Entrevista com Julian Quijano, criador do jogo
Monster Prom

Interview with Julian Quijano, Creator of Game Monster Prom

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Abstract: We report on an interview with Julian Quijano, founder of Beautiful Glitch. This is an independent developer which produced *Monster Prom*, an English-language visual novel released in April 2018 and available on Steam. The interview, kindly provided by email in June 2019, addresses the company, the game development, and Julian Quijano's opinion of game localization. The goal was to learn a little more about the videogame market, moving away from the traditional approach to big companies. The interview was conducted in English and translated into Portuguese to be reported in a bilingual English-Portuguese version as a means to reach a wider audience.
Keywords: Indie developer. Videogame. Localization. Interview.

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Resumo: *Apresentamos uma entrevista com Julian Quijano, fundador da Beautiful Glitch. Trata-se de uma desenvolvedora independente que produziu* Monster Prom*, uma* visual novel *ocidental lançada em abril de 2018 e disponível na plataforma Steam. A entrevista, concedida gentilmente por e-mail em junho de 2019, aborda questões sobre a empresa, o desenvolvimento do jogo e a opinião de Julian Quijano em relação à localização de videogames. Nosso objetivo foi conhecer um pouco mais do mercado de videogames, fugindo da tradicional abordagem às grandes empresas. A entrevista foi realizada em língua inglesa, mas optamos aqui por traduzi-la e apresentá-la em versão bilíngue inglês-português a fim de atingir um público mais amplo.*
Palavras-chave: *Desenvolvedor independente. Videogame. Localização. Entrevista.*

T he act of playing is common among livings beings (HUIZINGA, 2000). Animals can play as much as humans, like kittens do when they playfully hunt for objects. Animal play has rules like those of humans – for example, light bites are perceived as acts of play, rather than attacks.

The human being has been developing various genres of games over the centuries. Simple plays have been transformed into card games, board games and strategy games, among many others, all built on predefined rules. But it is in its encounter with technology that games may have had their greatest changes in their form of development.

Today, one of the key features in the game-player relationship is immersion. The need to clear a level, beat the enemy, or know how the plot will develop pushes many individuals to spend hours in front of a device.

At first, games were basically based on intuition and simple commands – counting on the player's intuition was a safe option because gameplay was basically self-explanatory. However, with the technological improvements, games have migrated to computers and machines. In fact, electronic games have continued to evolve and adapt to new technologies and to the need to survive in a fast-growing industry that is quickly able to make any product obsolete and outdated.

From this perspective, the very use of language in complex narratives anchored in multimodality has become a striking element of today's electronic games and capable of exerting great influence on immersion. As such, as much as the English language is considered a global language, several people do not understand it so well, are completely unaware of it or even prefer to have experiences in their native language. Such a market share may have a major influence on revenues, which explains why localization has been expanding.
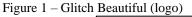
No one needs thorough knowledge of videogames to have heard of big companies like Nintendo or Sony, which invest large amounts in localizing much of their products. However, several independent companies, commonly called indies, also publish and market games, especially on online platforms such as Steam (https://store.steampowered.com). Some famous titles found on this platform include Don't Starve, Life Is Strange, and Limbo. In some cases, localization is not even an immediate concern, as this is a long, expensive stage that needs to be assessed in light of its potential return on investment.

We report on an interview with Julian Quijano, founder of Beautiful Glitch. This is an independent developer that has produced a single videogame to date, Monster Prom. This is a

visual novel released in April 2018 and available on Steam. The game has been published in English only, even though the developers are Spanish.
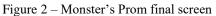
One of the authors investigated this game in her senior thesis. She sought to reflect on the translation of adjectives and nouns from English into Portuguese, with the concern of neutralizing male/female gender variation in Portuguese (RADIN, 2019). Figures 1 and 2 show, respectively, the company logo and the final game screen.

The following interview was kindly provided by email in June 2019. It consists of questions about the company, game development, and Julian Quijano's opinion of game localization. Our goal was to learn a little more about the videogame market, moving away from the traditional approach to big companies. The interview was conducted in English, but we chose to translate it and present it in a bilingual English-Portuguese version as a means to reach a wider audience. We also opted to match Mrs. Quijano's informal tone in our translation.

Figure 1 – Glitch Beautiful (logo)

Source: screen shot from https://www.indiedb.com/company/beautiful-glitch/images/beautiful-animacion-2#imagebox. Access on: 2 mar. 2020.

Figure 2 – Monster's Prom final screen

Source: steamcommunity.com. Acesso em: 2 mar. 2020.

Could you please provide your background (e.g., age, education, career, games interests)?

Julian Quijano: 29. I have a degree on advertising and PR. I am the founder, creative director and project manager at Beautiful Glitch SLU. Then, I play indie games of all kinds. But I like thrilling indie games with frenetic pace (Nuclear Throne or Hotline Miami would be great examples).

Please describe your company in terms of size, goals, mission, vision, number of employees, and departments.

Julian Quijano: I guess it's a small company (normally I define size by number of employees). We make indie videogames. We now want to focus on making games around some key aspects we seem to control, such as narrative, characters, multiplayer or humor. Our vision is to become a referent on narrative-driven games. Like our reference there would be TellTale Games (in how they were recognized everywhere as THE developer of narrative games). The core team for Monster Prom was five people. Now we're more. Most people work as freelancers, given the nature of the projects.

How did you create your company and what arouse your interest in creating it?

Julian Quijano: I always wanted to make my own thing, since long ago. It just happened that I saved money from other jobs to a point in which I was capable of starting my own thing and try my luck. I saved specifically $10,000. I went into videogames because my last job before that was doing my thing (PR and communication) at an indie videogame company (also my only job in videogames), so for 9 months I gathered info on how such a company works. But I just love systems, which is said in most MBAs to be key for business management. I just love doing my own thing and managing creative projects. It ended up being videogames, but it could have been a restaurant or starting a magazine. I have many interests, and videogames is just one. Maybe with other stuff I would not have been this successful, but I would lie if I said this was meant to happen since the start. I just love creating stuff. You could tell me I would be managing a publishing house 10 years from now and I will be OK with it, most likely. So I just had the hunger for entrepreneurship since almost always... and then it happened that I had the (little) experience in the videogame sector, plus, some money saved. As simple as that!

What was the process of creation and development of the first game (Monster Prom) like? Has there been any change to the process for the games that followed?

Julian Quijano: There's no "games that followed" yet! The process on Monster Prom, I think, has been described many times. I will skip this one. I advise to check this then: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9EK3sd860g

[On the video, Julian Quirino tells about his passion for narrative games and narratives in general. He also says that the goal was to create a multiplayer dating simulator since the very beginning; the only thing that was in fact decided afterwards was the concept. In this case, the concept is a dating simulator based on a school of monsters in which every character is a different monster.]

How was the game development team hired to or engaged in the first game development? Has there been any change to the team or the hiring/engagement process afterwards?

Julian Quijano: I advise to check this then: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9EK3sd860g

[On the video, Julian tells that the team was composed of four members, and then five. The artists which worked on the visuals of the game were contacted because of another product made by Julian. He worked on a book called Indie G Zine, which is basically an "encyclopedia for indie game lovers" where one can find everything about indie games. Through Indie G Zine, he got the contacts from some of the artists who worked on other videogames.

How long did it take for the first game conception, for its development, and for its release? What is the average length of each stage? Is there any other stage you use in your company?

Julian Quijano: Conception (pre-production) was around some months long. It was like forming the idea and getting myself ready to go into that + getting the right team. Development was like... around 2 years – from early 2016 to early 2018. What a ride! It is our goal to improve these times and make a game in around a year from now on. Fingers crossed!

Who tested the first game and how was it tested? Has there been any changes to the test process?

Julian Quijano: We used KS [Kickstarter] backers and fans to test the game through some polls we prepared. I remember it being simple yet super interesting. Results were super good, and it was thrilling to see people falling in love with our chars for the first time!

Did you have any target audience in mind when you conceived of the first game? What is the usual target audience of your games? Did you have or do you have any country, nationality or locale in mind?

Julian Quijano: Yeah, we were targeting youngsters (18-35 years old) in English-speaking countries. We were almost right, and audience ended up being (on average) younger than that (I'd said 16-26y old). It is very balanced, gender-wise, and we're super happy about that!

Beautiful Glitch is a Spanish company. Was the first game originally written and/or developed in English or Spanish? Was localization considered from the very beginning? If so, how did it impact the writing and/or development process? Has there been any changes to the writing or localization process?

Julian Quijano: It was written in English. Localization was not considered. We need to refine our production (not the writing) for localization in the future, namely how we organize writing and specially art assets, for them to be ready from the start for localization.

What criterion or criteria did you use to make up or hire the team in charge for the narrative creation of the first game? Has there been any change to the team or the criteria?

Julian Quijano: This is kinda covered in the video I attached.

[On the video, he mentions that the narratives are written as if they were television shows, letting the player engaged and willing to see more. He emphasizes the importance of humor in these stories. He writes most of these narratives, but also gives instructions and works with his co-worker on these narratives.]

Do you intend to develop other games in the graphic novel format? Why did you choose this format?

Julian Quijano: Yeah, we will focus a lot in that format, even if playing around with other genres (as we did by adding stuff from party games on MonProm). I chose this genre for many

reasons, but mainly because I love writing and narrative-based projects, plus, the genre is easier on production than other genres, so it looked like a great first project for me.

Do you intend to localize all games or what kind of games? If so, from what language(s) to what language(s)? Do you have an in-house localization team, or do you outsource the process to any language/translation/localization agency?

Julian Quijano: We outsource. I don't have a specific intention. Localization is useful and good; but it takes work and money, specially for games like ours. Average rate for translating the game is around $30,000-$40,0000. So I don't know if I'm doing that. We're preparing Chinese for Monster Prom, and it has been quite complex, requiring us to do changes and delaying it A LOT (more than 1 year). So after so much work, we really need to assess if it's a good idea in the future, based on performance.

When it comes to localizing/translating a game of yours, what are the requisites to work in or for the Beautiful Glitch team?

Julian Quijano: Not sure at all, other than being a professional/company with verifiable experience on narrative-based games, preferably with humor.

In your opinion, what are the most relevant competences in a translator? Do you believe the translation has to be source text-oriented at the cost of playability, or should it be the other way round? Is it important or even mandatory that a translator has computer/programming skills? Is it important or even mandatory that a translator be himself a gamer? What should/must be the translator background or previous experiences?

Julian Quijano: I don't think it is necessary that the translator knows anything about games or technology as long as they know how to operate the software we use, which is basically Google Sheets. I prefer them to be knowing of pop culture and fiction of any kind, specially humor. We need people to understand the tone of what they're translating.

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