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## *Localizing Elden Ring*

The Words of The Lands Between

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REVIEW  
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# ELDEN RING™



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BY ALEXIS ANDRES BIRO AND CAMERON RASMUSSEN

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# *Localizing Elden Ring*

## The Words of The Lands Between

**E**lden Ring is a massive game. So it's no surprise that the task of localizing it for a worldwide audience was an equally massive undertaking.

Highly anticipated from its announcement in 2019, From Software's *Elden Ring* is the culmination of the game-design philosophy the studio charted since the release of *Demon's Souls* in 2009. It implements gameplay mechanics from almost every preceding title while introducing an open world that players can explore with few limitations.

“For a game of this magnitude to succeed, localization, culturalization, and transcreation *are a must.*”

Known as The Lands Between, *Elden Ring*'s vast landscapes, cities, castles, and palaces pave new ground for the so-called *Souls*-like subgenre of action role-playing games (RPGs). It also sets new expectations for all open-world games to come. With 13.4 million copies sold just a month after release and critical and audience acclaim following in its wake, it's a safe assumption that game developers will be taking lessons from *Elden Ring* for years to come.

For a game of this magnitude to succeed, localization, culturalization, and transcreation are a must. With the world's lore and characters written by famed fantasy author George R. R. Martin of *A Song of Ice and Fire* fame, the localization undertaking was massive — and a task not approached lightly. This review focuses specifically on the Latin-American Spanish localization, but in addition to that and Brazilian Portuguese, *Elden Ring* has been localized into 14 languages, including Thai, Korean, most major European languages, and two variations of Chinese.

Before jumping into some of the more interesting localization decisions and challenges on the Latin-American Spanish version, however, let's examine just what about *Elden Ring* makes it so popular.

### A promise fulfilled

With the release of *Demon's Souls* in 2009, developer studio From Software birthed the promise of a new kind of role-playing game: one that would push players to their limits but reward their persistence. *Souls* games — and the many other titles they inspired — are known for presenting players with punishing enemies, devious level design, intense boss fights, and esoteric lore that fans must piece together through contextual clues, non-player-character (NPC) dialogue, and item descriptions. But the exhilaration of defeating a tough boss or conquering a punishing challenge is second to none in video games.

While much has been written about the difficulty of *Demon's Souls*, *Dark Souls 1-3*, *Bloodborne*, *Sekiro*, and *Elden Ring*, it's important to note that the games are not about domination, but rather persistence. Players will die — probably quite often — but each death comes with a lesson. Patient players will gradually learn where to watch out for ambushes and traps, learn enemy attack patterns, master their dodging and blocking abilities, and ready themselves for greater challenges through improving their character's attributes and finding better equipment.

Thus, From Software's promise might be interpreted this way: *There will be challenges, there will be pain; but stick with us, and we'll deliver a rewarding experience unlike any other.* And in that respect, From Software's games and particularly *Elden Ring* excel above most of their peers.



Watch Alexis discuss some of *Elden Ring*'s localization choices while playing the game.





The depths of emotion that *Elden Ring* evokes can only be experienced for oneself. Along their journey, players will feel loneliness, wonder, awe, profound frustration at yet another death, and pure exhilaration at finally overcoming the odds. There's also a deep tension inherent in the game design. Upon death, players revive at the last checkpoint they've visited, known in *Elden Ring* as Sites of Grace, and all enemies respawn. That means players have to fight through the same foes they'd dispatched before their death, and what's more, they lose all their runes — the resource used to level up their character and buy equipment or spells.

But that punishment also comes with a degree of mercy. Players can recover their lost runes by reaching the spot where they previously died. Die a second time before touching the death marker, and the runes are gone for good. Fortunately, From Software's clever level design is replete with shortcuts, secrets, and alternate paths to shorten the journey to the next Site of Grace or boss.

In that sense, *Elden Ring* is truly the ultimate fulfillment of the From Software promise. It adapts the *Souls* formula on a grander scale than any other game to date, and it gives players an unparalleled level of freedom to pursue whatever path

through The Lands Between they choose. There is no hand-holding in *Elden Ring*. Minutes after creating a character, players step into a vast world with no direction other than golden light rays they can follow or not follow as they please.

With so much to see and discover, potentially hundreds of hours of gameplay, and a storytelling approach known for its subtlety and mystery, one might assume that localizing *Elden Ring* was no small feat. And they'd be right. A closer look at the process of localizing the Latin-American Spanish version of the game reveals some fascinating details about the process.

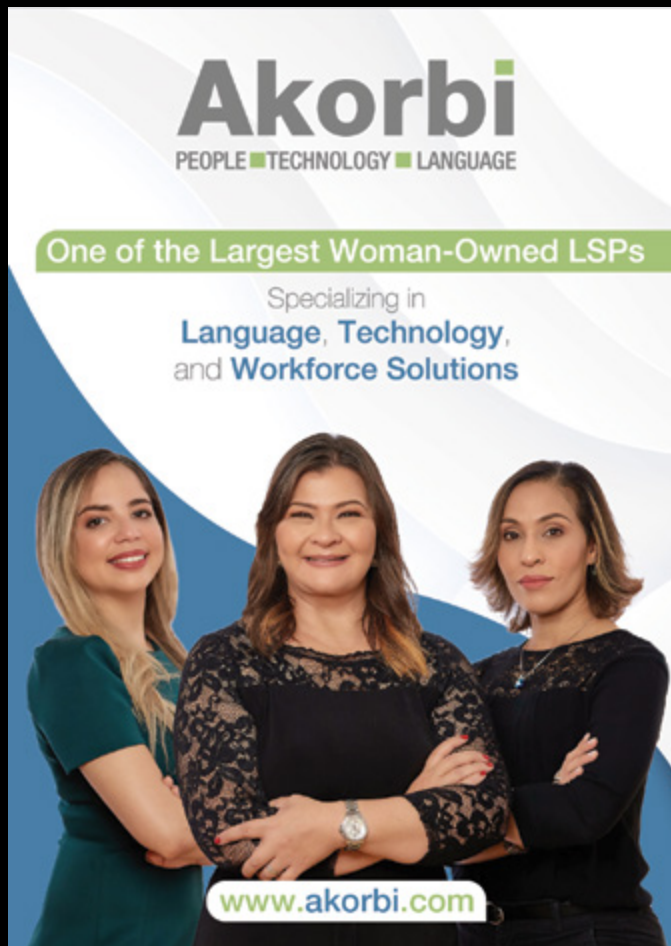
### Demystifying *Elden Ring's* language

Marina Ilari and Guido Bindi were part of the localization team led by GameScribes for the Latin-American Spanish version of the game. In an interview with Alexis Biro of Terra Localizations, they broke down their approach to localizing *Elden Ring* for the region.

"[The game] is set in a purely fantastic world full of gods, spirits, creatures of all kinds, and magical powers," Bindi said. "Therefore, some lines were very difficult to understand literally without seeing a description or picture. So we turned to everything that was available to us: query sheets, pictures, videos, and glossaries."

"Particularly for me, another challenge was unifying everything in terms of terminology, style, and grammar, since I worked mostly as a reviewer," he added.

**"*Elden Ring* [...] adapts the *Souls* formula on a grander scale than any other game to date, and *it gives players an unparalleled level of freedom* to pursue whatever path through The Lands Between they choose."**









To aid in that process, the team created an integrated termbase in their computer-assisted translation (CAT) tool, an internal glossary, and a style guide to help maintain consistency.

“Terminology management is absolutely essential in video-game localization, especially when working on such a massive game,” Ilari said. “Terminology needs to be well-established and well-managed throughout the project, not only for consistency purposes but also to make sure we were following the very specific style and lore of the game.”

Some names that remain consistent throughout From Software’s games, like the Moonlight Greatsword weapon and the devious character Patches, had to be localized with an eye for continuity. Nevertheless, most terminology was created from scratch, given that *Elden Ring* is a new IP.

Another challenge was the antiquated language style used by some characters.

“There are terminology and even grammar choices you can make to try to convey the intention and the weight of the original source text,” Ilari said.

“Perhaps one of the most challenging things about translating Old English is the risk of misinterpreting the intention of the text,” she added. “It’s important to consult with the right

sources so as not to confuse the original message, or even worse, confuse the players with a translation that is difficult to understand.”

And of course, there’s the issue of translating into neutral Latin-American Spanish suitable for numerous countries and regions. That meant more regional slang and cultural references were off the table.

“It usually becomes more challenging when it comes to dialog lines between characters or with the player, since dialogs need to sound extremely natural, which is difficult to achieve when we are from different countries — each one with their own regionalisms and structures,” Bindi said.

“So this required investigation, checking with colleagues from other countries, and everything we usually do to make sure our translations are understood in all of Latin America,” he added.

After turning *Elden Ring* inside out over more than 100 hours, Biro uncovered some interesting discrepancies between the Latin-American Spanish and English versions of the game. Keep in mind that most of his observations are based on his own conjecture but are rooted in a deep knowledge of Latin-American Spanish localization.

### Márida instead of Máríka

The first thing to come up concerns Queen Marika the Eternal, the current ruler of The Lands Between, the shatterer of the *Elden Ring*, and a key figure in the game. Her name is changed in the Latin-American localization of the game to “Márida.”

That could be because in South American culture, the name could potentially be associated with a term that sounds the same, but is spelled with a “c” instead of a “k.”

The word “marica” (with the stress acting on the “i”) is a term used to refer to homosexual men in many parts of South America. Keeping this in consideration, the localization team likely made a correct choice in making this slight but significant name change, allowing it to have its own weight within the game’s lore and preventing players from being distracted by a name that could be interpreted in an unintended way.

In the European Spanish version, strangely enough, this change just didn’t happen. The name “Máríka” is the same as the game’s English version.

### The shattering of the Elden Ring

An interesting localization difference between *Elden Ring*’s English version and Latin-American Spanish version is the verb used to describe the destruction of the *Elden Ring*, or the natural law of The Lands Between that governs life and death. It varies both in meaning and overall intention of the word.

While in English, the breaking of the *Elden Ring* is described as “The Shattering,” in Spanish for South America, the literal word for devastation is used instead: “La devastación del Anillo de Elden”. Breaking down that localization choice to

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its constituent parts, the conclusion is it may not be the most precise. But it's still suitable

The Ring's shattering indeed caused devastation in The Lands Between. Using this term symbolizes much more than just the ring being shattered — it also took many of these lands with it in the process.

## Margit the Fell Omen

There are two different adjective choices for the game's first boss. Let's break them down, shall we?

Margit the Fell Omen is probably the first big boss that players encounter while playing *Elden Ring*. He is a formidable foe that might take anyone several attempts to beat. And interestingly, his name in both versions of Spanish varies one from the other.

While in Spanish from Spain, the name holds up to its meaning in English: "Margit, el Augurio Caído." It's pretty much a word-for-word translation of the status and representation that the game gives to the English-version character.

For comparison, the Latin-American Spanish localization team decided to change Margit's name to "Margit el Ajojo Cruel."

It's a key change from the "Fell Omen," which could potentially impact the game's lore. In English, this translation means something like "Margit the Cruel Evil Eye." Now why would they change it to something so different?

In Latin America, there is a commonly known concept known as the Evil Eye, a look or stare that supposedly brings

misfortune upon the subject. When we talk about the Evil Eye, it is typically not in a positive sense. If you add "Cruel" to wrap up the name, then you have quite the omen (get it? Omen?). It sends an instant message that this fight won't be pretty, and this guy means business.

Given that Margit's whole purpose at that stage of the game is to ensure that no Tarnished — a term referring to the player character and other individuals who have fallen from grace — reaches the Shardbearer Godrick in Stormveil Castle. The player must reach Stormveil's gate to fight Margit, who watches from the top of a tower and jumps down to engage the them, before advancing into the castle.

Either calling him the Fell Omen or the Cruel Evil Eye works well for all targeted markets. Both names portray this stylish boss as dangerous and powerful. Depending on the name, he could be interpreted as someone who already fell or who possesses an evil energy that can be handled one way or the other.

That's the beauty of localization and the creativity of the localizers who use query sheets, context, and conceptualizations of what different terms, names, and expressions should portray. Game localization is all about taking liberties in order to find the best terms possible for the players in their target markets. 🌐

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**ALEXIS ANDRES BIRO** works in business development at Terra Localizations, PR and localization at Astral Clocktower Studios, and is a co-host and producer on Open World Videocast.

**CAMERON RASMUSSON** is editor-in-chief of MultiLingual Media.