunities (Buhalis et al., 2019; Buhalis, 2020; Buhalis and Sinarta, 2019). As regards the latter, one of the most strategically important innovations with strong implications for the tourism industry is gamification (see Bulencea and Egger, 2015). Broadly defined as the use of game design elements and game thinking in a non-traditional gaming context (Deterding et al., 2011), gamification is a persuasive strategy which exploits game features and mechanics (avatars, points, achievements or badges, levels, story, goals, feedback, rewards, etc.) to create a connection with users, like employees and customers, and to enhance their behaviour. In tourism, indeed, as Xu, Weber and Buhalis explain (2014), gamification can be applied in two major ways: first, in human resources, training, and productivity enhancement and, secondly, for marketing, sales, and customer engagement. As concerns the second function, gamification involves travellers and visitors around the world in interactive experiences, it encourages their participation, it generates or increases brand awareness, and it contributes to higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty for tourism stakeholders, destinations, and hospitality organisations (Xu, Buhalis and Weber, 2017). In this sense, gamification has long permeated tourism: ludic and game-like elements like loyalty cards, stamp books and reward memberships represent early forms of gamified marketing and branding.

Game-related tourism is a clear illustration of the potential of gamification for marketing and customer engagement purposes, meaning both the simple incorporation of game features and mechanics into traditional tourism activities and, more relevantly here, the design of proper game-based experiences to attract new visitors and enhance their immersion. Today it also represents an emerging form of media-induced tourism (see Berardone, 2017; 2021; Dubois and Gibbs, 2018). In more detail, «videogame-induced tourism» is tourism induced by a videogame which represents, describes, or is set in a real place and which induces players to visit the existing place they have already explored in the virtual game world (Berardone, 2017: 27).

As concerns museums, the role digital technologies play in creating new

experiences for museum visitors has attracted considerable scholarly attention in the past decades (see, among others, Bertacchini and Morando, 2013; Bonacini and Giaccone, 2022; King, Stark and Cooke, 2016; Müller, 2002; Solima, 2017, 2018; Viola and Cassone, 2017). In particular, videogames are often considered to be tools that change the relationship between museums and visitors, because they generate an immersive context of informal learning, especially for young visitors, which is further enhanced by games' essential feature, i.e., interactivity (Hammady, Ma, and Temple, 2016; Rowe et al., 2017; Yannoutsou and Avouris, 2012; Yannoutsou et al., 2009; Xu and Buhalis, 2021). As regards Italian museums, many gamified experiences have been developed and, as a consequence, investigated as manifestations of the digital transformation of the cultural industry (see Di Raddo, 2021; Solima, 2021a; 2021b). Gamification is thus one of the most important facets of the influence of the digital revolution on museums, it represents a significant managerial innovation that exploits the possibilities offered by these media to go beyond the mere digital transformation of experiences normally enjoyed in a traditional and non-digital format, including, for instance, the simple design of the museum's website and social media profiles. As Solima (2021b) explains, these initiatives considerably increased thanks to the important reform affecting Italian national museums in 2014, which meant greater decision-making power for museum directors, who have been allowed to autonomously manage their financial resources since then, thus opening up new possibilities to experiment with original ideas and to carry out new projects.

According to Solima (2021b), a prime example of this change in museum management is the project launched by the National Archaeological Museum of Naples in 2017, namely *Father and Son*, which represents the focus of this paper, and whose features will be described more in-depth in Section 3. However, it seems worth mentioning here that this project was conceived within the framework of the MANN's Strategic Plan 2016-2019 (Solima, 2021b), which, to outline the museum's mission and objectives, placed great emphasis on accessibility as a key value and strategy to remove physical, economic, cognitive, and digital barriers and to finally make the museum experience accessible and enjoyable to all audiences, regardless of factors like nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, language, etc.

In this sense, playable museums contribute to prove that digital technology does not necessarily drive people away from real tourist sites, or create isolated experiences, but it can lead people to visit real places and, thus, it represents a powerful tool to promote traditional tourism. Accordingly, playable museums serve as a tool exploiting the playful qualities of games to enhance the relationship with the audience by making the museum experience more enjoyable and engaging thanks to interactivity (Solima, 2018). They are educational and marketing tools aimed at attracting new visitors to the museum by bridging the gap between the digital and the physical museum experience (Viola, 2018; Viola and Giulierini, 2018). They exemplify the use of a new language to ex-

tend the spatial and temporal boundaries of the interaction between the museum and its audience (Izzo, 2017; Solima, 2021a).

Another interesting insight into the concept is that of Florence's Marino Marini Museum which features a «playable museum award», whose meaningful slogan is «re-create the future museum». As of January 2024, about 100 projects of playable museums have been developed, as listed on the museum's website (Museomarinomarini.it/playable). According to Viola (2023), the project coordinator, «the museum of the future» is «a participatory platform where the individual is placed with his emotions and dreams at the centre of the experience, through an engaging and human use of technology», it is «a place of action and interaction, an active hub of cultural production» which establishes a new relationship with visitors and creates «new models of use for [the museum's] spaces and collections».

3. *Father and Son*

Father and Son is a single-player adventure game which was developed by the international collective of artists named TuoMuseo (Tuomuseo.it) and published by the National Archaeological Museum of Naples in 2017 (see MANN, 2017). It was released as a free downloadable app for Apple and Android operating systems at global level. As regards reception, according to the data shown in Giulierini (2023: 35), as of 2022, *Father and Son* recorded 4.8 million downloads, with 55% of players over the age of 35, and it reached countries like China (38% of downloads), India, the USA, Russia, and Indonesia. Moreover, the game received almost 41 thousand reviews with an average rating of 4.5 (out of 5), it was the topic of more than 700 world newspaper articles and, more importantly, it led more than 40,000 people to visit the MANN since its release. These data clearly show that game tourism can attract visitors from all over the world thanks to engaging narratives which «take the museum out of the museum» and amplify dialogue and interaction between museums and visitors beyond the physical space of the cultural site and beyond the time of the traditional interaction, thus, not only during the visit, but also before and after the visit (Solima, 2021b).

The project was launched in order to achieve the MANN's «goal of maximum museum accessibility for its various audiences» and to «experiment with a new expressive form of digital communication» (Solima, 2021a: 52). According to the museum's director Paolo Giulierini, *Father and Son* represents «a new tool for the cultural and touristic enhancement of the MANN's great collections, as well as for the history of Naples and its artistic heritage and development» (2023: 34).

As the game's website (Fatherandsongame.com) and the game's description on the Apple Store and Google Play platforms emphasise for promotional purposes, *Father and Son* is about «your memories, your choices: your life». In

more detail, as the title suggests, the game tells the story of a son, Michael, the playable protagonist, and his father Federico, who was an archaeologist at the MANN. In a narrative-driven gameplay, as Caramel (2021: 168) and Giulierini (2023: 31) explain, after Federico's death, Michael goes to Naples to fulfil his father's last wish and give him the last farewell. It's a «very human, personal journey», that is «the story of a son who lost his father and who is re-tracing his roots» by «exploring an alien yet family-related city» (Giulierini, 2023: 33). However, «what begins as a story of a son that never knew his father becomes a universal and timeless story where the present and the past are the set of meaningful choices» (Fatherandsongame.com).

It is exactly the relationship between, and the alternation of, the present and the past to represent the key feature of the game's narrative and of the gameplay mechanic. In the past, players immerse themselves in different historical eras, from ancient Egypt to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD, or to the Bourbon Kingdom of Naples. In the present, players explore the museum's halls and the beauties of Naples in the many real settings scattered around the city. Examples include iconic places like Piazza del Plebiscito, which is also the setting of the game's happy ending, and Via dei Tribunali, rich in and famous for its street food joints, which is the street linking Michael's house to the MANN. As concerns the game's graphic design, *Father and Son* «is characterized by a horizontal scrolling orientation», and it was «hand-drawn by artist Sean Wenham – who reconstructed three kilometres of Neapolitan streets based on hundreds of photos taken in situ, as well as interior views from the MANN itself» (Giulierini, 2023: 31). Consequently, given the global distribution of the game, *Father and Son* presents «touristic and ambassadorial» intent which offers a gamified experience of both the city and the museum: Naples is «also sponsored from a touristic and cultural perspective», the museum «has been fully and digitally reconstructed» and the national cultural heritage it hosts is provided with «a further digital, cultural testament» (Giulierini, 2023: 31).

Moreover, in line with the aims of playable tourism, the essential feature of this game is that «players must physically go to the museum», and thus they must travel to Naples, in order to get additional content and fully enjoy the experience (Giulierini, 2023: 33). In other words, the game «can be completed only if and when visiting the MANN», meaning that «the last level unlocks only while entering the museum – thus encouraging users, mainly international visitors and millennials, to visit the institute as both «gamers» and «visitors»» (Giulierini, 2023: 33).

As concerns localization, *Father and Son* was translated from English into eight languages including the so-called FIGS (French, Italian, German, and Spanish) plus Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, and also Neapolitan, Naples' local language. Indeed, when the playable protagonist «walks around Naples, he can interact with people from the streets – who embody different aspects of our society and culture» and, since players «can also opt for the local language»,

Father and Son re-creates «a fully experiential immersion in the culture of our context and city» (Giulierini, 2023: 33).

In terms of size, as one might expect based on the game's playtime (about one hour), especially if compared to mainstream videogames, *Father and Son* is a small localization project: its English database contains about 15,000 words in roughly 1,500 text strings, of which 99% are dialogues, the text type examined in this paper. *Father and Son's* dialogues are not voiced over, the game audio is limited to the original soundtrack by Polish musician Arkadiusz Reikowski, and verbal exchanges between the playable protagonist and non-playable characters are written text lines displayed in speech balloons.

4. Game Linguistics

Game Linguistics is a young «subarea of media linguistics, performed by linguists and media and communication [...] scholars from around the world, in and about multiple languages» (Ensslin and Balteiro, 2019b: 1). It aims at examining videogames as «medium-specific objects and tools of language studies and discourse analysis» (Ensslin and Balteiro, 2019b: 1), as «means and objects of communication; how they give rise to new vocabularies, meanings, textual genres, and discourse practices» (Ensslin and Balteiro, 2019b: 2).

The language and discourse of games and gaming, as seminally explored by Ensslin (2012), is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, which involves several layers of communicative interaction, multiple types of social actors, and different media and communication platforms (Ensslin and Balteiro, 2019b: 2). It embraces, for example, the ways in which games and game professionals communicate meanings to players, and the ways in which players and other stakeholders communicate and negotiate meanings by engaging in debates about games and gaming in many contexts. As Ensslin explains (2012: 6), the language and discourse of games and gaming may involve, among others: gamers across different media and communication platforms, for instance, via social networking sites, online discussion fora and in-game chats; the game industry's professionals, such as developers and publishers; critics, journalists, politicians, educators, parents, activists and other media stakeholders who, with different purposes and in different settings, generate and participate in discussions about games and gaming.

More relevantly for this research, the language and discourse of games and gaming include the language belonging to the game itself, the language used within games as part of their textual world, i.e., in-game texts, and encoded into a variety of text types, such as user interfaces, scripted dialogues, tutorials, instructions, system messages, etc. Furthermore, given the variety of products falling into the category of videogames, in terms of genre, subgenre, theme, age rating, platform, etc., special attention should be paid to the languages of videogames in the plural, since each individual videogame may speak its own

language or one specific language in particular. In other words, «it is the experience players are offered in a game world what deeply influences the language used in-game» (Pettini, 2022a: 400).

In this study, the focus is on in-game language, an aspect that has remained largely unexplored. The reasons for the small quantity of works examining language within videogames lie in the difficulty in accessing authentic game texts. As pointed out by Pettini (2022b: 11), most game developers and publishers are unwilling or unable to provide scholars with access to game texts, which are necessary in Language Studies. «This means that researchers must resort to other very time-consuming, and somehow limited activities to study videogames» (Pettini, 2022b: 11), because of the difficulties introduced in language analysis by the interactive nature of these products and the consequent non-linearity of in-game texts (Pettini, 2022b: 44). Game texts are non-linear to give players authorial agency in the storytelling process, that is to say, to allow the game engine to customize players' experience through interactivity.

However, as Ensslin observes, although games are procedural and interactive media which must be played rather than simply read, watched, or listened to, «they are nevertheless textual in nature» (2015: 407). Games are multimedia and multitextual creations belonging to a complex entertainment product whose interactivity allows players to influence the textual world they are playing in (Bernal-Merino, 2015: 108).

The nature of videogames as texts is thus extremely composite. Although the description of their multitextual features is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth highlighting that a first major distinction must be made between diegetic and non-diegetic elements in relation to the game world, or between in-game or on-screen texts and paratext (promotional material, box cover, manual, etc.). Secondly, within these two broad categories, text types vary depending on their function and, consequently, present different characteristics (see Pettini, 2022b: 47-51).

Given the story-driven nature of *Father and Son*, as already mentioned, the text type this study concentrates on is in-game dialogue, i.e. dialogue strings which are uttered by both playable and non-playable game characters during both interactive and non-interactive sequences. Dialogue is «narrative» and «oral/dialogic» text, and represents the major linguistic device used by game developers for the purposes of narrative development (Pettini, 2022b: 50).

5. Data and methodology

The investigation of the present study is based on the Excel database spreadsheet of *Father and Son* the researchers were provided with by TuoMuseo, as described in Section 3. The dataset was then transformed into a txt file (15,000 words, roughly) that could be processed via the corpus linguistics analytical tools of the software SketchEngine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004). Its algorithms allow

examining actual texts to rapidly determine what is common in language and what the typical linguistic structures of a textual genre are.

The methodology adopted relied on corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington, 2004) and the database was investigated both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to see how places and the museal experience are characterised in the game (Dann, 1996; Durán-Muñoz, 2019).

The first step consisted of the creation of a wordlist of all the words in the dataset and the extraction of the most frequent nouns related to places and to the museal experience in the first 100 hits of the list. Only the nouns with at least a frequency of >10 were shortlisted for the following qualitative analysis.

After that, the second step was to have a closer look at the collocational pattern of the extracted nouns in terms of their qualification, thus analysing the adjectives that are associated with them. To do so, the CQL option search in SketchEngine was used. The CQL is a special code or query language that enables users to search for complex grammatical or lexical patterns specifically by creating search strings that contain specific values.

Since the interest was in adjectives and nouns, the following CQL queries were created: 1) [tag="J*"] [lemma="museum"²]; and, 2) [lemma="museum"] [lemma="be"] [tag="J*"]. These search strings allowed identifying all the concordances in which nouns are pre-modified (first string above) or post-modified (second string above) by adjectives. All the extracted concordance lines after this procedure were then scrutinised manually.

In the next section, the results of the linguistic analysis will be detailed.

6. Analysis of a Collocational Pattern in *Father and Son*

As mentioned in the Introduction, this paper presents a corpus-assisted pilot case study which aims to explore the linguistic features of *Father and Son*. For this purpose, in this section, in-game dialogues will be examined to observe the language used in the original English version. In other words, the analysis aims to investigate the strategies used to language this gamified museum experience from the perspective of Game Linguistics, as discussed in Section 4.

Starting with the quantitative overview of nouns in the dataset, the following figure shows the results obtained using SketchEngine with the parameters defined in the methodology section.

² The noun 'museum' in its lemma form is an example and can be substituted by all the other nouns of the wordlist for the purpose of the analysis.

WORDLIST Father&son

noun (481 items | 2,236 total frequency)

Noun	Frequency	Noun	Frequency	Noun	Frequency	Noun	Frequency	Noun	Frequency
1 man	79	11 lucius	27	21 mind	22	31 ticket	16	41 memory	11
2 time	78	12 beauty	27	22 today	21	32 thanks	15	42 michael	11
3 father	77	13 naples	26	23 money	21	33 coffee	15	43 look	10
4 museum	68	14 life	26	24 smile	20	34 goodbye	14	44 everyone	10
5 work	46	15 wife	23	25 thing	20	35 leg	13	45 federico	10
6 day	42	16 world	23	26 everything	17	36 anything	13	46 hercules	10
7 people	39	17 something	23	27 exhibit	17	37 face	13	47 friend	10
8 way	37	18 moment	23	28 eye	17	38 place	12	48 heart	10
9 love	34	19 city	22	29 lot	17	39 i	12	49 girl	10
10 maxima	32	20 legacy	22	30 art	17	40 pleasure	12	50 hand	9

Figure 1 – Noun Wordlist Extracted via SketchEngine.

Having a closer look at the wordlist, it is interesting to notice that the first three hits seem to mirror the main characters, and the extended temporal dimension proposed by the developers in the description of the videogame on the homepage of *Father and Son's* website (Fatherandsongame.com):

What begins as a *story* of a *son* that never knew his *father*, becomes a universal and *timeless story* where *the present and the past* are a set of meaningful choices.

These themes are reflected in the use of nouns throughout the whole game, and this relation can be observed with the most frequent key nouns in the wordlist, i.e. man (79 occurrences) that can be a reference both to «son» and «father»; time (78 occurrences) that can be representative of «present» and «past»; and «father» (77 occurrences) that is a key figure around whom the story revolves.

As for the representation of places and of the museal experience, the analysis focused on the nouns related to those categories, e.g., Naples, city, place, museum, work (of art), art, exhibit, etc., in the wordlist as shown in Figure 2.

WORDLIST Father&son

noun (461 items | 2,239 total frequency)

Noun	Frequency ↑ ↓	Noun	Frequency ↑ ↓	Noun	Frequency ↑ ↓	Noun	Frequency ↑ ↓	Noun	Frequency ↑ ↓
1 man	79 ...	11 lucius	27 ...	21 mind	22 ...	31 bucket	16 ...	41 memory	11 ...
2 time	78 ...	12 beauty	27 ...	22 today	21 ...	32 thanks	15 ...	42 michael	11 ...
3 father	77 ...	13 naples	26 ...	23 money	21 ...	33 coffee	15 ...	43 look	10 ...
4 museum	88 ...	14 life	26 ...	24 smile	20 ...	34 goodbye	14 ...	44 everyone	10 ...
5 work	46 ...	15 wife	23 ...	25 thing	20 ...	35 leg	13 ...	45 federico	10 ...
6 day	42 ...	16 world	23 ...	26 everything	17 ...	36 anything	13 ...	46 hercules	10 ...
7 people	39 ...	17 something	23 ...	27 exhibit	17 ...	37 face	13 ...	47 friend	10 ...
8 way	37 ...	18 moment	23 ...	28 eye	17 ...	38 place	12 ...	48 heart	10 ...
9 love	34 ...	19 city	22 ...	29 lot	17 ...	39 i	12 ...	49 girl	10 ...
10 maxima	32 ...	20 legacy	22 ...	30 art	17 ...	40 pleasure	12 ...	50 hand	9 ...

Figure 2 – Nouns Related to Places and to the Museal Experience.

Starting from the highlighted items, the investigation then considered how those places/museum-related expressions are qualified, and their collocational pattern with adjectives was analysed.

The most frequent noun «museum» tends to collocate with the qualifying adjective ‘beautiful’ that gives a positive connotation to the place by enticing the player to physically visit the museum. Example (1) shows the pattern and its occurrence in a dialogue line uttered by Michael, the protagonist, and thus by the player:

Ex. (1): [tag=”J*”][lemma=”museum”] BEAUTIFUL

Player: Thank you kindly. This is a *beautiful* museum.

If the word «museum» seems connoted in a very simple way by mostly a single qualifying adjectival form, the noun «city» presents a more varied collocational pattern that seems to progress incrementally in the level of positive qualification, as is observable in Example (2) and in the two dialogue lines which follow:

Ex. (2): [tag=”J*”][lemma=”city”] BEAUTIFUL, WONDERFUL, INSPIRING, STUNNING

Player: Two strangers in one of the *awe-inspiring* cities in the world meet by complete coincidence.

Player: Naples is a *wonderful* city, I was never expecting to fall for it the way that I have; even just walking around in the evening, taking in the smells of the street food, the colours and beauty of the buildings.

Proceeding with the analysis of the most frequent nouns, it is interesting to notice that unlike «museum», which is generically connoted as «beautiful»,

the noun «exhibit» has a more intellectually related qualification, as shown in Example (3). This adjectival use could stimulate the gamer's curiosity by making him or her a prospective museum tourist.

Ex. (3): [tag="J*"] [lemma="exhibit"] INSPIRING

Player: I'm not sure, really... They were all *pretty awe-inspiring*, especially the *Ancient Egyptian exhibit*.

Reference to «art» is very prominent within the entire videogame and is found both in the parts referring to the present time and in those developed in other historical eras. The linguistic choice of how this noun is qualified by adjectives follows hand in hand with the diachronic variation of the game as evidenced by the Example (4), in which «art» is defined, on the one hand, with the old-fashioned and formal adjective «exquisite» in a line uttered by the character Bourbon Wife; on the other hand, in the more recent context, the player qualifies «art» using the more informal and up-to-date adjective «stunning».

Ex. (4): [tag="J*"] [lemma="art"] EXQUISITE, STUNNING

Bourbon Wife: We are surrounded by pieces of *exquisite art*.

Player: We are surrounded by *stunning art*, but I am in front of a true thing of beauty.

When the proper name of the city «Naples» is introduced within the game, the dimension of enchantment (Dann 1996) comes into play. The name of the city is associated to «place» and is described as «magical», a place where everything can happen, as in the line uttered by a street food vendor shown in Example (5):

Ex. (5): [tag="J*"] [lemma="place"] MAGICAL

FoodVendor: Naples is a *magical place*, anything is possible. (He reaches out to hug you) Goodbye my friend.

In the next section, some preliminary conclusions will be drawn.

7. Conclusions

The exploration of playable museums in the context of game tourism and the role of language in contributing to the fun factor of these interactive experiences presents an intriguing avenue for research. The preliminary findings of this study, emphasising the significance of keywords in reflecting extralinguistic concepts and values within narrative-driven game experiences, offer a promising foundation for further investigation.

Since the pilot nature of the study implies a smaller sample size, a larger and more diverse dataset could be necessary to draw more robust conclusions applicable to a broader context. For example, playable museums and their linguistic characteristics may vary significantly across different regions or cultural settings, impacting the external validity of the findings.

For these reasons, further research is needed to get a more in-depth perspective on the role of language in game tourism. Future research will thus include the investigation of linguistic and translational features of relevant and special categories such as culture-specific references, as these elements can provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of language on game tourism. For instance, specifically dealing with *Father and Son*, it would be interesting to focus on Neapolitan as a specific linguistic dimension, exploring regional or cultural linguistic variations within the context of game tourism. This could shed light on how language diversity influences and characterises the gaming experience.

Secondly, a case study on the sequel of the game, i.e., *Father and Son 2* (see Viola, 2022), will be carried out to extend this paper research and compare findings also in the light of the female playable protagonist of this second chapter from a gender-critical perspective. Analysing the game's dialogue, cultural references, and translation choices can provide further valuable data for understanding the linguistic and translational dimensions of contemporary non-mainstream gaming.

Finally, from a practical point of view, collaborating with game developers may help gain deeper insights into the intentional use of language in creating enjoyable gaming experiences. This collaboration can provide access to behind-the-scenes information on narrative design, linguistic choices, and translational challenges faced during the development process.

In conclusion, addressing these limitations and pursuing further research in the suggested directions can contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the linguistic and translational aspects of game tourism.

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