STARS

Honors Undergraduate Theses

UCF Theses and Dissertations

2019

Open World Translation: Localizing Japanese Video Games for a Globalizing World

Emily Suvannasankha
University of Central Florida

Part of the Game Design Commons, and the Technical and Professional Writing Commons

Find similar works at: https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses

University of Central Florida Libraries http://library.ucf.edu

Recommended Citation

Showcase of Text, Archives, Research & Scholarship

OPEN WORLD TRANSLATION:

LOCALIZING JAPANESE VIDEO GAMES FOR A GLOBALIZING WORLD

by

EMILY N. SUVANNASANKHA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in English
in the College of Arts and Humanities
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 2019

Thesis Chair: Madelyn Flammia, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the most effective ways of handling cultural differences in the Japanese-to-English game localization process. The thesis advocates for applying the Skopos theory of translation to game localization; analyzes how topics such as social issues, humor, fan translation, transcreation, and censorship have been handled in the past; and explores how international players react to developers' localization choices. It also includes interviews with three Japanese-to-English translators who have worked with major Japanese game companies to gain insight into how the industry operates today. Through the deconstruction of different aspects of Japanese-to-English localization, this analysis aims to help the game industry better fine-tune Japanese media to Western audiences while still sharing valuable aspects of Japanese culture. The thesis concludes that if Japanese game companies work to improve the localization process by considering more diverse international perspectives, hiring native speakers as translators, and approaching the English script as a creative endeavor in itself, they will be able to both broaden the minds of their global audiences and more effectively capitalize on the worldwide fervor for Japanese video games.

DEDICATION

For my mother, Sarah,
for always playing video games with me and my brother
as if she were one of us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

NOMENCLATURE

- This paper generally uses the modified Hepburn style of romanization, with long vowels indicated by macrons (ā, ī, ū, ē, ō).

- Japanese names have been put in English name order (given name, surname).

- Japanese words are italicized unless they have been commonly adopted into English (e.g. anime, sushi vs. *sarashi*, *mukokuseki*).

- Titles of games are italicized only when referring to a specific game itself, not when referencing a whole series.

- Finally, in the title of this paper and throughout, I chose to refer to the world as "globalizing" instead of "globalized," unlike most scholars. I made this decision because, to my ear, "globalized" suggests that globalization is a thing of the past, a bygone event that left no more work to do, instead of an ongoing process to which every human on this earth still contributes daily. In other words, I believe there is much to look forward to as we strive to challenge our own cultural schemas and understand each other from across great physical and cognitive distances. We are not done yet.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ALT: Assistant Language Teacher, a position in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program.

- E-J: English-to-Japanese.

- ESRB: Entertainment Software Rating Board, an organization that assigns age and content ratings to video games in the United States.

- J-E: Japanese-to-English.

- JLPT N(_): Japanese Language Proficiency Test. Scale goes from N1 (hardest) to N5 (easiest).

- JRPG: Japanese role-playing game.

- L1: a speaker's first (or native) language.

- L2: a speaker's second (or non-native) language.

- RPG: role-playing game.

GLOSSARY

delocalization

Fan-created translation that aims to undo changes in localized games.

domestication

Replacing elements of one culture with similar elements of another culture in localization.

Opposite of foreignization.

eikaiwa

English conversation school in Japan.

fanservice

Sexual material added specifically to appeal to an audience demographic.

foreignization

Retaining elements of the original culture in localization. Opposite of domestication.

game mechanic

A feature of gameplay in a certain game, such as the player jumping or the sky darkening as

time elapses.

hinaningyō

Ornamental dolls representing Japanese royalty placed in the home to celebrate the Doll

Festival, or Girls' Day, in Japan.

kadomatsu

Traditional Japanese decorations made of three cut pieces of bamboo placed in front of

homes for New Year's.

koinobori

Colorful koi fish-shaped flags flown annually to celebrate Children's Day in Japan.

kotatsu

A Japanese low table covered by a blanket and heated from underneath, around which people often gather in the winter.

mukokuseki

"Nationality-less"; describes characters that are designed to appear as if they have no particular race or nationality.

power-ups

In-game bonuses that players can collect to gain certain advantages, such as increased size or firepower.

pre-localization

A method of translation that involves hiring native English speakers on the development team from the game's conception.

region-locking

A practice used by video game companies that only allows consoles to play games released in a certain region.

transcreation

Creating a work anew for a target audience using some creative liberties in translation.

PREFACE

Video games are psychosocial moratoriums, a "time out of life" in which the player can freely experiment, explore, and take risks without real-world consequences; indeed, this escapism is the beauty of games, that people young and old can step into another universe and feel boundlessly empowered (Erikson 156).

But video games do not exist in a vacuum—rather, they are products of the cultures that make them, and because culture is inextricable from language, translating them into a different language necessitates translating them into a different culture as well. As someone who has lived her life on the precipice of many different cultural identities, it fascinates me how a piece of creative media can go through the same nuanced changes in identity as it moves from one country to another. In this way, much like a person who speaks several languages, games engage in code-switching out of necessity to speak accordingly to those who play them.

Thus, I find localization a fun topic to explore. Localization can produce such gems as "Todd Bonzalez" and "Bobson Dugnutt," the fake American baseball player names Japanese developers conjured up for the 1994 SNES game *Fighting Baseball* (Colburn). But alas, we are past 1994's comical shots in the dark; 2019 demands more concerted efforts to globalize our media, to make international what was once purely domestic. We know each other better now.

This thesis marries two of the topics closest to my heart: the Japanese language and East-West cultural exchange through media sharing. Something in me turns to magic when I see the Japanese music, games, and shows I am so familiar with in the hands of my American friends and family, as if two worlds I know and love have, for a second, become one. Through this thesis, I hope to help continue bridging the gap between Japanese and American culture and

share my appreciation for the complex art of translation. It is only through translation that I can

share the culture I love with the people I love.

Emily Suvannasankha

Introduction

The circulation and quality of translated media contributes immensely to global culture, and thus translators wield tremendous power over how audiences perceive foreign cultures. I will apply this argument specifically to Japanese video games translated into English and localized for Western, largely U.S.-based, populations. The thesis will provide context on the history of the game localization industry, survey how video game companies have handled different kinds of cultural issues in translation in the past, analyze their receptions by the target audience, and offer suggestions for how developers can improve the international versions of their games.

I argue that paying attention to localization is important for two main reasons:

1. In a digitally oriented and globalizing world, internationally minded media can connect regular people from disparate regions and spread tolerance and celebration of different cultures, thereby making intercultural relations more harmonious worldwide.

2. Game companies can increase sales by studying both problems in localization that cause tension or controversy and examples of excellent localization practices that they can employ in their own games in the future.

For these reasons, video game translators and editors have both the duty and the incentive to localize intentionally and thoughtfully. Adherence to the Skopos theory of translation, which advocates for staying faithful to ideas rather than words, may help in this process by allowing translators to use the target language more freely while retaining the essential effect of the original (Chiaro 103). But to effectively derive meaning from a foreign author's work, translators

must have thorough knowledge of both the original and target cultures—simply acting as a word-to-word dictionary is not enough.

The Meaning of "Open World Translation"

There is a difference between so-called "open world" video games and "linear" video games. Open world games allow players to roam freely, explore the map as they wish, and deviate from the main objectives of the game if it suits them. Linear games, on the other hand, provide events and levels in a designated order, requiring players to travel down the game's main scripted path with little deviation.

I found interesting parallels between these gaming terms and translation types such as "direct" or "literal" translation and "free" translation (or "transcreation"). When using direct translation, translators must follow the scripted path set by the original writers quite faithfully, if not word-for-word. But when using free translation or transcreation, translators may add, subtract, or change parts of a work, taking some creative liberties to deliver a product more fit for the target audience. As if exploring an open world game, translators are more free to deviate from the original path, using their own judgment to find the most interesting and enjoyable way to the end goal.

Thus, "open world translation" is a term I created to describe a mode of translation that gives translators and localizers more power to fine-tune games for specific cultures, while also encouraging more open access to international game content. Above all, open world translation focuses on recreating effects, not mechanisms. This thesis aims to outline how open world translation can be achieved—through creativity and increased cultural awareness.

Chapter 1: Translation and Localization Defined

For the purposes of this paper, I define translation as transferring content from one language to another, and localization as adapting content from one culture to another. In *Translation Words: Formation and Background*, Yanabu describes translation as a "tertiary language of abstraction," one that diverges from both the original language and the target language and may become incomprehensible to native speakers when done word-for-word instead of meaning-for-meaning (Levy 6). Therefore, the processes of translation and localization cannot be fully separated; both must not focus on being faithful to the original words of a work, but on transmitting the work's feeling, nuance, and *ideas* while using "irreducibly different" phrases, references, and cultural lingo to do so (Hewson 1).

Translators and localizers act as gatekeepers of cross-cultural interaction, wielding enormous control over how people interpret media from cultures outside their own—and thus what they think of that particular culture. Would the anime film *Spirited Away* have become so renowned among foreign fans if it had been translated poorly? Would the Pokémon franchise have reached such prolific success in America if not for its heavily altered 4Kids localization? The existence of so many devoted international fans of Japanese media today is thanks to the work translators and localizers did and continue to do; without them, exposure to Japanese culture in this way would be limited to those proficient in the language. Thus, it is critical to examine their methods of using this power and how it affects fans' cultural perceptions.

Literal vs. Free Translation

Although the art of translation is too complex to fully condense, scholars do tend to distinguish two general ends of the translation method spectrum: trying to replicate the actual words of the original versus trying to replicate its perceived intent while taking liberties with the words themselves (Dorn 213). In this paper, I will refer to these polarities as literal translation and free translation respectively.

Literal translation, as defined in the first classification of translation styles by Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958, works best when there is an "exact structural, lexical, even morphological equivalence" between languages that are "very close to each other" (Molina & Albir 499).

Conversely, free (or oblique) translation, also defined by Vinay and Darbelnet, occurs when "word for word translation is impossible" (Molina & Albir 499). The U.S. Foreign Service Institute categorizes Japanese as imposing the highest level of difficulty on English speakers among the world's languages, reflecting an unusually large distance between the two languages and cultures; thus, focusing on recreating purpose, not form, through free translation is often the only option for Japanese-to-English translators (U.S. Department of State).

Finding the *Skopos* of Japanese Games

The Skopos theory of translation, proposed by German scholars Hans J. Vermeer and Katharina Reiß in 1978, emphasizes recreating the context of the original work in the target language instead of fixating on semantics (Trisnawati 246). This method of free translation requires extensive knowledge of both audiences' cultural backgrounds, or "practical experiences," in order to locate cultural norms and popular references that approximate the

original (Trisnawati 246). Isabelle Collombat describes translators as rhetoricians, with their main job being to "[find] arguments in the target culture that are equivalent to those contained in the source text" (Collombat 3). In other words, translators look for the original work's *skopos*, the Greek word for "purpose," and try to replicate that in the translated work above all else (Trisnawati 246).

To accomplish this, translators who adhere to Skopos theory construct the same rhetorical situation in the target language while almost ignoring which words in particular the author used to create the original situation. Skopos theory gives translators more freedom to use the target language in the way they think best without being restricted to direct, dictionary-bound translations. In fact, Anthony Pym describes translation as moving away from the "clutches of linguistics" and into a new sociolinguistic field that requires not only knowledge of grammar and phonics, but "applied sociology, the ethics of communication and a gamut of considerations that are loosely held under the term 'cultural studies'" (Pym 3). He emphasizes the same point this thesis supports: Translators do not only manipulate words in the short term—they also distinctly manipulate how cultures perceive each other through translated work in the long term (Pym 4).

Critics of Skopos theory, primarily those who subscribe to more linguistics-based methods, argue that throwing out the dictionary entirely can make a product more of an "adaptation" than a true and faithful translation (Collombat 247). In addition, opponents of functionalist theories such as Skopos theory caution that translators may lose the beauty and expression inherent in the original author's use of language if they fixate on merely conveying the perceived message of the text without also transferring its stylistic nuances (Collombat 248).

Some scholars, such as Mehmet Cem Odacıoğlu, advocate for *combining* theories of linguistic literary translation and functionalist technical translation in a harmonized approach he calls "integrated localization theory" (Odacıoğlu 25). Indeed, translators should pay adequate attention to stylistic flow to preserve as much of the original work's linguistic poeticism and cultural flavor as possible. However, as video games are distributed to such an unusually wide international audience compared to other media, this paper identifies functionalism as the most important tool for creating effective localized products. A game that deviates too far from the original but makes functional cultural sense to the target audience will sell more than a game that sticks so strictly to the original that it is incomprehensible to the rest of the world (or is translated so literally that it ceases to make linguistic sense at all). Therefore, this paper will advocate for the use of Skopos theory and other methods of free translation/localization in the Japanese-to-English video game industry.

Translators who aim to replicate the words of the original as closely as possible and stay faithful to every aspect of the author's work tend to produce more literal translations with a stronger lingering "odor" of the original culture and language (Iwabuchi 27). This approach often works well for media that targets consumers who already know much about the original culture and do not want their media to be "dumbed down." In the case of Japanese-to-English translation, this includes many anime (Japanese animation) and manga (Japanese comics), as well as some more obscure forms of games, such as visual novels (Japanese choose-your-own-adventure games). However, when used for media easily discoverable by the layman who does not know much about Japanese culture, literal translations can come across as clunky and foreign, often bombarding people with references they do not understand. Some examples of

6

easily accessible media include more popular anime, Netflix shows, and music videos that any netizen can randomly click on and stream on websites like YouTube.

As the most lucrative medium for delivering Japanese culture overseas, video games must capture and hold the attention of international players from all walks of life (ABS-CBN). Therefore, in order to avoid alienating consumers with little to no experience with Japanese culture, many games opt for free translation, replacing Japan-specific content with cultural references from the West and limiting use of speech, items, and settings that may feel out of place to a Western player. This cultural rewriting sometimes results in products that differ significantly from the original. However, if done with dexterity, games can both ring true to an international audience and retain integral parts of the original's cultural "odor," infusing the product with a cultural education that can expose overseas players to Japanese culture while still remaining seamlessly playable on an international scale.

Taking proper care to create a product that works for foreign as well as domestic cultures will reward companies financially, both in the short term (as excellently localized games sell more copies) and the long term (as fans across the world grow loyal to Japanese games, keep coming back for more, and spread the word globally). Moreover, the Japanese government's "Cool Japan" initiative, which aims to export more Japanese culture to foreign countries, needs the multi-billion-dollar industry of video games to succeed (Abe). Video games have benefitted the Japanese economy already as people all over the world gain access to Japanese games, become interested in visiting the country itself, and further fuel the Japanese tourism industry (Kohler x). Forms of Japanese pop culture such as anime, manga, and music have not

traditionally done well in export sales, but video games have been the overwhelming exception (Kawashima 24).

If Japanese game companies work to improve the translation/localization process and consider more diverse international perspectives, they will both broaden the minds of their global audiences and more effectively capitalize on the worldwide fervor for Japanese video games.

Chapter 2: Brief History of Japanese-to-English Game Localization

To fully grasp the current state of translation and localization in the Japanese game industry, one must look to the past to gain context. Since the 1970s, when developers changed the Japanese arcade game *Puck Man* to the wildly popular US and European version *Pac-Man*, localization has revolutionized how companies ship their games to new international markets and how audiences receive them (Bernal-Merino 13). As worldwide demand for video games grew and international fans demanded more accessibility from publishers in the 1980s and 1990s, the new industry of game localization blossomed out of necessity to bring games closer to their players in regions outside of Japan (Bernal-Merino 15).

Today, companies like Nintendo, Square Enix, Konami, and Sony that began in Japan have snowballed into huge multinational corporations that dominate much of the global gaming industry (Consalvo 2016). Examining how developers began converting Japanese games into internationally palatable products will help contextualize modern localization efforts.

Erasing "Japaneseness" in the 20th Century

These days, plenty of video games from Japan retain clear elements of Japanese culture; many even showcase them with lush Tokyo scenery (*Persona 5*, *The World Ends With You*, the *Yakuza* series), traditional Shinto motifs (*Okami*, *Shin Megami Tensei*), and/or Japanese titles unchanged for Western audiences (*Danganronpa*, *Ni no Kuni*). Some popular series, like Yakuza and Tokyo Mirage Sessions FE, do not even provide non-Japanese dubs, as the setting and culture are inextricable parts of the games' premises. And no wonder—many players seek out

Japanese role-playing games (JRPGs), visual novels, and fighting games *because* of their distinct Japanese flavor, not despite it.

But when Japanese companies first experimented with exportation, several big game developers tried to keep their games as "culturally neutral" as possible (Iwabuchi 1). For example, Mario from the 1983 *Super Mario Bros.* franchise has no discernable Japanese qualities and is in fact Italian-inspired, reflecting an early effort on the part of companies to create games and characters that were *mukokuseki*, meaning "country-neutral" or "nationality-less" (Iwabuchi 78). Indeed, Consalvo reports speaking to multiple players who did not know they were playing Japanese games at the start of their gaming careers, noting little to no sense of foreignness in their favorite games or systems, as if cloaked in a "cultureless cover" (Consalvo 19).

This sheen of neutrality may have contributed to the skyrocketing popularity of Japanese video games in the 1980s and 1990s. Because the market for video games was at first limited to mainly U.S.-based arcade gamers, what little text Japanese arcade games contained was written in English to begin with, stalling the need for a true localization industry and maximizing the incentive to wash games of perceived foreignness (Bernal-Merino 12).

However, the arcade game *Pac-Man* in 1980 began a new era of Japanese-to-English cultural changes, demanding quick decisions to localize the game for Western consumers. Developers at Namco deemed the original Japanese title, "Puck Man," uncomfortably close to the unsavory exclamation "F*** Man" in English, so they renamed it "Pac-Man" for its Western release (Bernal-Merino 13). The company also changed the ghosts' Japanese names, "Akabei," "Pinky," "Aosuke," and "Guzuta" (reminiscent of actual Japanese first names) to the more playful, culturally neutral monikers "Blinky," "Pinky," "Inky," and "Clyde" in the English

version, amplifying the game's lighthearted tone (Bernal-Merino 14). The localization rang true to American consumers, and Pac-Man became the most lucrative arcade game in North America, surpassing the most popular film of the time, *Star Wars*, in financial returns by making $1 billion in its first 18 months (Brill 119). And thus, with the localization of Pac-Man and other arcade games, Japanese developers realized that what worked for Japan might not work for international releases—sometimes a little creativity was required.

Similarly, in 1996, Nintendo's Pokémon franchise took the world by storm, becoming the most profitable computer game ever produced and extending equally successfully into trading cards, animation, children's toys, apparel, comic books, and more (Tobin 3). Former Nintendo of America Marketing Manager Gail Tilden explains that the production team "tr[ied] hard to keep American children from thinking of Pokémon as being from Japan. This requires localization, not to hide the fact that Pokémon is made in Japan, but to convey the impression that these are global characters" (Tobin 69). And indeed, this erasing of Japaneseness shows in the non-Japanese-looking player sprites from *Pokémon LeafGreen*/*FireRed* to *Pokémon Black*/*White*, the *mukokuseki* and "religion-free" cities with ambiguous names such as Pallet Town and Viridian City, and the absence of clear Japanese cultural markers such as tatami mats and chopsticks (Tabin 68).

From Specialization to Internationalization in the 21st Century

By the mid-1990s, Japanese video games already dominated the market without heavy localization; according to one survey, Mario had already become more recognizable to American children than Mickey Mouse (Tobin 1). But as video games moved out of arcades and into home

and handheld consoles, developers had to decide how much Japanese culture to include and how much to erase in international releases, and out of this necessity blossomed a thriving game localization industry. This shift gave translators considerably more control over which remnants of other cultures players received through video games' graphics, story, and gameplay.

In the 2000s, game companies began employing so-called "full localization," which includes full voiceover and often some customized elements depending on the locales the game is released in (Bernal-Merino 17). "Full culturalization," as Aung Pyae calls it, goes a few steps further, including comprehensive changes to plot, gameplay, art, music, marketing, and other features to target certain audiences with incredible cultural precision (Pyae 4). It can be argued that this last method makes the game into an almost entirely different product from the original.

For example, Ubisoft publishes Just Dance games in multiple variations customized to match the popular music, dance, and fashion of different cultures around the world (Pyae 7). The Japanese version of *Just Dance Wii*, released in 2011, contains tracks from J-pop groups like AKB48, EXILE, and Morning Musume, and *Yo-Kai Watch Dance: Just Dance Special Version* provides a crossover between *Just Dance* gameplay and the popular Japanese children's anime *Yōkai Watch*.

This represents a marketing strategy based in separation and specialization; developers specifically create each game to target a certain culture without bringing much or any "foreign" content (relative to the target audience) into the game. Marketing separation explains a phenomenon called region-locking as well, which restricts games to the consoles made in their areas. Until recently, Western fans of games like Pokémon who wanted to play in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, etc. had to import copies of games directly from those countries, as each

cartridge only held one language and could only be played on that region's version of the console. Similarly, until 2016, if players wanted access to all *Just Dance* songs ever made, they would have to buy multiple versions of the game from different countries, along with multiple versions of the region-locked consoles. The near-comical difficulty and expense of this task leads players to either illegally modify their consoles to eliminate the region-lock or give up and only play the version of the game available in their area. Region-locking occurs because national divisions of international companies often do not want to lose business in their region—even to a sister company—and because creative licensing laws differ from country to country, making it difficult to create one version of a game that is legal everywhere (Letters).

However, in the mid-2010s, more game companies began rethinking their marketing initiatives to be more internationally inclusive while still abiding by national laws. For example, *Pokémon X* and *Pokémon Y* (2013) were the first Pokémon games to have a simultaneous international release; until then, the games came out in Japan a few months before releasing overseas, as many Japanese games do (Nakamura). They were also the first in the franchise to include seven different languages—English, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, German, French, and Italian—on one cartridge, with *Pokémon Sun* and *Pokémon Moon* following suit and adding traditional and simplified Chinese in 2016 (Ishaan 2). This reflects how console games may be shifting to more closely rival the convenience of online and mobile games, which often release simultaneously worldwide and allow players to switch between languages easily.

Game content itself has been internationalized as well in recent years to catch up with the seamless global connectivity of the internet. Since 2016, the *Just Dance* franchise has offered a service called *Just Dance Unlimited*, which allows players who buy a subscription to access an

online catalog of local and international songs through streaming (Ubisoft). And of course, the *Pokémon Go* phenomenon, also in 2016, redefined how players connect to the rest of the globe by making them travel to certain real-world locations to catch Pokémon exclusive to those places. Mobile games have enabled international players to connect to each other across country, culture, and language like never before.

From here on out, Japanese game developers cannot deny the necessity of acknowledging the global reach of their products and would thereby do well to work toward more internationally inclusive *design* as well as localization. In today's globalizing world, "Japaneseness" is no longer a quality that always needs to be extinguished; rather, it can be incorporated and adapted to increasingly knowledgeable foreign audiences who understand and value the origins of Japanese games.

Chapter 3: The Process of Game Localization

In this chapter, I will report on how professional translators and editors make hard decisions about which traces of a work's original culture should be kept and which should be localized. I will also discuss how the structure and management of translation teams can affect the quality of the product.

To gain insight on industry practices, I contacted three Japanese-to-English translators who specialized in game localization and asked them about their experiences in the field. I also interviewed them on their opinions on how games should be localized and how the industry has changed over time. I could only interview those translators who were kind enough to return my emails; therefore, this sample size of three individuals does not reflect the population of Japanese-to-English translators as a whole. Full interviews are located in Appendices A through C.

A Note on the Indispensability of Sociocultural Knowledge

As a general industry rule, translators usually translate into their native language, or L1, to ensure that their prose flows naturally and contains no non-native awkwardness. (Translating into, for instance, one's second or third language—L2 and L3, respectively—is notoriously difficult.) Because translators are usually native speakers of the target language, they will likely already have a strong grasp on the sociocultural norms tied to it. However, as Yoko Hasegawa emphasizes, translating without a deep understanding of the *source* culture as well can result in unfortunate misinterpretations of the author's intent, rendering a translation lacking in nuance at best and utterly wrong at worst. Nida states that "For truly successful translation, biculturalism is

even more important than bilingualism, since words only have meanings in terms of the cultures in which they function" (Yang 77).

To demonstrate the dangers of ignoring cultural nuance in translation, Hasegawa presents an example from the Japanese translation of *Saving Private Ryan*, wherein a prisoner begins singing *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The translator translated the lyrics directly, not knowing that the lines were from the American national anthem, and thus made it sound like the prisoner was deliriously singing a love song (Hasegawa 24). Since this detail is linked to the story's setting and adds to the reader's understanding of the character, the translation would have benefitted if the translator had already known about the song or looked up the lyrics to see if they were an important reference.

However, translators cannot be expected to know everything about the source culture, and indeed, all translators' abilities are inextricably colored by their background and limited experiences. Thus, resourcefulness is increasingly important in the translation/localization industry; now, translators have a wealth of options, such as researching topics online, contacting subject matter experts, and immersing themselves in media from the source culture to gain familiarity with their customs, idioms, and references. Of course, these options are secondary to spending time in the country or locale itself, which best arms translators with the sociocultural knowledge required to do their jobs. But translators, though inherently bicultural creatures, cannot be in two places at once, so tradeoffs must be made.

Working in Translation Teams

Japanese video games, especially visual novels and RPGs, are known for having scripts longer than some novels; for example, the visual novel *Clannad* contains approximately 1.3 million English words, whereas the entire Harry Potter series clocks in at about one million (Cowan). Thus, translating whole games requires the cumulative, often herculean effort of a team of translators.

In our interview, Nora Stevens Heath, who has translated for Nintendo, Square Enix, and Ubisoft, noted that game companies usually hire a group of translators for one game and divide the text up among them. She stated that sometimes each translator is assigned one character's dialogue, forcing her to translate conversations one-sidedly without knowing how her colleagues will translate the other side. Another common way to divide the work is to assign one translator the main dialogue, another the secondary dialogue (such as side quests), and yet another the item and menu text. This strategy of dividing by *kind* of game text results in a more consistent voice throughout the game and allows translators to translate while worrying less about how the other translators will interpret lines.

But the most effective ways of organizing translation teams sometimes involve using specialized tools to manage large amounts of generated content. Heath noted, "My biggest client has their own content management system that requires you to check out files to work on, check them back in when you're done, and mark them ready for review. This makes the most sense to me, and the mechanics and workflow were the least stressful. We also had a huge official glossary that helped a ton." Investing in an all-in-one system for translators to store files, communicate, and coordinate game terms is faster and more efficient than making translators

rely on email to messily puzzle out answers. Such holistic methods also reflect a rising

dedication to quality translation and localization that other game companies would do well to

emulate.

Translation teams will likely continue to be the norm when it comes to translating games,

creating an intersection between stereotypically lone-wolf freelancers and a large volume of

inescapably collaborative work. Heath explained that though she prefers to work alone, "it's nice

to know there's someone out there who. . . is (hopefully) working just as hard and is just as

invested in a good outcome." She recalled fond memories of meeting another translator for the

first time in person and gradually piecing together that they had been working on the same game

for the last four months. Thus, because collaboration matters so much in game translation and

localization, any system that facilitates closer communication and bonding between translators

will result in a cleaner, more streamlined process and, in the end, higher-quality games.

Cultural Adaptation

Game publishers usually regulate how controversial subjects such as alcohol use and

social issues are handled in localization; however, the job of deciding how cultural elements like

Japanese holidays and customs are depicted often falls to translators. Translators may choose to

keep these elements in and forgo explanation, keep them in and provide footnotes defining them,

or get rid of them completely. This responsibility gives translators a significant amount of power

in the translation process, coloring how the game, and thereby the source culture, comes across

to international players.

In our interview, Alexander O. Smith, well known for his localization work on the Final Fantasy series (among many others), described the challenge of choosing which Japanese cultural elements to delete and which ones to retain with an example:

> Let's say you are translating a passage in a book where there is a 'kotatsu' (a low, heated table with a comforter over it for warming up in the winter). If you leave the word 'kotatsu' in, you risk confusing your audience, who probably won't be familiar with the term, and you're introducing a hiccup in the experience of reading that section that wasn't there for the original audience. Similarly, if you add in a footnote explaining it, you're once again introducing something that wasn't in the original reading experience, and could change the tone of the book. (Am I reading a ripping mystery yarn, or a treatise on Japanese culture?) Then again, if you take the word out, you might be detracting from the sense of place built up in the book with descriptions of a specifically Japanese setting.

In other words, every possible solution has its downfalls, so translators must know their audience well enough to determine what will benefit their experience most. Smith emphasized that if a game's audience already takes interest in Japanese culture, it makes more sense to add educational footnotes. On the other hand, players with less interest and/or familiarity with Japanese culture may be less forgiving of elements like footnotes that hinder the game's immersion.

In fact, Paul Koehler, a translator who worked on *Final Fantasy XIV*, pointed out that often, effective game translations take the liberty to replace Japanese cultural references with Western references that are "understood (and hilariously so) by the target audience playing the game in English." Using more creative license like this to translate games exemplifies Skopos

theory's focus on purpose; though the words, and therefore the product, differ from the original, a very similar effect is achieved. When this technique is done well, the game often resonates soundly with the target audience, almost as if it had originally been written in English.

Thus, if allowed, translators and localizers should not be afraid to try injecting more regional cultural references when needed. Video games' unique ability to be heavily customized makes them prime candidates for cultural adaptation—they are already different products in every region they are released in, so translators might as well cater them to their audiences as much as they can.

Changes in the Localization Industry

The game localization industry has only existed for a few decades, but several key advancements in that time have significantly changed how translators work. Heath noted that the biggest differences are the sheer amount of resources available to make translators' jobs easier and programming advances that allow translators to write longer dialogue. Thanks to the breadth of the internet and the dedication of fans everywhere, translators can often find transcripts, write-ups, and other helpful tools that already exist to help speed up the process of translation. And Heath notes that game translators used to be limited by line length and could only use twice as many English characters as the Japanese text. But technology eventually improved to wrap text and add extra text box "pages" as needed, allowing translators to write lines as long as they liked. Advancements like this that circumvent the limitations of the medium have given translators more freedom to focus on choosing the best words for the job, not just the ones that will fit.

Aside from technological progress, there have also been some recent changes affecting how translators and localizers are hired and treated. Smith explained these changes and issues in the localization industry:

> In places, things have gotten more organized, with more understanding on the parts of clients and publishers of what is required to produce a quality localization. The most marked improvements, though, are at specific companies that have developed a culture to support localization (either in-house or out-sourced). Outside of those few companies, the industry (at least in the J to E direction) is still immature, with wildly differing pay and expectations. Also, outside of the few in-house positions, pay rates tend to be too low on average to really foster professional development, leading to a constant cycling in and out of recent graduates and other inexperienced workers, which has led to pervasive quality issues. I do think things are improving overall, however.

Some publishers are even reducing the need for translation by hiring more native English speakers to write original English scripts for the Western gaming market, which Smith calls "pre-localization." This practice reflects a clear shift from the industry's beginnings, when Japanese in-house employees would often translate games into English. Essentially, some companies are hiring a stable team of native English speakers from the start, which ensures that English versions are smooth, readable, and relevant the whole way through. Smith expressed his hope that if more companies shift to this more stable approach instead of piecemealing freelance translation teams together, demand for translation will decrease, demand for localization will increase, and fewer places (with more consistent organization and staffing) will do more of the localization work.

Globalization has also changed how players want their games to feel; *Fighting Baseball*'s unintentionally hilarious fake American names like "Sleve McDichael" and "Ted Balloon" may have been passable in 1994, but those days are long over (Colburn). Koehler asserted that the process of localization is more demanding now than ever, because "the expectations of gamers are much higher, and the expectations on translators are higher still." But despite these shifts, Heath admitted that when it comes to the heart of game localization, she does not think the job has changed much so far, nor does she think it will change drastically in the future. The purpose is, and always will be, to convert a Japanese work to an English work of the highest quality possible.

Chapter 4: Globalization and Social Issues in Japanese Games

Translators may affect how traditional symbols of Japanese culture are handled in games, but how social issues are handled is often out of their hands; companies themselves decide how to alter key story elements for a regional audience. This chapter includes different sections on race, gender, and sexuality in Japanese video games and examines how developers have grappled with issues in each category when adapting them for Western players. I will provide examples of when social issues such as racial diversity are handled with (sometimes unintentional) dexterity and when they have caused controversy in the West.

As stated in Chapter 1, I define translation as transferring content from one language to another, and localization as adapting content from one culture to another. O'Hagan, however, defines localization as "a process to facilitate globalization by addressing linguistic and cultural barriers," and by this definition, translators hold an even greater responsibility for how audiences interact with sociocultural differences (O'Hagan 25). Examining localization of social issues will help illuminate how games both reflect the Japanese society that creates them and propel modern social discourse on a global, cross-cultural scale.

Race

The way Japanese game developers handle race is undeniably linked to the homogeneity of Japan; even in 2017, the country's foreign population numbers only about 2% (Japan Times 1). Until recently, the vast majority of Japanese games that included any kind of character customization did not include varying skin tones, often offering only two options: a light-skinned

boy or a light-skinned girl. Popular series like Pokémon, Yo-Kai Watch, and Shin Megami Tensei reflect this binary pattern throughout most or all of their games.

Even games with more malleable character appearances often do not include darker skin tones; for example, games in the Fire Emblem series through *Fire Emblem: Fates* allow players to choose the protagonist's gender, hair, and body type, but not skin color. Perhaps even more frustratingly, Animal Crossing games through *Animal Crossing: New Leaf* only let players darken their skin through a "tanning" mechanic that browns their character's skin tone if they stay outside too long. In some installments of the series, this mechanic only exists in the summer, giving Animal Crossing fans who desire dark skin no choice but to force their characters to stay outside and tan. For a game series that hinges on players creating avatar versions of themselves in a town with otherwise highly customizable sandbox mechanics, this has caused controversy, especially in the more racially diverse United States.

However, since the mid-2010s, a growing number of Japanese game developers have realized and responded to the demand for more diverse skin tone options. Atlus's *Etrian Odyssey V* (2016) allows players to customize whole teams of characters with 12 different skin colors, and Nintendo's *Pokémon X* and *Pokémon Y* (2013) are the first in the Pokémon series to offer dark-skinned choices for the protagonist. *Let's Go, Eevee!* and *Let's Go, Pikachu!* (2018) carried the effort further by making two out of four protagonist options tan or dark-skinned. Even the new Animal Crossing game, slated to release for the Switch in 2019, may include skin tone customization for the first time, as indicated by the dark-skinned options in the *Animal Crossing: Happy Home Designer* spin-off (2015) and the *Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp* mobile game (2018).

Aside from character customization, sometimes localizers change characters' appearances when exporting to the West to avoid racial insensitivity. Upon the Western release of *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Blue* in 1998, children's book author Carole Boston Weatherford pointed out that a Pokémon named Jynx resembled historically racist caricatures of African-Americans (Collins 56). In an attempt to skirt any further controversy, Nintendo changed Jynx's black skin to dark purple in the North American version of the next games, *Pokémon Gold* and *Pokémon Silver* (Collins 57). Similarly, Jane, a gorilla villager from Animal Crossing, appears as brown-skinned with large lips in the Japanese versions of *Animal Forest, Animal Forest+, and Animal Forest e+*, whereas the U.S. versions depict her as pink, likely to avoid racial concerns (TCRF).

When localizing games for an international audience, developers must exercise sensitivity to histories of racial tension that may not exist in games' original countries. Additionally, although Japanese developers often claim their characters are designed to be "*mukokuseki*," or nationality-less, every human who works on a game has been exposed to racial stereotypes and harbors unconscious biases that can come out in design. Therefore, consulting experts on the target culture, or simply any members of that culture, will help developers catch and correct controversial or culturally tone-deaf elements of the games they export. By the same token, Japanese games will need to continue diversifying their characters if companies want to stay relevant in a globalizing society of exports.

Gender

As far as character customization goes, gender diversity has progressed faster than racial diversity in Japanese video games. While playable protagonists almost always have light skin, players can often choose to play as a female character (e.g. *Pokémon LeafGreen*, *Yo-kai Watch*, *Persona 3 Portable*, *Shin Megami Tensei NINE*). Etrian Odyssey games strike an impressive (and perhaps unintended) balance by allowing players to assign any portrait and voice to any of their team members regardless of implied gender. As a result, the series is lauded by many queer players who enjoy creating nonbinary and trans characters of their own in a game that relies on the player's imagination to fill in the characters' stories (Medium).

However, occasionally localizers change the genders of certain characters to match the perceived tastes of Western audiences. For example, Nintendo changed two male characters who spoke in a feminine manner in the Japanese versions of Animal Crossing into female characters in English versions (Mandelin 2). Players speculate that Grace (Japanese)/Gracie (English), a giraffe fashion designer who sports eyeshadow, and Roland (Japanese)/Saharah (English), a traveling camel with long eyelashes, were made female to avoid potentially "controversial" gender expressions and/or resemblances to stereotypical depictions of homosexuality in a Western children's game (Mandelin 2). However, while developers make both racial changes and gender changes to minimize controversy, the effects can be vastly different. While racial changes avoid insensitivity to the history of racism in the West, gender changes like banishing all feminine-presenting male characters and masculine-presenting female characters can actually *contribute* to the upholding of unhelpful Western gender norms. As studies continue to indicate that sexism and rigid gender roles in the media affect people's level of empathy in real life,

26

developers and localizers would do well to remain cognizant of the power their games hold and wield it carefully (Gabbiadini, et al. 2016).

When localizing Japanese media in particular, translators sometimes face challenges with the level of ambiguity imbued in Japanese games, especially regarding gender. Japan is a high-context culture, meaning that in Japanese, context clues and nonverbal communication are key to understanding, and not everything will be explicitly stated (Hall 113). For instance, unlike English, the Japanese language has, but does not require, gendered pronouns; in fact, many lengthy Japanese sentences have no subjects at all or simply refer to people by their names. This means that sometimes the original copy for Japanese games does not clearly specify the gender of a character, forcing J-to-E translators to guess and try to stay consistent. The baby sun named Watt in Paper Mario, for example, uses "she/her" pronouns in most of the English games, but in a few instances, the game copy uses "he/him," likely a translation mistake due to the ambiguity in Japanese (Mandelin 6). Unless the character in question is gender-fluid (a valuable concept in itself that games rarely explore), translators should keep an eye out for consistency in potentially unspoken game elements when translating from a high-context language to a low-context culture.

In addition, when bringing Japanese games to the West, the disparity between Japanese and Western understandings of transgender and/or gender-nonconforming people can cause issues. Naoto Shirogane, one of the main characters in the JRPG *Persona 4 Golden*, clearly "reads like a transman" to many Western fans through a narrative of gender dysphoria, chest-binding with a *sarashi*, and discomfort with female pronouns; however, the game's canon instead treats Naoto as a crossdressing woman who simply disguised herself as a man to avoid

sexism in Japanese workplaces (Petit). Similarly, the visual novel *Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc* tries to address toxic masculinity in Japan by depicting side character Chihiro Fujisaki as a "trap" (meaning a boy disguised as a girl, a popular trope in Japanese media) who fears being called weak by male students for liking traditionally "girly" things.

Without Eastern societal context to clue Western fans in on what their narratives might be saying about Japanese gender norms, Chihiro and Naoto's narratives understandably read as those of many trans people's. This cross-cultural clashing of gender schemas can cause significant controversy, leading fans to fight at length on social media over characters' "true identities." Such disputes are likely inevitable as Japan and Western countries continue to tackle gender issues on their own separate timelines and in their own cultural ways. However, localizers should still pay attention to how commentary on Japanese gender issues will likely play to foreign ears and perhaps adjust their messages accordingly to avoid misinterpretation, especially now that such critical revolutions on sexism and queerness are taking place in the West.

Sexuality

On the whole, like Western games, Japanese games exhibit significant heteronormativity, very rarely allowing players to date characters of the same sex. A few recent notable exceptions include *Fire Emblem Fates* (2015), in which Rhajat, a female character, and Niles, a male character, are available for same-sex relationships with the player (though one must buy the right version of the game to get each one), and *Danganronpa V3: Killing Harmony* (2017), in which the player can romance all characters regardless of gender at the Love Hotel. *Valkyria Chronicles* includes power-ups called "Fancies Women" and "Fancies Men" for some characters

of the same sex, and *.hack//GU* includes romantic cut-scenes for a few gay couples. But these games are by far the exceptions to the rule.

Like gender, sexuality in Japanese games is handled in response to Eastern (and more specifically, Japanese) norms that differ from those of the West, causing intercultural misunderstanding in gaming communities. For instance, in *Persona 4 Golden*, Kanji Tatsumi, depicted as a brazen "tough guy" on the outside, constantly fears that the whole town thinks he is gay because he likes to sew and knit. The game shows his Shadow (Persona's representation of the dark self) as a flamboyant gay man trapped in a dungeon called the "Steamy Bathhouse"; the Shadow transforms into a "nude version of [Kanji], surrounded by a bed of roses holding two Mars symbols" (Ng). After its release, GameSpot published a scathing review of Kanji's character, arguing that "by clearly raising the idea in the player's mind that Kanji is gay and then rejecting that idea, *Persona 4 Golden* sends the message that homosexuality is shameful and should not be accepted" (Petit).

Indeed, the narrative never conveys explicit acceptance for queer identity, and from a Western perspective, it is easy to see how Kanji's character can come off as parallel to, or even mocking of, stereotypical media portrayals of gay men. However, while the silence on queerness is an issue in itself, several critics rebut that Japanese developers created Kanji to subvert toxic masculinity in Japan, much like Chihiro in Danganronpa (VentureBeat). They argue that, as the true ending of the game indicates, Kanji's Shadow is not meant to represent latent homosexuality, but society's assumptions about him based on his gender nonconformity (VentureBeat). Kanji's narrative illustrates how dramatically a story's message can change based on the culture that perceives it.

When tackling sexuality in Japanese games, localizers would be wise to keep in mind that games are not released into a vacuum, but into complex sociocultural microcosms. Especially important to remember is that the combination of recent progress in mainstream awareness of LGBTQ+ issues in the West and the dearth of queer representation in Western media often results in already frustrated foreign fans who see characters tackling Japanese gender issues and—naturally, lacking cultural context—interpret them as commentaries on LGBTQ+ identity. The lesson here is that players from different parts of the world come at the same piece of media with entirely different cultural frameworks. Thus, sometimes significant changes to make sure messages from one country do not come across as jarring or distasteful against the backdrop of another country's social discourse can help mitigate post-release damage control and let games celebrate (rather than inadvertently disrespect) players of many different identities.

Chapter 5: Katy Perry, Kotatsu, and Other Culture-Specific Content

Unlike social issues, translators can often decide how Japanese culture-specific content is handled in the context of a game. It is therefore worth examining how translators can make smart choices that cater to a game's foreign audiences based on their cultural knowledge.

Translated media almost always retain traces of their original culture, or what Koichi Iwabuchi calls a "cultural odor"; no localization, no matter how adept, can strip down a creative work to a full cultural neutral (Iwabuchi 27). In fact, Japanese game developers often intentionally retain and rebrand Japanese cultural elements as novelties in Western versions of games. This preservational approach can provide educational moments, allowing players to absorb pieces of Japanese culture through natural gameplay. Other times developers choose to remove more complex cultural traditions from the original culture, sometimes replacing them with more recognizable subjects from the target culture (Sakamoto & Nakajima 793).

In this chapter, I will explore trends in how game developers localize region-specific content and how these decisions influence intercultural communication within gaming communities.

Keeping Japanese Cultural Elements

Thanks to the rise in popularity of elements of Japanese culture such as anime and fashion, localizers have recently exercised more freedom to retain signs of "foreignness" in their games that enhance, instead of detract from, their international appeal (Carlson & Corliss 74). Venuti advocates for this strategy, which he calls "foreignization," and opposes the so-called "violence" of translations that cater too heavily to "aggressively monolingual" cultures like that

of the United States (Yang 78). Foreignization can help video games simultaneously capitalize on a knowledgeable audience's interest in Japanese culture and expose players without much prior knowledge to cultural traditions and styles outside their own.

The global popularity of JRPGs such as Pokémon, Kingdom Hearts, and Final Fantasy in which all the characters are drawn with colorful spiky hair and recognizably non-Western-style art represents this phenomenon excellently. Players of these games, often anime fans, respond well to their characters looking "Japanese-style," reminiscent of the foreign shows they so enjoy, so developers do not tend to redesign or redraw these characters when exporting games to Western audiences. (Notice I specify "Japanese-*style*," not ethnically Japanese. But though the characters often appear *mukokuseki*, the style they are drawn in remains a clear reminder of the game's origins.) The inclusion of dual audio—meaning the option to switch between both English and Japanese voice acting on one cartridge—in many JRPGs also indicates an international desire to play games as Japanese games, not as *mukokuseki* products that exist outside the realm of their original culture.

Similarly, localizers sometimes leave in Japanese cultural content as a novelty to global audiences. For example, in Nintendo's Animal Crossing franchise, players in any region can amass a whole collection of Japanese-themed furniture, even including rather specific references to Japanese culture, like conveyor-belt sushi, *kotatsu*, and mochi pestles. However, some Japanese holiday-themed items appear in Japan versions only, such as the *koinobori* and *hinaningyō* items (TechnoBuffalo). This method of selective exposure works both for general audiences, who enjoy the "exotic" addition of a few different cultural items, and international

fans of Japan, who recognize and appreciate such items as part of their preexisting realm of familiarity.

Such features of games can introduce players to traditional and modern Japanese culture without hitting them over the head with it; sometimes they even spur game writers and vloggers to create content explaining their cultural significance to overseas fans. For example, one article titled "Animal Crossing Pocket Camp: What's All That Japanese New Year Stuff?" on Player.One, a gaming news site, provided helpful context for foreign players confused by the traditional New Year's tangerines and *kadomatsu* hitting their inboxes (Medina).

On occasion, development teams export Japan-specific content to intentionally expose their global audiences to the games' origins. Over the years, localizations of the Persona games have retained more and more of the original setting with each release; *Persona 4 Golden* takes place in the Japanese countryside, and *Persona 5* showcases the districts of Tokyo in both domestic and international versions (Ward). Yu Namba, Senior Project Manager of the localization of the Persona franchise, states that "the [Persona] games had so much Japanese content that our goal was to try to maintain that [content] to… I wouldn't say educate, but maybe introduce Japanese culture to western game players" (Ward). Thus, localizers should consider leaving in cultural content and changing less to cater to international audiences when they can do it in moderation (like Animal Crossing) and/or their fanbase is largely receptive to Japanese culture (like Persona). This way, such exposure will educate and intrigue players without befuddling them.

Removing Japanese Cultural Elements

On the other hand, sometimes localizers switch out Japanese traditions for ones that speak more closely to the experiences of a certain international audience. Venuti calls this "domestication," where the translator tries to "minimize the strangeness of the foreign text" for the target audience (Yang 77). Domestication can benefit games that aim to entice general players who may not be familiar with or receptive to Japan-specific elements that read as too foreign to them. However, domestication does not have to mean eradicating all traces of the original culture; it can mean swapping cultural elements to bring the game closer to the player while still allowing access to cross-cultural gameplay.

Along with retaining some traces of "Japaneseness," Animal Crossing also engages in significant culture swapping when appropriate. In all installments of the series, international versions use appropriate regional holidays and traditions instead of Japanese ones—in Spain's version of *Animal Crossing: New Leaf*, players eat a dozen grapes at midnight on New Year's Eve, whereas in Japan, players eat *toshi-koshi soba* and watch their villagers eat sushi rolls facing the new year's lucky cardinal direction (Iwata). When informed in an interview that players can travel to the in-game towns of people in other countries to experience different holiday traditions, former Nintendo CEO Satoru Iwata excitedly responded, "That's a really good way to promote international exchange! I think that's great!" (Iwata).

Conversely, sometimes localizers go arguably too far, changing nearly everything about a game in an attempt to match an international audience's perceived expectations. The Ace Attorney games are renowned across the internet for their setting switch from Tokyo, where they originally take place, to Los Angeles in the Western version (Ishaan 1). Capcom's Janet Hsu, an

employee involved in the localization, states on the company's blog that the localized Ace Attorney takes place in an alternate-universe LA where "Japanese culture was allowed to flourish and blend into the local culture in the same manner as other immigrant cultures" (Ishaan 1). But some fans felt the choice comically underestimated the intelligence of foreign audiences, exemplified in a well-known webcomic by Katie Tiedrich mocking it ("Ahh, Los Angeles. Truly the greatest city in these United States of America," a character in the comic proclaims while gazing out of a Buddhist temple window at Mt. Fuji) (Tiedrich). Localizers should know their audience; if fans of a series are relatively familiar with Japanese culture, a paper-thin cloak of "American-ness" may come off as insulting or laughable rather than accommodating.

Nevertheless, there lies a double standard in domestication: While Japanese games often include significant Western content, Western versions of the same game tend to domesticate more judiciously, cutting most or all Japanese content from the original. For example, the English versions of Just Dance games feature artists from the West almost exclusively, but the Japanese versions do not only contain Japanese music—they also include many songs from Western singers, such as MC Hammer, the Spice Girls, and Katy Perry. Until recent installments of Just Dance, each Western release would contain only one Eastern song (or, rarely, two), like PSY's "Gangnam Style" or Bollywood's "Katti Kalandal" (Pyae). This disparity exemplifies how much Western culture often makes it into Eastern versions of games compared to how little Eastern culture is usually included in Western versions of games. But just as recent titles in the series have opened access to cross-cultural content through digital streaming, localizers can continue to internationalize game content to the benefit of a more diverse and knowledgeable fanbase.

Chapter 6: Corporate Localization vs. Fan "Delocalization"

Thanks to the rise of digital media, people can access international content more easily than ever before. Thus, many jobs that were once solely left up to professional translators can now (theoretically) be done by anyone with an internet connection. The proliferation of online media has irretrievably altered the translation industry in particular—now fans of foreign cartoons, books, comics, games, movies, TV shows, and music can translate works into any language, post them on the internet, and make them instantly accessible to the whole globe.

But this phenomenon, while undeniably revolutionary and helpful to foreign fans, can sometimes result in poor translations and localization mistakes made by amateur translators. Differences between translations can also fuel uproar among people who prefer fan translations to official ones due to their tendency to be more literal, or linguistically faithful to the original (O'Hagan 105-106). Comparing receptions to these translations will reveal how the disparity between what developers think their players know about Japanese culture and what players themselves think they know can create tension in gaming discourse.

Chopping Off the Invisible Hand

Discourse on translation commonly states that a good translator's work naturally fades into the background, rendering the fact that the work was first written in a different language undetectable and inconsequential to most general readers. Lawrence Venuti calls this the translator's "invisible hand," arguing that "the more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text" (Venuti 1-2). However, problems arise when audience members have some preexisting knowledge of the

source text and/or language, rendering the translator's hand visible and possibly irritating to them, regardless of the translation's fluency. These are the people who can (and sometimes do) fight with the translator over which interpretation of the source material is "correct," occasionally even creating their own fan translations to provide an alternative to official translations with which they disagree.

Corporate localizers and fan translators approach translation with fundamentally different goals. Naturally, companies prioritize bringing in as much revenue as possible by maximizing player enjoyment, while fan translators tend to focus more on being accurate and faithful to the original work. Too many changes in localization, even when done in a genuine effort to help international players, can frustrate those who want to play the same game Japanese players play with no cross-cultural middleman in between. These fans often believe they know enough about Japanese culture to understand the references in the original and feel patronized by the "dumbing down" or "Westernizing" of Japanese content (Mandelin 1).

It is no wonder so many of these fans exist; the exponential rise in popularity of Japanese anime has created legions of non-Japanese people who feel an affinity for the country itself, recognize many key motifs of the culture, and do not appreciate being lumped in with "the masses." Sato-Rossberg and Wakabayashi explain that "for some hard-core gamers, the typical loss in localized versions is often associated with censorship applied to games, in turn driving them to undo such manipulations through subversive actions known as translation hacking" (Sato-Rossberg & Wakabayashi 190). Translation hacking occurs when fans hack a game, write their own translation of it, and port it back into the game, making it available for download to all foreign players who prefer a more strictly faithful interpretation.

37

This prime example of participatory culture in gaming communities speaks to the malleability of translation; different translators produce different work, as there is no one right answer. As Baker emphasizes, no translation represents pure truth; "The existence of multiple [target language] translations for one [source language] text point to the ludic open-endedness of translation where . . . the translation as much as the source text is an 'open work'" (Baker 93). Fan translation even resembles generative gameplay, where players take what game companies give them and create something new, twisting the very nature of the source material in ways developers never anticipated.

In the early days, unofficial translations combated the limited availability of localized versions of JRPGs that contained so much text that companies hesitated to begin the herculean task of translation (O'Hagan 107). This tradition continues today as, in addition to revising perceived injustice in localization, fan translation often brings more obscure Japanese games to foreign players. For example, Sekai Project, a "small group of fans. . . dedicated to bringing the best of the East to the West," translates niche visual novels with small but spirited fanbases in the West and releases them on Steam for profit (Sekai Project). As illustrated, both an impetus to right wrongs in localization and a passion for bringing games to wider audiences can give rise to fan translation.

Fan Translation Wars

Fan translation certainly helps give international players options when choosing how to play a game and empowers fans to interpret the material their own way. But occasionally the existence of an unofficial translation sparks controversy in itself.

38

For instance, a group of fans called Team IF translated *Fire Emblem Fates* and not only left the Japanese text's meaning almost entirely unaltered, but reintroduced gameplay elements from the Japanese versions that localizers had removed, like a "face-petting game" and a scene that was removed for its similarity to gay conversion therapy (Klepek). Fan translators like these also aim to keep the characters' personalities intact, whereas official localizers sometimes tweak them to appeal to Western audiences. One translator from Team IF emphasized that their team felt "more confident in being able to portray the original intended meaning of the Japanese script" (Klepek). Professional *Kingdom Hearts* translator Brian Gray responds, "That whole mindset—that Japanese has 'correct' translations into English and that localizers are people who mangle those perfect answers—is misguided" (Klepek). The controversy over how to best translate *Fire Emblem Fates* reflects a larger "delocalization" movement among fans who perceive localization as a sort of barrier to experiencing the "true" version of the game they want to play.

Sometimes the development of multiple fan translations of the same game sparks conflict among fans. The Danganronpa visual novels had two popular fan translations, one from a "Let's Play" YouTube series and the other from a fanmade English patch of the game (Mandelin 4). Fans of both versions fought with zeal over how the canon term 超高校級, which describes characters' special abilities, should be translated—one goes with "Super High School Level [talent]," and the other chooses "Super Duper High School [talent]" (Mandelin 4). To complicate matters further, the official English localization of the game rejects word-for-word translation entirely and shortens the term to "Ultimate [talent]." Such feuds over seemingly minor discrepancies come from the intense loyalty gamers feel to the games they love. As Clyde

39

Mandelin, writer of the Legends of Localization blog, points out, "there's a weird psychological phenomenon with translations in which the first translation a person is exposed to tends to be the one [they] cling to—they'll refuse to accept any others" (Mandelin 4).

A Note on Amateur Translation from an Amateur Translator

As the creator of a website that provides translations of Japanese fans' comments on the Japanese music industry, I can personally speak to international fans' hunger for English translations of the content they love so much, even if they are unofficial. Often fans who do not know Japanese unabashedly praise fan translations, lauding the translators as "saviors" for allowing them access to content they crave that otherwise would remain indecipherable to them. I have experienced this phenomenon myself; multiple fans have taken time out of their days to comment or email me to express their gratitude. These fans usually do this without trying to decode whether my translation is "accurate" or not—in fact, they assume that because I have studied Japanese and produced a translation with no obvious grammatical errors, it must be correct, or correct enough. (Their faith is helped by the typically low quality of Japanese music companies' official translations; some corporations even plaster their music videos with English subtitles so unintelligible that it is clear they were written by non-native English speakers. By comparison, fan translations often look [ironically] more professional than official translations.)

Unofficial translators certainly appreciate gratitude for their labors and the resulting merit they gain in their communities. However, Svelch suggests that this over-willingness to forgive fan translators and forgo critique of their work (often because the fans who consume it cannot critique it without knowing Japanese) can discourage budding translators from improving

(Svelch). Considering this, amateur translators should keep in mind the limited knowledge of their audience and strive to continue honing their skills, and official localizers should take note that the praise amateurs receive often comes from a place of content deprivation. If corporations themselves would fund more active localization initiatives and translate their own content more professionally, fans would not have to turn to potentially incorrect unofficial translations to get their fill.

O'Hagan warns that in such globally incendiary times, developers must be prepared to deal with these increasingly involved and empowered fans and make consciously smart, strategic localization decisions. Crowdsourced translations will only continue to get better as more people around the world learn different languages and become actively engaged in digital media, and thus, official translations must improve along with them.

Chapter 7: When Localizing Requires Creativity

When translating a foreign work, often translators stumble into phrases or elements from the original that simply cannot be translated literally, as no direct equivalent exists in the target language. This difficulty occurs most prominently when trying to translate things like jokes, puns, and funny names that are based on the preexisting cultural knowledge and shared language of people who come from a certain region. However, adhering to Skopos theory and prioritizing the function of the joke over equivalence to the original can solve humor's "untranslatability" (Chiaro 90).

This chapter will focus on instances where direct translation does not work at all, requiring translators to use their own ingenuity and creativity to convey a similar effect in the target language.

Creativity's Place in Localization

Game localization differs from other types of translation in that the *skopos* is to maximize the enjoyment of the player, not necessarily to remain faithful to the source text itself. Unlike other forms of media, the interactivity of video games results in players experiencing a unique level of intimacy with the text, making sales rely more critically on their connection to the content of the translation. So, to ensure that the text resonates well with the target audience, game localizers often receive notably more creative license to modify the actual content of the source text itself. As Mangiron and O'Hagan state, "With games, fidelity takes a different meaning whereby the translator does not have to be loyal to the original text, but rather to the overall game experience" (Mangiron & O'Hagan).

Therefore, translators of games not only need to be proficient in at least two languages, but also creative in their use of those languages. When hiring translators, Square Enix requests an 800-1000 word creative writing sample in the target language to make sure applicants can tell a story using their own ingenuity, not just translate one robotically (O'Hagan & Mangiron 256). This difference in heart is why Google Translate will not likely ever take over the job of a real translator, and especially not that of a localizer. Thus, translators must be willing to bend the text or even make things up to entertain the target audience just as much as the source game entertained the original audience.

Mangiron and O'Hagan call this practice "transcreation," as the end product literally becomes a new creation of its own, taking on a different cultural flavor for each locale out of necessity (Mangiron & O'Hagan 1). Transcreation can include acts as simple as introducing new accents to replace ones that only exist in Japanese; for example, localizers often give characters who speak in Kansai dialect any variety of accents in English, ranging from Texan to East Coast to vaguely gangster-like. But transcreation often occurs most when translating moments of humor, as comedy is nothing if not steeped in cultural references and shared language. And because Japanese culture and American culture do not yet share many pop culture references outside of a few very popular anime, translators often must flex their transcreation muscles when localizing jokes in video games.

In fact, Japanese-to-English translation may require transcreation more frequently than other language pairs because of significant linguistic differences as well. Without the ability to rely on common Latin roots, prefixes, suffixes, and even grammatical structure, translators cannot get away with as literal translations as they often can when going from English to many

European languages (Costales 399). Even English-to-Japanese translation demands less creativity, as the Japanese language has an approximated 40,500 built-in English loanwords, allowing localizers to simply transliterate many English words and phrases into Japanese (Japan Times 2). But the English language uses very few Japanese loanwords, making direct transliteration impossible, and Japanese humor can often hinge on the use of Chinese characters, or *kanji*, of which English has no equivalent. This considerable linguistic distance between Japanese and English makes creativity even more important when looking for someone to bring such an interactive product from the East to the West—and make it funny.

Jokes, Puns, and Funny Names

Studies show that localizers tend to infuse American versions of games, as well as films and other media, with more humor than their original Japanese counterparts (Mangiron 14). And when tasked with flexing their creativity, translators can come up with some golden material all on their own, at times even surpassing the source game in refreshing originality.

For example, in the Nintendo DS game *Monster Racers*, localizers changed a monster's name from ブッシュ (literally "Bush" in phonetic *katakana*) to the ingenious "Flowrwolf," a palindrome that reflects the two-headed creature's ability to run both backwards and forwards (Mandelin 5). This discovery sparked such joy in one reader of the Legends of Localization blog that the reader wrote in just to notify the blogger, who agreed and then excitedly posted it to the site. Finding unexpected creativity in localizations breeds true passion and fondness for the game in players and thus should not be overlooked.

But the task of a localizer is not always to improve upon the original—often, it is to recreate the same "feel" of a joke or pun in the target language. Searching for parallel, or at least similar, wordplay in another language can prove challenging (and sometimes even impossible), but often with creativity, localizers find a way. The localization for Ace Attorney shines in this department; in both the original Japanese and the English adaptation, all the characters' names are puns, allowing for jokes to naturally flow through the game's dialogue. Table 1 lists some of the best *Ace Attorney* name puns in both languages.

Japanese Name	Japanese Meaning	English Name	English Pun
Naruhodō Ryūichi (成歩堂龍一)	なるほど (means "ah, I see!") "Naru hodo, Naruhodō-san!"	Phoenix Wright	"That's right, Wright!"
Aiga Hoshiidake (星威岳哀牙)	愛がほしいだけ (means "I just want love")	Luke Atmey	"Look at me"
Hozumi Kaku (賀来ほずみ)	確保済み (means "has been secured")	Candice Arme	"Can disarm"
Manii Kōchin (マニィコーチン)	マニーコーチン (means "money coaching")	Manny Coachen	"Money coaching"
Mugitsura Yatabuki (矢田吹麦面)	麦面→麺 Combining the two kanji in his given name results in the kanji for "noodle"	Guy Eldoon	"Noodle guy"
Michiru Onamida (尾並田美散)	美散るお涙 (means "beautifully falling tears")	Terry Fawles	"There he falls" or "teary falls"
Takita Kitaki (北木滝太)	Spells *kita*, or "north" three times in Japanese name order	Wocky Kitaki	"Walkie-talkie" or "walk the walk, talk the talk"
Shouhei Igarashi (五十嵐将兵)	五十嵐将兵 (means "fifty officers and soldiers storm")	Victor Kudo	"Victory, kudos!" "He's earned his Kudos for the day."
Teruo Ukari (宇狩輝夫)	うっかり (means "carelessly")	Pal Meraktis	Spoonerism for "malpractice"
Fumitake Auchi (亜内文武)	アウチ (transliteration of English word "ouch")	Gaspen Payne & Winston Payne	"Gasp in pain" & "Wince in pain"

Table 1. Strategies for Translating Puns

Table 1 clearly shows localizers using many different strategies for translating puns in the same series. Some names imitate the original's wordplay on the character's personality (e.g. Aiga Hoshiidake to Luke Atmey, or "look at me"), others simply transliterate the *katakana* (e.g. Manii Kōchin to Manny Coachen, or "money coaching"), and still more take a different approach to punning entirely (e.g. Takita Kitaki to Wocky Kitaki, or "walkie-talkie"). But all the strategies result in humor that both makes sense to the target audience and retains comic authenticity to the original.

Legends of Localization explores a comedic moment in *Persona 4 Golden* that similarly recreates the meaning of the original in the target language with satisfying dexterity. The joke revolves around a character mixing up syllables in the words *derikashī* (meaning "delicacy," as in politeness) and *dekashirī* (meaning "large bottom"). The Atlus localizers manage to salvage the meaning of the joke in the English version by making the character wrongly pronounce the word "subtle" as "sub-buttle," coming close enough to the original to eliminate the need to rewrite the surrounding text (Mandelin 3). In the translation industry, chances to write with originality can be quite rewarding to translators, especially when greeted with foreign players' uproarious laughter in YouTube Let's Play videos. These examples of creative wit in localization reflect a general consensus in the field: when it comes to translating comedy, plumb the creativity reserves and rewrite it in any way that works.

Lost in Translation

For a joke to be funny, the joker and the listener must be on the same page, which is especially difficult when trying to traverse vast disparities in cultural norms. As a result of this

difficulty, sometimes localizers fail to (or simply cannot) find a clever way to surpass these sociolinguistic barriers, losing some bits of humor in translation.

For example, in one Japanese installment of *.hack*, a character starts telling bad jokes in a mock comedy routine, like "*shiro wa shiroi kara shiro ii*" ("the castle is a good castle because it's white"—a pun on the word *shiro*). However, the English version completely drops the wordplay and replaces it with jarring "non sequitur" questions like "Why is the sky blue?" that come across to players as sheer nonsense (Mandelin 7). Assuming the questions are not meant to be humorous, this is an example of translators missing or ignoring the *skopos* of the text: to make the player groan at comically bad one-liners. Such oversight often works to the detriment of the end product, as players neither get to experience the original intent nor enjoy a playful reinterpretation based on successful localizer creativity.

Another challenge for Japanese-to-English translators lies in translating English loanwords. Japanese games often rely on these words, written in *katakana*, to make character names sound cool and "foreign," which naturally fails to translate to English-speaking audiences. For instance, localizers renamed the Pokémon ブラッキー (literally "Blacky") to "Umbreon" in English, derived from the Latin *umbra* (meaning shadow or ghost). This is because while "Blacky" is a portmanteau of the *katakana* words "black" (pronounced *burakku*) and "lucky" (pronounced *rakkī*) in Japanese, to native English speakers it comes across as a lazy reference to the color of the Pokémon—or worse, a racial slur. Replacing *katakana* with Latin and/or European roots can help recreate the "foreignizing" effect while still referencing languages the audience is familiar with.

As Pokémon illustrates, translation does not have to result in loss of meaningful gameplay elements; even if the specificity of the original Japanese is lost, new value can be gained through localization, and that tradition of continuously adding layers of content from different cultures to the larger media canon is valuable in itself.

Chapter 8: Transcreation and Censorship

In transcreation, in order to cater more appropriately to international audiences, sometimes localizers significantly alter core elements of story and gameplay, not just the words themselves (Bernal-Merino 2018). Often this means the removal of aspects of the game that could potentially cause controversy in a certain culture. For example, Nintendo of America subjected many early Nintendo games to heavy scrutiny and censored any nudity or references to religion that developers thought might offend a North American audience (Mangiron 10). Even now, localizers comb through Japanese games' content to make sure nothing prevents them from getting the American ratings the companies want. Differences in the cultural appropriateness of alcohol, gambling, and sex come to light particularly strongly when analyzing video games, as players often interact *directly* with such elements instead of just watching them on a screen.

In this chapter, I will explore instances of more intense transcreation and/or censorship in localized Japanese games and analyze when it goes over well and when it causes rifts in gaming communities.

Sex, Drugs, and the Celadon Game Corner

In the 1980s and 1990s, Nintendo's United States headquarters altered or banned many Japanese video games for depicting too much blood, violence, alcohol, smoking, or religious symbols. Localizers removed images of the cross from *Earthbound* (1994), which only symbolizes hospitals in Japan, to avoid offending Christians in the West (Collins 59). Western localizations often censor sexual "fanservice" (material intentionally added to please the audience), which is more commonplace and accepted in Japan than the U.S., and change

49

characters' designs to feature more modest apparel. East-to-West censorship applies to everything from skimpy outfits to bars in kids' games, and though foreign fans often do not take kindly to it, localizers must adhere to the cultural mores of countries they release in to make sure the games attain appropriate ratings.

In the early days of video games, Nintendo of America changed mentions of "sake" (Japanese alcohol) to "soda" and "bars" to "cafes," eliminating all connotation of imbibement from American versions (Collins 59). Disparities in cultural norms can account for these modifications; in Japan, drinking culture permeates the workplace, no religion objects to alcohol consumption, and nothing like America's temperance movement has occurred (Milne 388). As a result, unlike Americans, many Japanese people do not view alcohol as a drug, even regarding it as a "safety valve" for one's true feelings in a collectivist culture that values group harmony over all (Milne 388). Thus, Japanese video games sometimes normalized alcohol consumption to a degree that developers thought would make American parents uncomfortable, given that Nintendo's audience in the West largely consisted of children at the time.

Similarly, Japanese cultural differences also extend to racial and political content that would likely spark controversy in the United States and prevent games from attaining a rating under T (for Teen). Nintendo blurred out the appearance of an "insane cultist" character in *Earthbound* (1994) to hide his KKK uniform for the U.S., because while such a character may feel foreign to Japanese players, such stark historical reminders would likely read as inappropriate for an American audience, especially in a children's game (Huang 53). Japanese games also sometimes cast their only black characters as thieves and/or criminals (not unlike much American media, but often more blatantly), resulting in localizers lightening the skin tone

of such characters for Western audiences in old games like *Casino Kid* (1989) as well as recent ones like the mobile game *Fate/Grand Order* (2015) (Huang 53).

However, the practice of wiping Japanese games clean for American release now often result in cries of censorship from players who oppose removing features in the name of localization. In 2015, Karrie Collins conducted a survey asking American Pokémon players, "On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not important and 10 being very important, how important is it to you that Japanese video games be uncensored when they are brought to North America?" Sixty-nine of 83 participants answered with a seven or higher, indicating their desire to play the same game Japanese players enjoy without localizers watering it down (Collins 56). And fan controversy on both sides among foreign players ensued when they found out that Nintendo deleted a scene from the Japanese *Fire Emblem Fates* (2015) that involved the male player character secretly slipping a powder into the drink of Soleil, a canonically "girl-obsessed" female character, to magically shift her romantic focus onto males instead (Polygon 3). Though many agreed with the decision to axe the scene, believing that it too closely resembled gay conversion therapy, some decried it as unjust censorship, with Team IF's fan translation of the game deliberately reinserting the scene to keep faithful to the original (Polygon 3).

But fans do not always react to censorship with animosity. The Celadon Game Corner, a casino in early Pokémon games, features a Voltorb Flip game instead of slot machines in Pokémon games released after 2009 to lessen implications of gambling (Collins 47). Nintendo likely could not have included the slot machines in these later games without having to add a warning for "simulated gambling," to which America's ESRB board automatically ascribes a Teen rating (Collins 52). Presented with the reasons for this change, 21 out of 30 players

questioned by Collins responded with a positive or neutral reaction toward the new Game Corner in *HeartGold* and *SoulSilver*; however, more responded negatively to the Game Corner being removed ("closed down") in the succeeding *Omega Ruby* and *Alpha Sapphire* games instead of replaced with a fun new minigame (Collins 54).

The Celadon Game Corner example illustrates that players will often respond better to censorship when localizers replace the offending material with an engaging alternative rather than remove it entirely. Above all, localizers must respect the norms of different locales regarding suggestive or controversial content while also trying to ensure that players of all nationalities are too enamored by the game to mind a few missing details anyway.

Conclusion

The United States and Japan have led the global video game industry since its beginnings, and analysts project that the market's worth will soar to over 138 billion U.S. dollars by 2021 (Statista). However, Japan's firm grip on the video game industry may not last if developers and localizers do not adapt their games to global audiences. Whether that entails a heavier or gentler hand in localization practices will depend on the game, as every audience is different. The point is, companies and players alike will benefit from a more careful and intentional approach to localization that incorporates actual members of the target culture.

The Role of the Localizer

As previously stated, for the purposes of this thesis, I define translation as transferring content from one language to another and localization as adapting content from one culture to another. For more straightforward, less interactive media, such as manga and television shows, translation without much localization can work well. The consumers of these products almost always know they are reading or watching a foreign product and, naturally, expect the inevitable cultural disparities. However, as this paper has established, players of Japanese video games do not always know they are playing a foreign-made game and thus expect games to conform to their own culture, not the other way around. Therefore, Japanese developers must create games anew for a foreign audience, focusing not on recreating the words themselves, but the *skopos*—the purpose.

The localizer's role is to create the closest approximation of the original game in the target language, making sure that foreign players get the most out of gameplay while also enjoying themselves just as much as Japanese players.

Adhering to Skopos theory will allow developers to produce games that are not identical, but *parallel* to the originals, using cultural references from the target culture when appropriate and adapting to its social mores. Nevertheless, to achieve this level of translation quality and sociocultural specificity, game publishers must hire natives of the target language/culture and treat their input as valuable from the beginning. Establishing stable systems for storing files and game term glossaries would be even more beneficial, ensuring localizers are all on the same page and engaging in swift communication. The currently popular system of cobbled-together teams of freelance translators with randomly assigned roles is not the most organized or effective way to localize games. Game companies would do well to strategize for the long term and invest in more clean, efficient localization processes based in native-level expertise that will increase both their revenue and player loyalty.

Knowing Your Audience

The most useful tool localizers can wield is knowledge of a game's audience. The success of any translation or localization technique is relative and highly dependent on how well it caters to its target audience. Thus, a thorough analysis of who exactly composes a game's core demographic and what those players want out of the game will significantly help developers tweak localization methods for each game to maximize enjoyment and minimize backlash.

Localizers must aim to strike a balance when representing Japanese culture in games—cultural elements must be palatable to foreign players, but also respectful of any interest in or knowledge of Japan they may already possess. Therefore, developers and localizers must know as much as possible about why foreign players are playing their games. Are players generally trying to feed an already existent hunger for uniquely Japanese media (e.g. players of *Yakuza*, *Project Diva*, almost all visual novels)? Are they children and parents who are just looking for an enjoyable game and do not necessarily know or care whether the game is Japanese (e.g. players of *Pokemon*, *Paper Mario*, *The Legend of Zelda*)? Or do they tend to fall somewhere in the middle (e.g. players of *Ace Attorney*, *Fire Emblem*, *Katamari Damacy*)? In order to choose how much Japan-specific content to retain, localizers must recognize what their players already know, cater to what they want, and expose them to doses of a culture outside of their own when appropriate.

The relationship between foreign players and official game translation is also important for localizers to keep in mind. While it is impossible to know for certain exactly how players will react to a game beforehand, developers can study past examples of controversy in gaming communities. Will fans familiar with Japanese culture feel insulted by a too-heavy hand in localization and regard the game as a joke? Will staunch traditionalists take umbrage with censorship and be inspired to "delocalize" the game with their own amateur translations? By considering questions like these, publishers may gain insight into how far they can safely go with localization among their fanbase.

And perhaps most importantly, game publishers must strive to respect the social landscapes of different regions when it comes to handling censorship as well as issues like race,

gender, and sexuality. Out of all the suggestions listed, this effort applies to developers the most, as localizers rarely have the power to delete or overhaul core story elements. Nevertheless, it is essential that games that comment specifically on Japanese society are not allowed to mistakenly take stances on the differing social issues of other countries. Though it may pose a challenge, game publishers should consider a more holistic approach to adaptation when their work handles sensitive subjects. After all, every nation contains a vastly different sociocultural history into which games enter; thereby, game publishers are responsible for making sure their story does not offend their audience or step on the toes of countries' social progress.

The Future of Localization in Japanese Video Games

As access to international content through the internet becomes the norm, video games will likely continue to catch up and allow players to explore other countries' content as well as their own. Developers may even produce more inherently global games like *Pokémon Go* that take advantage of increasingly global citizens and do not need much localization, for they start with international playability as their very premise. But most Japanese video games will still need localizers to bring a human, (hopefully) native perspective to products that were developed in—and naturally, respond to—a cultural context that is vastly different from what many Western players are used to.

Translating interactive works of art so entrenched in a cultural conversation to which many consumers are not privy will always pose a challenge to localizers. However, as the game localization industry matures in the coming decades, more companies may follow the trend of investing in quality localization divisions, hiring native speakers as in-house translators, and

thinking of the English script as a creative endeavor unto itself. And as global media, video games will continue to impact how ordinary people from different cultures perceive each other, making the job of attentive, respectful, and internationally mindful localization even more important.

APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW WITH NORA STEVENS HEATH

Interview with Nora Stevens Heath: Working in Translation Teams

Nora Stevens Heath is a freelance Japanese-to-English translator with more than 25 years of language experience. She earned a B.A. in Japanese and in linguistics from the University of Michigan and has passed the JLPT N1. She has translated for Japanese game companies like Nintendo, Square Enix, and Ubisoft and worked on games across all platforms, from the GameBoy Advance to iOS/Android. In this interview, I asked her about her experience working in groups with multiple translators and how that affects the final game itself.

How has freelance game localization worked for you in the past (working in teams vs. alone, for companies, etc.)?

> **Heath:** I did work alone on a few titles both large and small, but the norm was working in groups. In some cases all of the game text was divided kind of willy-nilly among a handful of translators who actively worked together over E-mail, sending heads-up with glossary updates and questions about the plot or what have you. This could be messy; one of my project managers divvied up the dialogue by character, which sometimes felt like acting against a green screen: my hero character was shouting at the bad guy, and while I knew what the bad guy was saying in Japanese, I didn't know exactly how my colleague would translate it. It turned out all right in editing, but I probably would have done something completely different in the first place had I been more aware of the final context.
>
> Another common way to split up the work was to give the main dialogue (which by this time was usually voiced) to one person, any secondary dialogue (for sidequests--nothing in any cutscenes) to another, and item names and system menu stuff to someone else

59

entirely. I worked with a couple of agencies and one direct client who did things this way. This had less sharing among the translators; you'd ask the agency or client for clarification on various points, they'd ask around, and come back to you with an answer. I remember meeting a translator who happened to also work in games, and after coyly tiptoeing around what we'd been working on lately (our non-disclosure agreements keep us pretty tight-lipped), we realized that we had been translating the same game at the same time: him on the items and system text and me on the dialogue. Four months of a lot of hard work and we had had no idea!

How do you prefer to work?

Heath: I generally like working alone; I am a freelancer, after all. ;) But when there's a really solid system in place to ensure continuity, it's nice to know there's someone out there who gets you and is (hopefully) working just as hard and is just as invested in a good outcome. We've all had bad experiences with groupwork, though, and game translation is not immune.

Speaking of which, my biggest client has their own content management system that requires you to check out files to work on, check them back in when you're done, and mark them ready for review. This makes the most sense to me, and the mechanics and workflow were the least stressful. We also had a huge official glossary that helped a ton. I was here in Michigan while the rest of the team was in Japan, so we would do our work and leave questions for each other to essentially wake up to and tackle in the (local) morning. It would have been great if I could have been on site for that project—there's nothing like it—but there was a rhythm to this process that appealed to me, too.

Are there any specific games that have stood out to you as taking the longest or being the most work-intensive, or even the most fulfilling?

Heath: I'd say Silent Hill 3 was probably the most fulfilling game for me. I relished translating the puzzles, and I appreciate that people still talk about them all these years later (even if I wasn't the one who came up with them). The songs, too; that was fun. Hearing someone sing my words for the first time brought tears to my eyes. And Kingdom Hearts 2 was special for being my first title with my dream company. I think that job took nine months, mostly at home with a month of in-house work at the end for testing and the like, and it did feel like prepping for a birth at times!

How do you think the localization industry has changed?

Heath: I don't feel as though the overall industry has changed that much, at least not from my point of view; clients still send me things to translate and I send 'em back in English. :) Although I've always had the Internet as a resource, it feels like there are so many super-fans (to put it mildly) that you have a good chance of finding absolutely any reference material to do with your job online somewhere. Lately I was pleased to find all 75 episodes' worth of scripts for the next-episode teaser portion of a certain show I'm working on. Someone out there cared enough to type it all out and put it online, and lucky me, I happen to be the one person who could really use it right now.

Games-wise, though, the biggest difference came in programming advances that allowed text boxes to accommodate longer text-string lengths. Once upon a time, translators were limited to English text that was no more than twice as many characters as the Japanese text (because Japanese text is double-byte). As you can imagine, this was often really

challenging, especially for item names and system text where space was already at a premium. As the technology improved, though, we could make our text as long as we liked, and the program was smart enough to wrap lines as necessary and even add extra "pages" if needed. That was a big deal. I'm still unusually aware of line length, which still comes in handy when translating shows for subtitle and dubbing, although it's not as strictly enforced as it used to be in the games industry.

Where do you think the game localization industry is going in the future?

Heath: As for where the industry as a whole is going, I might be naive to think it won't change much. I believe that even the best machine-assisted translation will still require a skilled human's eye, especially for complex languages like Japanese. There will always be things to translate and, hopefully, only more reference materials at hand online and otherwise.

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL KOEHLER

Interview with Paul Koehler: The Changing Localization Industry

Paul Koehler is a freelance Japanese-to-English translator with a news reporting background. He lived in Japan for almost eight years and is proficient in Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) programs. He has in-house experience working for Square Enix and Honda and currently interprets both J-E and E-J for the automotive industry. In this interview, I asked him about the changes he has witnessed in the localization industry and how the localization process has become more demanding.

Can you tell me a bit about your background?

> **Koehler:** With regards to my background, I graduated the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2004 with a B.A. in Journalism and Advertising Studies. I worked as a reporter briefly in my home state before moving to Japan, first working as an English teacher with ECC (one of Japan's many *eikaiwa*, or conversation schools) and as an ALT in a junior high school in Gifu. While I was doing the second job I started translation and have done it ever since.

What experience do you have in game translation?

> **Koehler:** As I began translating in 2009 during the depths of the recession, Square Enix was actually my first in-house translation experience. I didn't work on localization of the titles, but I did work as a support agent dealing with issues for Final Fantasy XIV (among which included translating comments from players to the development team in Tokyo) and translating information from Japan to the US and Europe (Square Enix works with Japanese, English, French and German as their main languages.)

The main title I worked with is Final Fantasy XIV, and I found it the most rewarding as it

is an extremely immersive world that is constantly being updated with input from the

players and developers alike. Game translation has come a long way since the days of

Zerowing and even Final Fantasy Tactics, but as such it is a lot more demanding. In

addition, the pay is not as good given the popularity of the field (supply outstripping

demand for translators). I earn more doing automotive-related translation (my bread and

butter these days) so in terms of monetary rewards there are better fields to pick.

I noticed you have a lot of experience using computer-assisted translation (CAT) programs.

Have they been useful for video games in particular?

Koehler: CAT programs are great, but they are only useful for game translation if the

team you work with has agreed to use them. Sadly, Square Enix was not using CAT

programs when I was working with them, and their use in localization is really on a

project by project basis.

How has the game localization industry changed over the years?

Koehler: It used to be the case where Japanese in-house employees did the English

translations, and they were also limited by the technology they worked with when it came

to text length (think the original Nintendo Entertainment System). Nowadays translations

are done by people who translate into their native language, and not only do they

understand the nuances of the original language, they are able to write in the target

language and often add quite a bit to the translation in the process. Final Fantasy XIV is a

great example of this, many of the English translations contain references to popular

culture that are not present in the original Japanese, but are understood (and hilariously

so) by the target audience playing the game in English.

Why do you say the localization process has become more demanding than in the past?

Koehler: I say the process is more demanding because the expectations of the gamers are

much higher and the expectations on translators are higher still.

How do translators choose which elements of Japanese culture should be heavily localized

to make sense to a Western audience and which ones can stay (or be slightly altered)?

Koehler: It really depends on the title, but I find that some elements of Japanese culture

will stay if they are pertinent to the plot or are easily recognizable by the target audience.

However, certain elements for series/games targeted for kids (think Pokémon and the

like) are changed even more so, with different social mores compared to Japan.

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER O. SMITH

Interview with Alexander O. Smith: Cultural Adaptation

Alexander O. Smith is a freelance Japanese-to-English translator who graduated from Harvard with an M.A. in classical Japanese literature. He worked as an in-house translator for Square Enix in Tokyo for four years and has since moved to freelance based in Japan. He has translated for companies such as Sega, Nintendo, and Capcom and worked on the Final Fantasy series and the Ace Attorney series, among others. In this interview, I asked him how localizers handle Japan-specific content and social issues for Western audiences, as well as where he thinks the industry is headed in the future.

I've heard that you've turned localization "into an art." Does the product change a lot after you (and the other people who work on it) are done with it? Especially with heavily story-based games, I know that sometimes characters' personalities and other details are changed. How do you balance trying to do right by the original game and also cater to an English-speaking audience?

> **Smith:** I wouldn't say the product changes "a lot," other than the obvious change of language. Changes in personalities are often due to how certain archetypes are portrayed in one language/culture vs. the other. For example, in *Final Fantasy VII*, the character Ashe is a strong heroine type in both the Japanese and English version, but her voice is a touch lower and her wording a touch more decisive in the English version. It's not a change to the underlying character, so much as an adaptation so the character feels right in the new, English-language context.

I'd also love to know if there have been any times when you've had to figure out how to translate (or just cut) parts of Japanese culture in games that international players might not understand.

> **Smith:** There is always a (difficult) decision to be made when translating something
>
> culturally specific. I'll use a specific example for clarity. Let's say you are translating a
>
> passage in a book where there is a "kotatsu" (a low, heated table with a comforter over it
>
> for warming up in the winter). If you leave the word "kotatsu" in, you risk confusing your
>
> audience, who probably won't be familiar with the term, and you're introducing a hiccup
>
> in the experience of reading that section that wasn't there for the original audience.
>
> Similarly, if you add in a footnote explaining it, you're once again introducing something
>
> that wasn't in the original reading experience, and could change the tone of the book.
>
> (Am I reading a ripping mystery yarn, or a treatise on Japanese culture?)
>
> Then again, if you take the word out, you might be detracting from the sense of place
>
> built up in the book with descriptions of a specifically Japanese setting.

How do you decide which path to take?

> **Smith:** It's never an easy decision, though there are other factors that can make it easier.
>
> If your audience is specifically interested in access to Japanese culture (like a fansub
>
> audience, for example), then adding a footnote or some other kind of explanation makes
>
> more sense. Likewise, if the setting of the story is fantasy or science fiction, and
>
> something idiosyncratically Japanese sneaks in (like everyone bowing, for example), the
>
> translator has a freer hand in interpreting those cultural elements.

Have you ever been in a situation where cultural differences between Japan and the West on social issues posed a challenge (for example, Kanji's gender/sexuality storyline in Persona 4 Golden)? If so, how did you/the team decide how to handle that for an international audience?

Smith: Nothing so obvious, though I did once adjust the ages of a certain character's victims—he was, essentially, a panty snatcher, and while there was no getting around what he was doing, in the original his targets were young (probably under the age of consent) girls, which in Japan would be considered pretty pervy, but not greeted with the four-alarm fire reaction that kind of situation might inspire in the West. It was changed so his targets were the older/elderly, and not necessarily women. Still pervy in the extreme, but less legally problematic. This change was made after I raised the potential issue with the original dev team and got their OK.

I've also been part of projects where, for age rating purposes, references to underage drinking or tobacco consumption were altered—the manga Dr. Slump, for instance, where cigarettes became lollipops with a quick erase of the wisp of smoke, and a whiskey flask carried by a high-schooler became a jug of sour milk that made everyone dizzy...

It's worth mentioning that in these instances, and in many other instances of "censorship" in cross-cultural media, it's not the localization team's prerogative to adjudicate changes. Rather, the changes are mandated by the Western publisher, either to meet specific criteria for an age rating, or as a result of house policies regarding content. Localization's role is simply to point out potential issues and help resolve any that the publisher requires if the changes are in power to make.

Lastly, how has the localization industry changed over the years, in your experience, and where do you think it is headed?

> **Smith:** In places, things have gotten more organized, with more understanding on the parts of clients and publishers of what is required to produce a quality localization. The most marked improvements, though, are at specific companies that have developed a culture to support localization (either in-house or out-sourced). Outside of those few companies, the industry (at least in the J to E direction) is still immature, with wildly differing pay and expectations. Also, outside of the few in-house positions, pay rates tend to be too low on average to really foster professional development, leading to a constant cycling in and out of recent graduates and other inexperienced workers, which has led to pervasive quality issues.
>
> I do think things are improving overall, however, and I see two trends for the immediate future. The first is something that's been going on for a while, which is pre-localization, or having English-speaking writers on a dev team from the beginning. Increasingly, Japanese game devs who want to sell their product to the Western market are hiring English-speaking writers to write original scripts. If the number of companies doing that expand, it should reduce the demand for translation, which will hopefully mean fewer places doing more of the localization work, with better organization and staffing....but we'll see!

REFERENCES

Abe, Shinzō. "Cool Japan Initiative." Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), 2014.

"Animal Crossing/Version Differences." The Cutting Room Floor,

      tcrf.net/Animal_Crossing/Version_Differences.

"Animal Crossing: New Leaf's Customs Vary by Player's Region." *TechnoBuffalo*, 12 Apr. 2013,

      www.technobuffalo.com/2013/04/12/animal-crossing-new-leafs-customs-vary-by-

      players-region/.

Baker, Mona, and Gabriela Saldanha. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. Routledge,

      2011.

Bernal-Merino, Miguel A. "A Brief History of Game Localisation." Trans. Revista De

      Traductologia. 15, 2011.

Bernal-Merino, Miguel A. "Creativity and Playability in the Localisation of Video Games." The

      Journal of Internationalization and Localization, 2018.

Bitmob. "Kanji Tatsumi: A Look at Sexuality and Gender in Persona 4." *VentureBeat*,

      VentureBeat, 7 Nov. 2009, venturebeat.com/2009/11/07/kanji-tatsumi-a-look-at-

      sexuality-and-gender-in-persona-4/.

Brill, Marlene Targ. *America in the 1980s*. Twenty-First Century Books, 2010.

Carlson, Rebecca, and Jonathan Corliss. "Imagined Commodities: Video Game Localization and

      Mythologies of Cultural Difference." *Games and Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2011, pp. 61–82.,

      doi:10.1177/1555412010377322.

Chavez, Amy. "The Problem of Loanwords in Japan, and Returning Them." *The Japan Times*,

    www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2009/11/28/our-lives/the-problem-of-loanwords-in-

    japan-and-returning-them/#.XHypc-hKhPZ.

Chiaro, Delia. *Translation, Humour and the Media: Translation and Humour Volume 2*.

    Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010.

Chuang, Ying-ting. "The Concepts of Globalization and Localization." The Translation Journal.

    14, 2010.

Colburn, Randall, and Randall Colburn. "Check out These Wonderful 'American' Names from a

    '90s Japanese Video Game." *The A.V. Club*, The A.V. Club, 6 Oct. 2017,

    www.avclub.com/check-out-these-wonderful-american-names-from-a-90s-j-1819219155.

Collins, Karrie. "You Spoony Bard!: An Analysis of Video Game Localization Practices."

    University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2015.

Collombat, Isabelle. "Skopos Theory as an Extension of Rhetoric." *Poroi*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2017,

    doi:10.13008/2151-2957.1236.

Consalvo, Mia Lynn. *Atari to Zelda: Japan's Videogames in Global Contexts*. The MIT Press,

    2016.

Consalvo, Mia Lynn. "Console Video Games and Global Corporations." New Media & Society,

    2006.

Coskrey, Jason. "Defining the Heisei Era: When Japanese Games Went Global." The Japan

    Times, www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/09/29/national/history/defining-heisei-era-

    japanese-games-went-global/#.XHRATehKhPY.

Costales, Alberto Fernandez. "Exploring Translation Strategies in Video Game Localisation."

    Universidad de Oviedo, 2012.

Cowan, Danny. "Japanese Visual Novel Outsells Call of Duty on Steam." *Digital Trends*, Digital

    Trends, 24 Nov. 2015, www.digitaltrends.com/gaming/visual-novel-clannad-beats-call-

    of-duty-in-steam-sales/.

D, Billy. "Persona 5's Cultural Differences Made Localization Very Challenging, Says

    Localizer." *One Angry Gamer*, One Angry Gamer, 16 June 2016,

    www.oneangrygamer.net/2016/06/persona-5s-cultural-differences-made-localization-

    very-challenging-says-localizer/4849/.

Dorn, Louis. "APPROACHES TO TRANSLATION (Language Teaching Methodology Senes).

    Peter Newmark. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981. Pp. 213." Studies in Second Language

    Acquisition, vol. 7, no. 1, 1985, pp. 114–115., doi:10.1017/S0272263100005222.

Erikson, Erik H. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. W.W. Norton & Co., 1994.

Force, Gale. "Censored: 15 Final Fantasy Characters That Had to Be Changed Outside Of

    Japan." *TheGamer*, TheGamer, 10 July 2017, www.thegamer.com/censored-15-final-

    fantasy-characters-that-had-to-be-changed-outside-of-japan/.

Frank, Allegra, and Nick Robinson. "Fire Emblem Fates Won't Have Japanese Voice Option in

    Western Release." Polygon, 6 Feb. 2016, www.polygon.com/2016/2/5/10925232/fire-

    emblem-fates-japanese-language-dual-audio-western-release.

Frank, Allegra, and Nick Robinson. "Here's How Nintendo Changed 'Petting' in Fire Emblem

    Fates." Polygon, 5 Feb. 2016, www.polygon.com/2016/2/4/10920292/fire-emblem-fates-

    petting-skinship-localization-change.

"FSI's Experience with Language Learning." U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of

      State, www.state.gov/m/fsi/sls/c78549.htm.

Gabbiadini, Alessandro, et al. "Acting like a Tough Guy: Violent-Sexist Video Games,

      Identification with Game Characters, Masculine Beliefs, & Empathy for Female Violence

      Victims." Plos One, vol. 11, no. 4, 2016, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0152121.

"Global Video Games Market Value 2021 | Statistic." Statista, Statista,

      www.statista.com/statistics/246888/value-of-the-global-video-game-market/.

Hall, Edward Twitchell. Beyond Culture. Anchor Books, 2003.

Hasegawa, Yoko. *The Routledge Course in Japanese Translation*. Taylor and Francis, 2013.

Hewson, Lance. *An Approach to Translation Criticism: Emma and Madame Bovary in*

      Translation. Benjamins, 2012.

Hjorth, Larissa and Ingrid Richardson. "Pokémon GO: Mobile Media Play, Place-making, and

      the Digital Wayfarer." Mobile Media & Communication, 2017.

Huang, Xiangyi. "How Japanese is Wii? The Reception and Localization of Japanese Video

      Games in America." University of Kansas, 2009.

Ishaan. "Ace Attorney Takes Place In An 'Alternate' Los Angeles, Capcom

      Explains." *Siliconera*, 3 Nov. 2014, www.siliconera.com/2014/11/03/ace-attorney-takes-

      place-alternate-los-angeles-capcom-explains/.

Ishaan. "Pokémon X And Pokémon Y Will Have Seven Languages Available In The

      Game." *Siliconera*, 12 June 2013, www.siliconera.com/2013/06/11/pokemon-x-and-

      pokemon-y-will-have-seven-languages-available-in-the-game/.

Iwabuchi, Koichi. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*.

    Duke University Press, 2003.

Iwata, Satoru. "New Year's Noodles and a Dozen Grapes." Iwata Asks,

    iwataasks.nintendo.com/interviews/#/3ds/animalcrossing-newleaf/0/0.

Joseph, Olivia. "Of Your Own Making: Etrian Odyssey's Genderless Heroes." Medium, 26 Oct.

    2017, medium.com/@ojhh92/of-your-own-making-etrian-odyssey-imagination-and-

    gender-85c7766c3f9f.

"Just Dance Unlimited." Ubisoft - Careers / Search for Jobs, Ubisoft, www.ubisoft.com/en-

    us/game/just-dance-unlimited/.

Kana Trisnawati, Ika. *Skopos Theory: A Practical Approach in the Translation Process*. Englisia

    Journal, 2014.

Kawashima, Nobuko. "'Cool Japan' and Creative Industries: An Evaluation of Economic

    Policies for Popular Culture Industries in Japan." Asian Cultural Flows, 2018.

Klepek, Patrick. "The Fight Over the Best Way to Translate Fire Emblem Fates." *Kotaku*, 24

    Feb. 2016, kotaku.com/nintendo-removes-controversial-scene-from-english-versi-

    1754349779.

Kohler, Chris. *Power Up - How Japanese Video Games Gave the World an Extra Life*. Dover

    Publications Inc., 2016.

"Letters." Next Generation. No. 29. Imagine Media. May 1997. p. 166.

Levy, Indra. *Translation in Modern Japan*. Routledge, 2017.

Lies, Elaine, and Reuters. "Why Japan Is Counting on Anime, Manga to Boost Economy." *ABS-CBN News*, ABS-CBN News, 23 July 2013, news.abs-cbn.com/business/07/22/13/why-japan-counting-anime-manga-boost-economy.

Mandelin, Clyde. "Common Problems When Translating Games into Japanese." *Legends of Localization*, 16 June 2018, legendsoflocalization.com/common-problems-when-translating-games-into-japanese/.

Mandelin, Clyde. "2 Characters in Animal Crossing Who Changed Gender in Localization." *Legends of Localization*, 13 Mar. 2018, legendsoflocalization.com/sex-changes-in-animal-crossing/.

Mandelin, Clyde. "How Persona 4 Golden's 'Sub-Buttle' Joke Works in Japanese." *Legends of Localization*, 14 Aug. 2018, legendsoflocalization.com/how-persona-4-goldens-sub-buttle-joke-works-in-japanese/.

Mandelin, Clyde. "How the Official and Unofficial Danganronpa Translations Led to Fan Disagreement." *Legends of Localization*, 16 Mar. 2018, legendsoflocalization.com/qa-dangan-ronpa-fan-translations/.

Mandelin, Clyde. "There's a Localization Gem in This Generic Pokémon Clone." *Legends of Localization*, 15 Mar. 2018, legendsoflocalization.com/theres-a-localization-gem-in-this-generic-pokemon-clone/.

Mandelin, Clyde. "Why Watt's Gender in Paper Mario Has Caused Confusion." *Legends of Localization*, 3 July 2018, legendsoflocalization.com/is-watt-from-paper-mario-a-boy-or-girl/.

Mandelin, Clyde. "3 Examples of Translated Jokes That Don't Work at All." *Legends of*

    Localization, 17 Feb. 2018, legendsoflocalization.com/qa-these-are-supposed-to-be-

    jokes-right/.

Mangiron, Carmen, et al. *Fun for All: Translation and Accessibility Practices in Video Games*.

    Peter Lang, 2014.

Mangiron, Carmen and Minako O'Hagan. "Game Localisation: Unleashing Imagination with

    'Restricted' Translation." *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 2006.

Mangiron, Carmen. "The Localization of Japanese Video Games: Striking the Right Balance."

    The Journal of Internationalization and Localization, 2012.

Medina, ND. "Animal Crossing Pocket Camp: What's All That Japanese New Year

    Stuff?" *Player.One*, 26 Dec. 2017, www.player.one/animal-crossing-pocket-camp-

    japanese-new-year-event-122645.

Milne, Dave. "Alcohol Consumption in Japan: Different Culture, Different Rules." *JAMC*, 2002.

Molina, Lucia and Amparo Hurtado Albir. "Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and

    Functionalist Approach." *Meta*, 2002.

Nakamura, Toshi. "Everyone Gets Pokemon X And Y At The Same Time. Here's Why." *Kotaku*

    Australia, Kotaku Australia, 4 Oct. 2013, www.kotaku.com.au/2013/10/everyone-gets-

    pokemon-x-and-y-at-the-same-time-heres-why/.

Ng, Keane. "Is Persona 4's Kanji Gay or Not?" *The Escapist*, 28 Jan. 2009,

    www.escapistmagazine.com/news/view/89016-Is-Persona-4s-Kanji-Gay-or-Not.

O'Hagan, Minako. "Evolution of User-generated Translation: Fansubs, Translation Hacking and

    Crowdsourcing." The Journal of Internationalization and Localization, 2009.

O'Hagan, Minako, and Carmen Mangiron. *Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013.

O'Hagan, Minako. "Seeking Delocalization: Fan Community and Game Localization in the Age of User Empowerment." The Journal of Internationalization and Localization, 2018.

Ochsner, Amanda and Jenny Saucerman. "I Choose You! Diversity in the Design of Pokémon." Well Played: A Journal on Video Games, Value and Meaning, 2015.

Odacıoğlu, Mehmet. *Integrated Localization Theory of Translation Studies 1*. International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies, 2017.

Perfect Town Guide - Animal Crossing: New Leaf Guide, www.thonky.com/animal-crossing-new-leaf/list-of-holidays-events.

Petit, Carolyn. "Denial of the Self: Queer Characters in Persona 4." *GameSpot*, 20 Nov. 2012, www.gamespot.com/articles/denial-of-the-self-queer-characters-in-persona-4/1100-6404712/.

"Project Status." *Sekai Project*, sekaiproject.com/pages/project-status.

Pyae, Aung. "Understanding the Role of Culture and Cultural Attributes in Digital Game Localization." *Entertainment Computing*, vol. 26, 2018, pp. 105–116., doi:10.1016/j.entcom.2018.02.004.

Pym, Anthony. *Exploring Translation Theories*. London: Routledge, 2014.

Pym, Anthony. "Localization from the Perspective of Translation Studies: Overlaps in the Digital Divide?" Katmandu: Scalla Conference, 2004.

Pym, Anthony. "What Localization Models Can Learn from Translation Theory." The Global Insider, 2006.

Sakamoto, Mizuki and Tatsuo Nakajima. "The GamiMedia Model: Gamifying Content Culture."

    Cross-Cultural Design, 2014.

Sato-Rossberg, Nana, and Judy Wakabayashi. *Translation and Translation Studies in the*

    Japanese Context. Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

Schwandt, Friedrich. "Video Game Revenue in Japan 2008-2017 | Statistic." *Statista*, 2018,

    www.statista.com/statistics/260176/video-game-revenue-in-japan/.

Svelch, Jaroslav. "The delicate art of criticizing a saviour: 'Silent gratitude' and the limits of

    participation in the evaluation of fan translation." *Convergence: The International*

    Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, 2013.

Tiedrich, Katie. "Culture Schlock." *Awkward Zombie*, 2013,

    http://www.awkwardzombie.com/index.php?comic=120913.

Tobin, Joseph. *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*. Duke University

    Press, 2004.

Venuti, L. *The Translator's Invisibility*. London: Routledge, 2018.

"Video Games: A Winning Strategy for Japan." Nippon.com, 21 Jan. 2019,

    www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a04103/video-games-a-winning-strategy-for-japan.html.

Waeraas, Arild, and Jeppe Agger Nielsen. "Translation Theory 'Translated': Three Perspectives

    on Translation in Organizational Research." International Journal of Management

    Reviews, vol. 18, no. 3, 2016, pp. 236–270., doi:10.1111/ijmr.12092, 2016.

Ward, Robert. "Localizing Persona: An Interview With Atlus's Yu Namba." *Siliconera*, 20 July

    2015, www.siliconera.com/2015/07/20/localizing-persona-an-interview-with-atluss-yu-

    namba/.

Yang, Wenfen. "Brief Study on Domestication and Foreignization in Translation." *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, Vol. 1, 2010.