



# Our Favorite Multilingual Protagonists in Video Games

At Alpha Games, we're big fans of the art of languages. Maybe we're a bit biased, but we love languages, multilingualism, and the power that knowledge and fluency in another language provide.

We're not the only ones who love fluency in multiple languages. Although the ability to interpret and understand multiple languages may not be as sexy or impressive as other skills in a game, being able to read and speak more than one language opens up a world of exciting possibilities, not just for lore, but also for gameplay.

Here, in no particular order, are a few of our favorite multilingual protagonists in video games.

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## 1. The Dragonborn, *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*

The player created character of *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* is The Dragonborn, the last in a long line of prophesied dragon slayers. The Dragonborn is able to absorb the soul and knowledge of a slain dragon, including learning their language, Dovahzul.

Learning more of the dragon language will do more than just enhance your experience of the world of *Skyrim*, learning the language gives the Dragonborn access to powerful Thu'um, or Dragon Shouts, giving the player a wide variety of new abilities. The most famous of these is Unrelenting Force (Fus Ro Dah - Force, Balance, Push), which allows the Dragonborn to shout to shove aside things in his way.

There are twenty Thu'ums to learn throughout the land of *Skyrim*, each one granting a special power to the Dragonborn. In *Skyrim*, words are powerful.

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## 2. Lara Croft, *Tomb Raider series*

Lara Croft has been a popular character ever since her reception. Lara is a renowned archeologist and adventurer, often jet setting around the world to exotic locations on her quests. Like many archaeologists, it's likely that she would have a knowledge of ancient languages - possibly Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and more.

In the latest reboot of *Tomb Raider*, language plays an integral part. Being fluent in multiple languages helps Lara discover the secrets of ancient Japan's Empress Himiko, discover the legendary city of Kitezh, and stop a Mayan apocalypse.

On her journeys in Serbia and Mesoamerica, Lara discovers monoliths that can be deciphered to level up her language skills, teaching her Greek, Mongolian, and Russian, as well as ancient dialects such as Mam, Quetcha, and Yucatec.

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### 3. Wei Shen, *Sleeping Dogs*

The protagonist of *Sleeping Dogs* is Wei Shen, a tough cop who goes undercover to infiltrate a Chinese gang. Wei is Asian-American but goes undercover on assignment in Hong Kong. Wei Shen is an outsider in Hong Kong - he's Chinese, but not Hong Kong Chinese. He mostly speaks English, but Cantonese is the lingua franca for many of HK's citizens. It's a big culture shift for Wei Shen.

Fortunately, having some knowledge of Chinese helps Wei Shen reconnect with his childhood friend Jackie Ma, a low-level gang member who helps Wei infiltrate the Triads. From there, Wei Shen can integrate into the Honk Kong underworld and take on the Sun On Yee Triad.

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### 4. Niko Bellic, *Grand Theft Auto IV*

*Grand Theft Auto IV*'s Niko Bellic is a protagonist with a very long, troubled past, inspired by the Bosnian War. Some of Niko's past, such as his nationality, was left vague. Developer Rockstar considers him Eastern European, although where exactly in Eastern Europe remains a mystery.

Niko comes to Liberty City, seeking a new life with the help of his cousin Roman. Within minutes of getting off the boat, he proves his fluency in English and chides his cousin for forgetting his Serbian. Soon he's using his English to chastise his cousin for lying about his affluence and life in Liberty City. Niko is disappointed and frustrated in his cousin, but he also doesn't know anyone else in the city.

Fortunately, Niko's English is good enough that he's able to secure jobs with Roman and others in Liberty City, helping his cousin pay off his gambling debts to the local mobs, and helping himself with his personal vendetta.

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## 5. Samus Aran, *Metroid series*

It makes sense that an intergalactic bounty hunter like Samus Aran would speak multiple languages - or at the very least, have a device that would help her translate. But it wasn't until *Metroid Prime* that we truly got to see Samus' linguist skills put to the test.

In a continual quest to combat space pirates, Samus explores a space station and the nearby planet Tallon IV. Tallon IV was previously host to the Chozo, an intelligent species that mysteriously disappeared.

Samus uses her visor to scan the environment for clues. Samus can scan Chozo artifacts and text and translate it. Without being able to read the language, the mystery of the Chozo and what happened on Tallon IV would remain an enigma.

Samus would use the same language skills in the subsequent *Metroid Prime* games, translating alien languages from the Luminoth, the Reptilicus, and the Space Pirates. Her suit's translation module and her visor's scanning abilities allowed Samus to interpret the rest of the galaxy, which seems pretty important for a bounty hunter.

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Video game protagonists haven't always been interpreters, translators, or polyglots, but when developers have made them multilingual, they've created more compelling and adventurous characters.

Who are some of your favorite multilingual game protagonists? Are there any you would like to see added to our list?

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