Degree Project

Level: Bachelor's

A comparative study of translation strategies applied in dealing with role languages.

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A translation analysis of the video game *Final Fantasy XIV*

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Abstract

Localisation is the process of taking a product and adapting it to fit the culture in question. This usually involves making it both linguistically and culturally appropriate for the target audience. While there are many areas in video game translations where localisation holds a factor, this study will focus on localisation changes in the personalities of fictional characters between the original Japanese version and the English localised version of the video game Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn and its expansion Heavensward for PC, PS3 and PS4. With this in mind, specific examples are examined using Satoshi Kinsui's work on *yakuwarigo*, role language as the main framework for this study.

Five non-playable characters were profiled and had each of their dialogues transcribed for a comparative analysis. This included the original Japanese text, the officially localised English text and a translation of the original Japanese text done by myself. Each character were also given a short summary and a reasoned speculation on why these localisation changes might have occurred.

The result shows that there were instances where some translations had been deliberately adjusted to ensure that the content did not cause any problematic issues to players overseas. This could be reasoned out that some of the Japanese role languages displayed by characters in this game could potentially cause dispute among the western audience. In conclusion, the study shows that localisation can be a difficult process that not only requires a translator's knowledge of the source and target language, but also display some creativity in writing ability to ensure that players will have a comparable experience without causing a rift in the fanbase.

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1. <u>Introduction</u>

One of the biggest milestones for me when it comes to learning a language is the ability to read and understand a source material without the aid of a translation, as it shows that all your hard work is finally paying off. Many people who have studied or are still studying a second language can most likely relate to this kind of an achievement as it gives us many new options. For example it felt good to first be able to enjoy various forms of media entertainment that were first released in Japan, before they being accessible to the rest of the world much later via the official localised English version. But after becoming more knowledgable of what a localisation could entail I have decided to conduct further research of what a localised game could mean and what it bring to its audience.

When we look at a localisation, the most common types of differences are names of certain characters and locations, and in video games there is also gameplay related differences such as the names of items and skills. But when it comes to video games there are also times when discussion leads to a certain video game cutscene or a specific character within the game and some people would respond: "*But that didn't happen in my version"*. Usually it is something trivial, perhaps a line was omitted or perhaps one version offered more exposition surrounding an event while the other tried be more vague and mysterious about it, but in the end both versions lead to the same conclusion. But there are also instances where a certain cutscene might had been altered completely; what seemed to be fine in the original version was considered to be inappropriate in the localised version and thus had to be changed. The latter is usually what sparks dispute within the fanbase, with criticism such as fans wanting to experience the original work instead of the version which catered to the targeted audience[1].

While it may seem strange, localisation changes are not really that uncommon in video games. Whether it happens visually, such as changing the color of an enemy unit or changes within the translated script, like omitting a particular dialogue. In fact, any game set for an international release will have some form of a localisation change, and the localisation process is nowadays so crucial to the finalization of a game that most publishers and developers will have its localisation team integrated and working together with the writing staff. This is considered a major step forward in modern computer and software industry as the localisation process were once more of an afterthought and something that was only done after a product had been finalized[2].

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1   O'Hagan, Minako and Carmen Mangiron. "A brief case study of Square Enix". *Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry*: 179-200. 2013.

2   Bernal Merino, Miguel. Translation and Localisation in Video Games: Making Entertainment Software Global. London and New York: Routledge, 2014

Translation studies concerning video games bring forth many questions as the work done surrounding this area is rather scarce, as video games are a niche in media entertainment. But like the computer and software industry, the video game industry has grown as a media entertainment and is today widespread in our community, and it is not limited just to consoles and computers but has also reached out to smartphones and tablets as well. But what makes video games different from other platforms such as novels is that it focuses on entertainment and player experience first and foremost, leaving language as a secondary focus[3]. This eventually boils down to what 'localisation' is about and why story sections and dialogue could change depending on what version of a game you were playing. As the name implies, localisation involves making a product fit for its target culture, and in this case due to differences in linguistic and cultural aspects between the Japanese and English language, there are some interesting outcomes to be found and discussed.

Therefore I decided to do just that. By examining several characters' personalities in the original Japanese version of the video game 'Final Fantasy XIV', and then compare these to their English counterparts I hope to gain a better understanding of localisation issues and how translators handle them. This would then potentially lead to some interesting conclusions surrounding localisation and its field within translations studies.

1.1 List of terms and slangs

- Elezen – One of the six major races in this game and is the typical 'Elf' race found in most fantasy genres.

- Eorzea – A region in the world of Eorzea in which the majority of the story takes place.

- Ishgard – A City-state in Eorzea located to the north. The land is currently suffering an eternal winter caused by events related to the plot.

- Heavenwards – The expansion to the game Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn.

- Hydaelyn – The world that FFXIV takes place in.

- Mage - A person skilled in the use of magic.

- MMORPG – An acronym of the term Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game. In short, it's similar to RPGs but contains online interactivity, where players from all around the world can play together.

- NPC – Non-player character, a term referring to characters in a video game that isn't controlled by a player.

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3   Mandiberg, Stephen. *"Translation (is) not localization: Language in gaming."* University of California, 2009.

- Primal – A magical entity worshipped as false Gods.
- RPG – Role-playing game, a type of video game genre that puts heavy emphasis on story, worldbuilding and character development.

1.2 Background

With the rapid growth of international markets and the rising demand for interactive entertainment software, localisation has today become a well-established practice thanks to the ever growing globalisation of the computer and software industry. This has in turn given rise to several new fields of specialisation within translation, one of them being 'game localisation'. However when localisation is mentioned, its meaning and relationship to translation studies remains ambiguous[4]. Arguments include that the term "localisation" should be considered inaccurate when used within the context of translation studies, as localisation "is just a catchphrase for a long list of smaller tasks"[5] with translation being only one stage of the localisation process. There are other concerns such as when it comes to following the traditional rules of translating, like faithfulness to the source material[6]. This is highlighted by the fact that game localisation is distinguished from other types of translations due to its 'Skopos', first mentioned by Vermeer (1978). With Skopos being the Greek word for aim or purpose, the basic concept of the Skopos theory is that all text are written with a specific purpose in mind. The translator then tries to imitate that purpose when producing a translation to its target audience. In terms of video games, being able to replicate a similar player experience is more important than providing an accurately translated text. This means that the translators here are granted freedom in modifying, adapting or outright removing possible translation issues such as cultural references, puns and wordplays that may or may not work in the target language[7][8], thus making it the main difference that separates game localisation from subtitling and book translations.

In his book "Exploring Translation Theories"(2010), Anthony Pym highlights some of the reasons on why the localisation industry remains as ambiguous as it is. Pym writes that many academics today have shown little to no sign of taking the localisation industry seriously, claiming that the term 'localisation' to be a fancy new term for translation brought by the increasing

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4 O'Hagan, Minako, and Carmen Mangiron. "*Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry."* , 2013.
5 Bernal Merino, Miguel. "*On the translation of video games."* In the Journal of Specialised Translation, Issue 6, 2006.
6 Mandiberg, Stephen. *"Translation (is) not localization: Language in gaming."* University of California, 2009.
7 Bernal Merino, Miguel. "On the translation of video games." *In the Journal of Specialised Translation*, Issue 6, 2006.
8   O'Hagan, Minako, and Carmen Mangiron. "*Game Localisation: unleashing imagination with 'restricted'translation."* The Journal of Specialised Translation, Issue 6, 2006.

globalisation and technological advancements[9]. Some academics also argues that there is nothing new in localisation and that it should be considered as a special kind of translation, similar to the Skopos theory. Pym also mentions that the localisation industry generally sees translation as a part of localisation but also acknowledges its close relation to globalisation, meaning that translators have to adapt their work in accordance with their target audience or the demands of the market.

This should illustrate the possibility that certain story segments, dialogue and characters can be altered in order to better fit a certain market, such as the preferences between the Japanese and the Western market. One such example is the video game *NierReplicant*(2010) which was originally released in Japan and later in Europe and North America as *NierGestalt*(2010). In the Japanese version, the story is about a brother saving his dying sister. However in order to better fit the western market[10], the brother was instead replaced by a completely new character, this time a father trying to save his dying daughter. This was a decision made by the publisher Square Enix which sparked debate and criticism amongst their fans[11], which gives an important insight on what consequences and impact a localisation decision can have.

1.3 Aim

In the world of fiction, there are times when we would encounter characters that with their unique actions, speech and mannerisms could draw us in, thus making them memorable and easily recognisable. When it comes to dialogue, this is mainly defined in how they speak and interact with other people. These types of traits being evident by having them fit a typical stereotype or in this case *yakuwarigo*, or role language as we call it in English. But some *yakuwarigo* doesn't translate well into another language. This could be explained by the flexibility the Japanese language has in developing unique *yakuwarigos*, with its wide selection of first-person pronouns and endings such as copulas and sentence-ending particles[12].

However, there are also cases where the characterisation has been toned down, omitted or perhaps altered completely. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to determine what kind of difficulties arise when localising a video game, by analysing each respective version of the Japanese and English script. Since the discussion on localisation changes in this thesis are focused on personalities of fictional characters, Satoshi Kinsui's work on *yakuwarigo* will be used to support my research. This

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9   Pym, Anthony. *Exploring Translation Theories:* 136-140, 2010.
10 http://www.inside-games.jp/article/2010/05/18/42090_2.html
11 O'Hagan, Minako and Carmen Mangiron. "A brief case study of Square Enix". *Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry*: 179-200. 2013.
12 Teshigawara, M. & Kinsui, S. "Modern Japanese "Role Language" (Yakuwarigo): Fictionalised orality in Japanese literature and popular culture." *Sociolinguistic Studies Vol 5,* No 1. 37-58, 2011.

will be followed by a reasoned speculation on why these changes might have occurred and on whether or not it was necessary; as there are points where translation decisions, while deemed correct from a translator's understanding of a target text may not always reflect the same with its audience.

1.4 Research question

In this study I will analyse the change in several character personalities in the video game Final Fantasy XIV, comparing the original Japanese version with the English localised version. Detailing the transformation of characters between each respective version is important as it helps us in gaining a better understanding of translation issues when localising characters, and will also provide insight as to the reasons for making such changes. As the subject of this study is a video game, the dialogue are usually accompanied by a cutscene involving fictional characters interacting. Since the main focus in this study is based on the linguistic aspect, the visual and auditory aspects are thus omitted and only brought up if it helps in further complementing the identity of a character.

The following is the research question of this study:

- Are there any significant changes in the personalities of characters in the translated version? And if there are, how and why?

An additional question that will be answered first as it will help in answering the previous research question:

- What kind of translation issues can be commonly found when localising certain *yakuwarigo*?

1.5 Previous research

Software and video game localisation is not only a relatively new field but it also demands a different approach compared to other types of translations. First coined by software developers in the late 1980s, the 'localisation' sector first emerged with the rise of the consumer software industry, where major companies like Microsoft was developing software for the North American market. This eventually expanded and other language versions were introduced. From English to German, English to French, English to Spanish, and so on. But as market grew software publishers began to realise that just a simple one-language-to-one language translation model wasn't enough. As Pym

puts it:

""Localization" can involve a wide range of tasks; it usually concerns information technology and marketing, as well as language skills."[13]

Localisation can involve a wide range of tasks, with many of them requiring the assistances of other areas. This is why a localisation process is mainly carried out by teams, in which translators are a part of. The Localisation Industry Standards Association (LISA) defines the term 'localisation' as:

"Localisation involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold."[14]

As for research in translation studies regarding game localisation, there are a number of articles and studies written by Carmen Mangiron and Minako O'Hagan as they focus on translation issues between games translated into English and their respective original versions. A few of their works are referenced in this study. They also provide insight on the thought process involved when localising a script from one language to another. By having first-hand experience in game localisation while also having conducted several interviews and case studies on Square Enix, a company best known for their role-playing video games franchises including the Final Fantasy franchise, their research should allow for a better understanding of some of the problems in video game translation and localisation.

Stephen Mandiberg has also published an article regarding video game localisation. In "Translation (is) not localization: Language in gaming."(2009), he considers it to be flawed and somewhat inaccurate when used in the context of translation studies. He claims that localisations have the possibility of ignoring linguistic differences as its intention is different from those of standard translation, valuing entertainment above accuracy. There are limitations and rules to be considered such as age-rating, cultural references and action and word synchronization. Instead of working around some of these issues, localisation teams may choose to ignore them, which can often produce a confusing result if not applied properly, loss of context being one of the mentioned examples.

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13 Pym, Anthony. *Exploring Translation Theories:* 121-124, 2010.
14 Pym, Anthony. *Exploring Translation Theories:* 122, 2010.

2. Theory

2.1 Game localisation

Most localisations today combine elements of audiovisual translation and software localisation, which can in return blur the meaning and the relationship between 'localisation' and 'translation'. And due to the lack of theorization it remains ambiguous within the field of translation studies. In the case of video games, its primary objective is to provide entertainment to its consumers. This implies that unlike most software localisation which involves websites and computer softwares, video games is a form of media entertainment that considers equal player experience a more important factor than translation accuracy[15].

Defying the standardisation of how we approach translation, game localisation requires a translator's creativity in conveying the right tone and message to its target audience while set under a number of restrictions. On the other hand, this could potentially allow translators the freedom to heavily alter content within a video game compared to other platforms such as novels and movies. Even more so if the translators are working closely with the developers. As Mangiron and O'Hagan puts it, the main priority of a game localisation is to create a similar yet equally enjoyable experience which caters to its audience. Thus, game localisation is about giving the players the '*look and feel*' of the original, yet managing to pass itself off as the original.

2.1.1 Translation strategies applied in game localisation

During a localisation process translators needs to follow guidelines set by the publisher while also preserve the same player experience across all regions where the game is scheduled to be released in. Some examples of common challenges a translator face that could affect the source material:

- − Age rating
- − Cultural references
- − Market driven adjustments

Age ratings may differ depending on the country the game is set to be released in. In one example Bernal mentions in his article "On the Translation of Video Games"(2006) that while some games may display blood, abusive language and excessive violence in the US, the same does not

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15 O'Hagan, Minako, and Carmen Mangiron. "Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry.", 87-91, 2013.

apply in Germany where any depiction of blood and Nazi symbols is completely forbidden[16].

 Cultural references, wordplays and puns are often subject to localisation. Other types of localisation issues are words or phrases with cultural context, the inadvertent use of taboos and discriminatory words etc. An example of cultural context highlighted by Mangiron and O'Hagan is the word '*arigatou*'[thank you], a simple word yet able to convey multiple layers of meanings depending on the context. In one of the final scenes of the video game "Final Fantasy X"(2001), the key female protagonist Yuna is about to say farewell to the main character Tidus, who also happens to be her love interest. Realising that she will never see him again Yuna slightly bows to Tidus while saying '*arigatou*' to him. While deemed appropiate in the Japanese version a literal translation into 'thank you' was deemed as too awkward from an North American perspective. So in order to alter the scene to better fit the target culture additional work had to be performed on lip-synch for voiceover while the line was to be changed into 'I love you', as the translation team deemed it more appropriate for the western audiences[17]. Another interesting fact mentioned in the same study was that this decision turned out to be quite controversial amongst some of the fans of the series, with one side arguing that it didn't fit in with Yuna's characterization and the other side justifying it as a necessary change from a functional and cultural standpoint.

 The source material may also be altered based on what the developers/publishers think what their audience might prefer. In the case of *NierReplicant* and *NierGestalt* mentioned earlier, the company Square Enix believed that a more mature theme and an older protagonist would resonate better with American players while deeming that the Japanese players would rather prefer a younger protagonist and a more fantasy-driven story.

 To counteract this a translator is often granted creative license to freely modify, adapt and remove content they deem neccessary in order to preserve the ga-me experience. A common practice that Mangiron and O'Hagan calls the technique of '*compensation*', i.e., '*introducing a new feature in the target text to compensate for a different one that could not be reproduced somewhere else in the text*'. While the usage of compensation is deemed common in game localisation, it departs from standard translation practices where a translator should stay true to the source material[18].

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16 Bernal Merino, Miguel. "On the translation of video games." In the Journal of Specialised Translation, Issue 6, 27-28, 2006

17 O'Hagan, Minako, and Carmen Mangiron. "*Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry."*, 173-174, 2013.

18 O'Hagan, Minako, and Carmen Mangiron. "*Game Localisation: unleashing imagination with 'restricted'translation."* The Journal of Specialised Translation, Issue 6, 2006.

2.2 <u>Yakuwarigo</u>

The term "*yakuwarigo*", in other words role language was first coined by Kinsui back in 2000. Kinsui explains that a *yakuwarigo* is a specific profile that can be imagined via a specific language usage such as vocabulary, expression or intonation etcThis principle can be applied vice-versa as a specific profile and can also be used to imagine how a person will act and speak(age, gender, nationality etc)[19]. There are characteristics that can help in profiling someone, everything from how a person laughs to the tone of their voice(a commanding voice, breaking off mid-sentence etc). Kinsui's theories and dictionary of various *yakuwarigos* such as his own dictionary for *yakuwarigo* "*Yakuwarigo: kojiten*" provides insight on common *yakuwarigo* types and may lead us to understanding why translation issues could occur when localising role languages. Perhaps there are cases when there is no *yakuwarigo* equivalent in the target language. Other possibilities might also be characters that are being targeted to a specific culture, some perhaps also being used in tackling certain issues considered taboo in other countries, all of which may have influenced the outcome of a translated text.

Here are some examples provided by Kinsui[20]:

a. 「そうじゃ、わしが知っておるんじゃ」(Elderly man)

Sou ja, washi ga shitteorujya

b. 「あら、そうよ、わたくしが知っておりますわ」(A lady of high-class royalty)

Ara, sou yo, watakushi ga shitteorimasu wa

c. 「さよう、拙者が存じておる」 (Samurai)

Sayou, sessha ga zonjiteoru.

d. 「そうだよ、ぼくが知っているよ」(Young boy)

Sou da yo, boku ga shitteiru yo.

e. 「んだ、おら知ってるだ」 (Someone from the countryside)

Nda, ora shitteiru da.

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19 Teshigawara, M. & Kinsui, S. "Modern Japanese "Role Language" (Yakuwarigo): Fictionalised orality in Japanese literature and popular culture." Sociolinguistic Studies Vol 5, No 1. 37-58, 2011.
20 Kinsui, S. Yakuwarigo: Kojiten. Kenkyusha, 2014.

While all of the above translates to "Yes, I know", the usage of a different first-person pronoun, copula, sentence-ending particle and certain vocabulary helps us paint a specific profile that matches a certain type of character or stereotype.

While Kinsui's research has been expanded upon by several other authors he is still referenced to this day as the foundation for their studies. In one study Kinsui and Teshigawara guides us through the connection between spoken language and the depiction of character stereotypes using fictional works like manga, anime and classic literature as examples. As role language plays a huge part in Japanese fiction and story telling one must also realise the fact that role language is something that is unlikely to be applied in real-life scenarios. It is also not something exclusively to the Japanese language as variations can also be found in other languages, it is just that no other language is known to be as diverse as Japanese when it comes to the amount of linguistic markers.

Kinsui's own study has been divided into four sections:

(a) To provide the framework of *yakuwarigo*, which includes an analysis on linguistic stereotypes with examples like '*ara',* an interjection used to show that the speaker is a female, usually coupled with the sentence-ending particle '*wa*'.

(b) To conduct an analysis on already established role languages in Japanese fictions. This includes the 'elderly male language', typical stereotypes of Japanese dialects such as Kansai or Osaka, with the latter having main characteristics of either a joker, someone affiliated with greed or desire and a stereotypical Yakuza type or someone being scary.

(c) Comparing role language to other languages other than English.

(d) The authors' findings and conclusion.

Besides research on linguistic stereotypes Kinsui has also studied the functions and historical changes of the Japanese language. He pinpoints that some fictional role languages had originally an actual language usage, but had succumbed to exaggeration, transforming into the role language we see in fiction today.

3. Method

3.1 Material

This study will examine and compare dialogue from selected characters, between the

original Japanese version and the English localised version of Final Fantasy XIV. Covering both the base game, the add-on content consisting of "patches", followed by the expansion pack "Heavensward". The latter is similar to what a patch is but the scale of the content is much larger, comparable to the base game. The script of a single patch contains over 100.000 words of English text, and double that for Japanese characters[21]. However since only dialogue from a few selected characters in the game will be covered it will thus limit my research to a more manageable level. When comparing the dialogue of each respective version the focus will be on changes, adjustments and omissions as the aim is to analyse the motivation behind localisation changes. Outcomes will be discussed and enough information will be provided to form an overall impression of the localised version. If there is any area that might require further input I will be using a few references in order to help improve my analysis, but mainly "The Routledge Course in Japanese Translation"(2013) by Yoko Hasegawa.

Two reasons led me into choosing this video game. The first reason is the genre and the brand of the video game. Final Fantasy is a role-playing game(abbreviated RPG). RPGs are a type of video game genre that puts heavy emphasis on story, worldbuilding and character development. As such, most modern RPGs features cutscenes, both voiced and texted dialogues. Through storytelling, the game introduces the player to fictional locations, cultures and characters. Final Fantasy XIV is the fourteenth entry in the world famous, long-running franchise (not including spin-offs).

The second reason is personal experience. I have already played through and finished most of the content so I am familiar with both the story and the characters while also being accustomed to most of the references used within the series and the genre in general. This gives me enough confidence in tackling this research as it allows me to quickly adapt to the varied content within the script and avoid common translation problems that usually occur when one is not familiar with the franchise and its various references, common RPG tropes and specific terms exclusive to the franchise.

When performing a purely textual research is the loss of imagery, which may prove to be difficult to explain with words alone. Examples such as scenes that carry different emotional weights in it. For example a character having a more comical personality will use a different type of body language and expression to accommodate for the change in tone. A character befitting a particular stereotype may also be told through aspects such as appearance, facial expressions and manner of speech. To help alleviate on this matter key expressions and other manners important to the overall tone of the cutscene will be listed in a short comment next to its title.

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21   FFXIV ARR: Fan Festival Lore Panel, 2014.

3.1 1 <u>Final Fantasy XIV</u>

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn, also known as Final Fantasy XIV, is an MMORPG developed and published by Square Enix for Microsoft Windows, OS X, Playstation 3 and Playstation 4. It is the fourteenth installment in the series and is considered a relaunch of the original Final Fantasy XIV which launched back in 2010. The original game suffered many issues and was widely considered as an unfinished game, and due to heavy criticism not only did it prompt an official apology but also the replacement of its original development staff. The game was then completely rebuilt from scratch and officially relaunched along with a brand new subtitle labeled 'A Realm Reborn'. It had a worldwide release on August 27th, 2013. The game is rated suitable for players ages 15 and up(CERO for Japan and PEGI for Europe). Titles in this category may contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling and/or infrequent use of strong language[22].

Set in the ficional world of Hydaelyn, the players spend the majority of their time in one of the regions called Eorzea. You start the game as an adventurer and throughout the story you combat monsters and demons in order to restore peace to the realm. Taking place in a high fantasy setting, the game shares many typical characteristics of other major high fantasy titles with the most famous one being The Lord of the Rings series by author J.R.R Tolkien. Typical characteristics of high fantasy include fictional races like elves, dragons and demons, along with the presence of magic.

The player character is customizable, starting by choosing to be either male or female. There are six races to choose from, each with their unique lore and background. Your choices will then affect how other characters perceive you from within the game which can ultimately change the outcome of a cutscene.

3.2 <u>Process of Translation</u>

Tools that will assist me in translating dialogues are online Japanese to English dictionaries such as Eijiro(www.alc.co.jp) and Weblio(http://ejje.weblio.jp/), mostly chosen based on previous experience and recommendations. As for acquiring the dialogue for translation I will be using XIVDB(http://xivdb.com/), a search database primarily used to read in-game data which includes dialogue by NPCs. I may also just read and translate the dialogue by manually viewing the cutscene in-game or if possible, find a recording on popular video sharing websites like

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22 http://www.esrb.org/ratings/ratings_guide.aspx

Youtube(www.youtube.com) or NicoNicoDouga(www.nicovideo.jp).

3.3 Method of Analysis

The method of analysis is seperated into three sections:

- Profile: Describe the character while identifying its personality and any particular *yakuwarigo* associated to it. A screenshot of each character will also be included. Visual and auditory cues are mentioned if they help on emphasising the *yakuwarigo*.

- Translation: In order to compare the written dialogue in each respective version a transcript of both versions will be included in the study for reference. A translation of the original Japanese dialogue will also be done to showcase what has been altered in the localised version. Any significant change in expression, movement or intonation of characters will be detailed at the beginning of each example via a short comment. A further insight may also be provided if necessary for the sake of context.

- Discussion: Here I will analyse the each version and provide a reasoned speculation on why these changes might have occurred and finally summarise on why these changes may have happened and on whether or not it was deemed necessary.

3.3.1 Abbreviations related to the analysis

- JP = The Japanese version of the text.

- RT= Romanised text of the Japanese text.

- EN = The localised English version of the text.

- MT = My translation, in this case my own attempt at translating the source text.

- PLAYER = The player's name. In Final Fantasy XIV, you are free to customize your character, including being able to decide your character's name. But for the sake of convenience the term "PLAYER" shall be used. The player character is usually silent throughout the game and replies are expreseed via simple animations like "nod", "laugh", "shrug" etc.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Four non-playable characters were profiled and had each of their dialogues transcripted for a comparative analysis. These five characters were chosen based on their characterisation in the game and how different they were portrayed in each language version. The role language these characters use and the way translators handles them should provide a decent sample on how a localisation process can drastically change a character's characterisation which can ultimately affect storytelling as a whole.

Figure 1

Character #1: Haurchefant / オルシュファン

Profile: Introduced as a minor character, Haurchefant is a lord and an Ishgardian commander stationed in Camp Dragonhead, a military fort outside the isolated City-state Ishgard which is currently at war with dragons. While most Ishgardians are rather reluctant in trusting outsiders, Haurchefant is very open-minded about guests and always welcome them with open arms. An unusual trait among his peers as they hold a more stoic and uptight personality, a common stereotype befitting battle-hardened soldiers. His personality also reflects this as he approaches the player in a cheerful and optimistic demeanor, and in the Japanese version of his dialogue it is particularly shown via his flamboyant words and expressions. His catchphrase is 「イイ」 (*ii*) and he uses the masculine final particle 「ぞ」 (*zo*). He refers himself by using 「私」 (*watashi*), a pronoun that can be seen as neutral. It can also signify politeness or high social status, with the latter referring to the pronounciation 「私」 (*watakushi*) instead.

In the following cutscene, the PLAYER has just returned from a quest is reporting back to Haurchefant.

Translation:

1. Meeting Haurchefant after completing a quest:

   (JP)「おおお、[PLAYER]ではないか！ どうした、さらに強靭になった肉体を、私に披露しにきたのか！？」

   (RT) "Ōo, [PLAYER] de wanai ka! Dō shita, sarani kyōjin ni natta nikutai o, watashi ni hirō shi ni kita no ka!?"

   (EN) "Well, well, if it isn't my fine friend, [PLAYER]! Would you care for a plate of roast karakul? Some mulled wine?"

   (MT) "Oh, if it isn't [PLAYER]! What brings you here? Have you perhaps come to show me the development of your sculpted body?"

Context: This cutscene occured in patch 2.3, the third add-on content in Final Fantasy XIV. While still considered a minor character back then Haurchefant was the PLAYER's main representative in the areas around Ishgard. His eccentric behaviour and obsession with the PLAYER's body was a recent addition to the game. But it particularly stood out due to the rest of the characters around Ishgard being so stoic and cold personality-wise since they were suffering from the endless war with the dragons. While Haurchefant's friendliness is carried out in the EN version as well, the sudden comment about the PLAYER's body has been replaced in exchange for offering the PLAYER more hospitality.

2. A line said by Haurchefant after you accepted his next request [your character nods in both versions]:

   (JP)「そうかそうか！支援物資の件は遺憾だが‥‥‥期せずして、お前の汗が‥‥‥再びこの雪原にきらめく日がきたようだな！」

   (RT) "Sō ka sō ka! Shienbusshi no kudan wa ikanda ga kisezu shite, omae no ase ga futatabi kono setsugen ni kirameku hi ga kita yōda na!"

   (EN) "Halone's blessings be upon you! Though I take no pride in the admission, many of mine own countrymen are not so well suited as you adventurers to dealing with such foes. Were they dragons, it might be otherwise!"

   (MT) "I see, I see! Although the matter with the supplies leaves much to be desired, it has led to your unexpected return. It seems the day has come for your sweat to sparkle in these snowy fields once more!"

Context: While Haurchefant's cheerful behaviour continue on in both versions, the last line from the JP version is quite bizarre and rather suggestive.

3. Followed by [JP version only: Haurchefant is holding his arms up in this air, excited]:

(JP) 「お前は以前よりも強靭になった。そして、頷きひとつからあふれる、その揺るぎなき自信‥‥‥イイぞ‥‥‥ますます活躍から目が離せん！」

(RT) "Omae wa izen yori mo kyōjin ni natta. Soshite, unazuki hitotsu kara afureru, sono yuruginaki jishin iizo masumasu katsuyaku kara me ga hanasen!"

(EN) "But truly, I could not wish for a finer ally. You have done much for my house in the past, and I have no doubt but that I shall have cause to celebrate your deeds again ere long."

(MT) "I see that you've become much stronger than before. And the way you nod your head, that unwavering confidence...most splendid...I'll definitely keep an eye on your future endeavours!"

Context: In both versions when Haurchefant first got introduced in the game, his register showcased that of a nobleman and a high-ranked officer. But once he gets familiar with the PLAYER his dialogue and behaviour changes completely. Phonological features such as intonation, the way he pauses before speaking certain phrases like 「イイぞ」 (ii zo), him dropping formal Japanese speech to informal etc. His body language acts accordingly. These features were not present nor even hinted at in the EN version.

4. And lastly [JP version only: your character acting surprised]:

(JP) 「何かわかったら、是非私にも報せてくれ。ふふ‥‥‥この辺りは一段と冷えるからな、温かい床を用意して待っているぞ！」

(RT) "Nani ka wakattara, zehi watashi ni mo shirasete kure. Fu fu kono atari wa ichidanto hieru kara na, atatakai yuka o yōishite matte iru zo!"

(EN) "Should you learn aught of value, pray return to me forthwith. A warm hearth and a warmer welcome shall be waiting for you."

(MT) "Should you learn anything of value, do share the news with me as well. Heh heh...this area has become increasingly cold lately, has it not? A warm bed awaits your return!"

Discussion: The changes in Haurchefant's characterisation were rather significant in the localised version. The English version has Haurchefant speak in a typical shakespearean style of language commonly found in fantasy genres with words such as "*ere*", "*aught*" and "*forthwith*". But while in both versions he is intended to be recieved as a good and cheerful ally, all of his more suggestive

lines from the original Japanese version has been omitted or heavily toned down in the localised English version to the point of censorship. There is also no English equivalent of his catchphrase and his characterisation is essentially reduced to that of a jolly soldier.

So why did Haurchefant's characterisation change so much between each version? One could speculate that his catchphrase 「イイ」 (*ii*) may have proven to be rather suggestive, especially in the way he pronounces it, not to mention that the Japanese version emphasizes on it by using katakana. There is also the fact with Haurchefant showing an interest in the player's body, specifically the muscles. And the player character's gender does not affect the dialogue, which may prove to be rather bizzare for some western players, perhaps outright offensive. The Japanese audience has been more accepting to this kind of archetype, there is even a fanmade site and artwork dedicated to Haurchefant, including a twitter bot based on him with over 5000 followers[23].

A reasoned speculation to this change could be that the localisation team did not want to provoke any negative reaction among some in the western audience as opposed to the Japanese version. Looking at it objectively, Haurchefant could potentially be seen as somewhat problematic for some western players and depending on the player's gender somewhat of a sexual harrasment as well.

Figure 2

Character #2: Alphinaud / アルフィノ

Profile: One of the main protagonist who guides the player character throughout the story. Alphinaud is a sixteen year old Elezen with white hair. He initially traveled to Eorzea accompanied with his twin-sister Alisaie to find out the whereabouts of their grandfather, later having decided to continue their grandfather's legacy in protecting Eorzea. Despite his young appearance, Alphinaud is very calm and mature for his age and most of his screen time within the story is spent on dealing

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23 https://twitter.com/Haurchefant_bot

with political matters. Considered to be charismatic and diplomatic, Alphinaud sports a deep masculine voice despite his androgynous looks, this applies in both the English and Japanese version.

In the following cutscene the PLAYER and Alphinaud along with a few other characters are visiting an old witch named Matoya, seeking her for guidance.

<u>Translation</u>:

Matoya:

(JP) 「・・・・・後ろの坊主は、ルイゾワの孫だね？」

(RT) "……Ushiro no bōzu wa, Ruizowa no mago da ne?"

(EN) "...The one there in the fancy duds-that's Louisoix's granddaughter, I take it?"

(MT) "...The boy over there, you're Louisoix's' grandchild, I take it?"

Alphinaud:

(JP) 「祖父をご存じなのですか？」

(RT) "Sofu o gozonjin nano desu ka?"

(EN) "Ahem. Grandson, begging your pardons. You knew my grandfather, my lady?"

(MT) "You knew my grandfather?

Matoya:

(JP) 「ルイゾワのジジイとは、よく喧嘩したもんさ。融通の利かない頑固者
だったがね・・・・・。アンタにも、赤ん坊のころ、一度だけ会ったことがある
よ。」

(RT) "Ruizowa no jijī to wa, yoku kenkashita mon sa. Yūzū no kikanai gankosha dattaga ne. Anta ni mo, akanbō no koro, ichidodake atta koto ga aru yo."

(EN) "..Knew him? We were constantly at each other's throats! Like rabid dogs, we were! He was a stubborn bugger, was your grandfather. Never a dull moment when he was around, though, I'll give him that. As for you, boy, I've known you since you were a rosy-cheeked babe at the teat."

(MT) "Knew him? We were constantly at each other's throats! Stubborn to the core, your grandfather was. As for you boy, we've met at least once before you know. You were but a baby back then.

Alphinaud:

(JP)「そうでしたか······ では、「お久しぶりです」ということになりますね、マトーヤ様。」

(RT) "Sōdeshitaka······de wa, 'ohisashiburi desu' toiu koto ni narimasu ne, Matōya-sama."

(EN) "And my sister, too, I gather. May I say what an honor it is to meet you again, my lady."

(MT) "Is that so...well then. I guess I should say "it is nice to meet you again", Lady Matoya."

Discussion: Although our focus is on Alphinaud, notice the fact that his transformation is not shown via his own dialogue, but from a third party. While the Japanese version has Matoya instantly recognise Alphinaud as a boy using the gender-specific term 「坊主」 (*bouzu*), the localisation team however have taken liberty in throwing in an English-exclusive gag onto the character, instead by having Matoya confuse Alphinaud for his twin-sister Alisaie due to their identical looks.

As mentioned earlier in his profile, Alphinaud possesses many androgynous traits for a male character. This is a common character type called "*bishounen*", meaning "pretty boy" in Japanese, and is commonly found in anime and manga. Characteristics include long hair, no facial hair, and a slender body, all which Alphinaud possess. This little change by the localisation team eventually turned into a running gag with Alphinaud questioning his appearance from time to time. A side-joke exclusive to the English version. One could question why the localisation team decided to create this little side-joke into the English version. Perhaps they wanted the western audience to know that they are aware of Alphinaud's androgynous traits, as the western audience might not be familiar with the *bishounen* character type.

Another thing worth mentioning is how the localisation team managed each character's register. In both versions Alphinaud uses a very formal speech while Matoya uses a very rough casual speech with the English version padding it out a bit further, giving Matoya a bit more grumpiness in her tone.

Figure 3

<u>Character #3</u>: Ser Charibert the Stern ／ 無残のシャリベル

<u>Profile</u>: A minor villain introduced in the expansion Heavensward. Ser Charibert is an Elven mage and one of the twelve knights protecting the archbishop in a holy order called the Heaven's Ward. Instead of co-existing with the dragons in peace, the holy order secretly wishes to exterminate all dragons, even if it meant causing another war. They are pursued and stopped by the PLAYER.

Out of the twelve knights, Ser Charibert is the only knight in the order given a proper introduction to the players. This is due to his fanatical behaviour in wishing to exterminate all heretics, causing him to launch a pre-emptive ambush on the PLAYER. His look is also quite unique. Although not officially confirmed, he is the only character in Ishgard sporting a tanned brown look, in a place that's supposed to be trapped in an eternal winter.

Similarly to Haurchefant, Ser Charibert has gotten quite famous within the FFXIV community, especially his Japanese version which has spawned several jokes related to his character[24],[25], and just like with Haurchefant there is also a twitter bot dedicated to his character[26]. In both versions he is described as a sadist who prefered the use of torture in dealing with heretics and was only promoted to a holy knight due to his exceptional skill in magic. What makes him stand out however compared to the other knights in the order is his unique personality.

In the following cutscene the PLAYER and a character called Hilda are planning a scheme before being ambushed by Ser Charibert. In this section I have highlighted the Japanese sentence-ending particles and other interesting areas, the reason will be discussed later below.

<u>Translation</u>:

Charibert:

(JP)「ンンン！？臭い、臭いゾォ・・・・・・ドブネズミの匂いがプンプンしやが

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24 http://ff14net.2chblog.jp/archives/45913942.html

25 http://blog.livedoor.jp/umadori0726/archives/45621651.html

26 https://twitter.com/charibert_bot

ルゥ・・・・・・。おんやぁ・・・・・・。教皇猊下に刃向かう、汚いドブネズミの親玉を探しに来たら・・・・・フォルタン家の客人サマまでいるじゃナイ。あぁ、なるほどぉ・・・・・・。謀反の密談をしてたって訳ネ？だからあれほど、ドブみたいな貧民街なんて、早く焼き払うべきだっていったのヨォ・・・・・・。」

(RT) "Nnn!? kusai, kusai zo~o……dobunezumi no nioi ga punpun shiyaga ru~u. Onya~a……. Kyōkōgeika ni hamukau, kitanai dobunezumi no oyadama o sagashi ni kitara…… Forutan-ka no kyakujin-sama made iru janai. A~a, naruhodo~o……. Muhon no mitsudan o shite tatte wake ne? Dakara are hodo, dobu mitai na hinmin machi nante, hayaku yakiharaubeki datte itta no yo~o……."

(EN) <sniff> "Ahhh, the unmistakable scent of heresy...And what do we have here? The honored guests of House Fortemps consorting with the queen of rats? Oooh. Plotting insurrection I shouldn't wonder. Tsk-tsk. That won't do. Sickness is wont to fester and spread. It must be burned out ere the infection takes hold."

(MT) "Hmmm...sure smells in here....the stench of filthy rats that is. But what do we have here...I came here searching for the leader of these filthy rats that's rebelling against His Holiness....but to think I would find the honored guests of House Fortemps here as well. Aa~h...I see~. Plotting insurrection, no doubt. I keep telling them, this is why filthy slums like these should be razed to the ground."

Similar to the former example, the next example however also contain a few suggestive lines.

Charibert:

(JP)「ンモゥ・・・・・・これだから、バカは嫌いなのよネェ・・・・・・。頭が悪すぎて、すぐキレちゃうんだからァ・・・・・・。ホラホラ、そんなにヤリたいなら、相手してアゲるから、表に出なさいナ・・・・・・。死にたくなるほど、シてあげるからサ・・・・・・。」

(RT) "Nmo~u…… koredakara, baka wa kirai nanoyo ne~e……. Atama ga waru sugite, sugu kirechau nda ka ra~a……. Horahora, son nani yaritainara, aite shite agerukara, omote ni denasai na……. Shinitaku naru hodo, shite agerukara sa……."

(EN) "Ahahaha! Such simple creatures, rats. Certain to attack when cornered. Let us step outside, milady. In here, your toys could hurt someone."

(MT) "Jeez....this is why I hate idiots....they're so stupid that even the smallest of things triggers them. Come on then, if you want to do *it* that badly, I'll play with you. Step outside

then....I'll play with you so hard that wish you were dead."

Other quotes:

(JP)「そろそろ幕引きネェ！」

(RT) "Sorosoro makuhiki ne~e!"

(EN) "And now the final curtain!"

(JP)「消えなさァイ！」

(RT) "Kienasa~ai!"

(EN) "Begone with you!"

(JP)「掃除してくれるワァ！」

(RT) "Sōjishite kureru wa~a!"

(EN) "Sickness must be purged!"

Discussion: In the Japanese version, Ser Charibert's manner of speech is evident right from the start. In short, Charibert's design and behaviour is that of an "*Okama*", which can in this case be interpreted as a Japanese slang for someone that is homosexual. The role language commonly associated with o*kamas* is called "*Onee kotoba*" which can be translated as "old sister language". Kinsui describes its style as a exaggerated form of "*onna kotoba*" or "*joseigo*" meaning "women's language".[27]. The areas I have highlighted is what makes Charibert unique in terms of his dialogue. Charibert uses a feminine style of speech indicated by his usage of feminine sentence-ending particles such as -*wa* and -*ne* and command forms like -*nasai*[28]. He also uses some provocative lines with sexual undertones, all of them delivered in a rising intonation to the point of exaggeration. The writers emphasizes on this in the text itself by having said lines displayed in katakana instead of hiragana. On the other hand, his feminine style of speech cannot be found in the localised English version, instead having Charibert act more like a fanatic while showing more emphasis in his sadistic behaviour, obsessed with purging sickness. This is also indicated via his repeated usage of the word "rats" and the rodents relation with spreading diseases.

Just like with Harchefant, a speculation to this change could be that the localisation team did not want to provoke any negative reactions among some in the western audience as using stereotypical manner of speech associated with gay men could potentially produce a major backlash.

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27 Kinsui, S. Yakuwarigo: kojiten; 16, 2014.
28 Kinsui, S. Vaacharu Nihongo yakuwarigo no nazo, 2003.

Figure 4   *Figure 5*

Character #4: Lady Iceheart, Shiva / 氷の巫女，シヴァ

Profile: Lady Iceheart is a female Elezen with pale skin and long gray hair. She is at first introduced as a villain but eventually joins the main cast as a protagonist in the expansion Heavensward. She leads a band of heretics who have pledged their allegiance to the dragons and wishes to end the 1000-year war between Ishgard and the dragons. She has the power to transform into the primal Shiva, a diety akin to Gods in which the players will have to fight against, although her personality remains relatively unchanged.

Lady Iceheart sees herself as a savior and leads a cult with only one goal in mind, to end the war and save Eorzea from further destruction. This is shown in the way how she speaks to the player.

The following lines are said by Lady Iceheart/Shiva as the player is fighting against her:

(JP)「なぜ追ってきたのだ‥‥‥光の戦士よ。 我が望みは戦いの終結‥‥‥そう言ったはず。やはり因果を断ち切るには力が必要か‥‥‥ならば私が立ちはだかる者を倒そう‥‥‥それが人々の希望であっても‥‥‥」

(RT) "Naze otte kita noda‥‥‥hikari no senshi yo. Waga nozomi wa tatakai no shūketsu‥‥‥sō itta hazu. Yahari inga o tachikiru ni wa chikara ga hitsuyō ka‥‥‥naraba watashi ga tachihadakaru mono o taosou‥‥‥sore ga hitobito no kibō de atte mo‥‥‥"

(EN) "You should never have come here, Warrior of Light. I labor only to forge a lasting peace. A peace you would deny us out of ignorance and blind faith. No matter.. If it is our fate to be at odds, then it is mine to strike you down."

(MT) "Why do you pursue me, Warrior of Light? As I've told you already, our wish is to end this conflict. It seems that force is necessary in order to break the cycle. And we will defeat anything that stands in our way, even if our enemy is the will of humanity itself..."

(JP)「我らを救い祈るべき神がいないなら‥‥‥聖女にこそ‥‥‥この祈りを捧げよう 」

(RT) "Warera o sukui inorubeki kami ga inai nara‥‥‥seijo ni koso‥‥‥kono inori o sasage you"

(EN) "We whom gods and men have forsaken shall be the instrument of our own deliverance!"

(MT) "If the gods have forsaken our salvation, we shall devote our prayers to a saint instead!"

(JP)「清らかなる氷よ 我が刃となれ！ 」

(RT) "Kiyorakanaru kōri yo waga yaiba to nare!"

(EN) "A blade of ice to defend my brothers!"

(MT) "Purest of ice, become my sword!"

(JP)「氷の輝きを力に！ 」

(RT) "Kōri no kagayaki o chikara ni!"

(EN) "The cycle ends here and now!"

(MT) "May the brilliance of ice strengthen me!"

(JP)「風よ、光よ、そのすべてを凍てつかせ、世界に静寂をもたらせ！砕け散れ！ダイアモンドダスト！ 」

(RT) "Kazeyo, hikari yo, sono subete o itetsuka se, sekai ni shijima o motarase! Kudake chire! Daiamondodasuto!"

(EN) "Embrace the serenity... renounce the hatreds that consume you... And scatter them like dust in the wind..."

(MT) "Wind, Light, let all be engulfed by ice and encase the world in serenity! Scatter! Diamond Dust!"

Discussion: Lady Iceheart is a character that considers herself to be someone chosen for a higher purpose and this is reflected in the way she speaks. She sometimes uses pronouns such as *wa ga*, *warera* etc, a very formal style that may also indicate a sense of proudness or high social rank akin

to leadership[29]. This accompanied with a certain speech flow akin to how a shounen manga character speaks, going as far as shouting her special attack or 必殺技(*hissatsu wasa*), complete in English even. This is a common trope found in many Japanese manga, anime and video games where characters shout their special moves right before using them. Most popular example being Dragonball and its famous *Kamehameha* blast where the user slowly chants the name while charging the attack. Many fighting games share this trope as well, where characters will shout out the names of their attacks right before using them.

In fact, other primals speaks in a similar way as well, here's another example from the primal Ravana, the God of War. He chants this right before unleashing his special attack on the players.

> (JP)「武の神髄！チャンドラハース！」
> (RT) "Bu no shinzui! Chandorahāsu!"
> (EN) "Rejoice in the glory of combat!"
> (MT) "The essence of war! Chandrahas!"

Looking at this, it seems like the Japanese version is going for an "anime style" of approach when it involves combat scenarios, while the localised English version is trying to retain the poetic writing style coupled with a mix of Shakespearean English or Fantasy English mostly found in fantasy novels, Tolkien among others. And when considering the translation strategies involving the localisation of an RPG, each region has their specific cultural preferences in how they want their story to be told.

5. Summary and Conclusion

After having analysed the material and given enough time to reflect over it through a series of discussions and speculations, it can be reasoned that efforts were made by the localisation team to ensure that role languages were either drastically toned down or had its content altered in a way to compensate for words or hidden meanings that could not be accurately expressed in other language versions. But as for the main reason behind these localisation changes, the results suggests that the cultural preferences between the Japanese audience and the Western audience might have

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29 Kinsui, S. Yakuwarigo: kojiten; 209-210, 2014.

also been a major factor. To summarise some of the findings:

Japanese version:

- Dialogue in the Japanese version uses role languages commonly found in Japanese manga, anime and video games.
- The characterisation in the Japanese version features character archetypes found in Japanese pop cultures.

English version:

- The English version stayed true to its high fantasy approach, inspired by Tolkien among others. The language feels poetic and the writing style is a mix of shakespearean and fantasy English.
- The characterisation in the English version have been altered compared to the original Japanese version. Some characters have had their personalities and behaviours toned down while others featured additional dialogue to compensate, explain or work around some of the tropes found in Japanese pop culture.

As already mentioned by Mangiron and O'Hagan, different cultures may have different preferences when it comes to certain elements. Cultural references that are obscure or offensive for players are more likely to break their immersion or suspension of disbelief. This would eventually prevent them from enjoying a game.

When relating this to translation theories, Hasegawa mentions that the more drastic changes in the localised version falls into the level of 'imitation', referring to one of the three translation types categorized by the English poet and critic John Dryden:

Metaphrase: "Turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another."
Paraphrase: "Translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not altered."
Imitation: "The translator… assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original… as he

pleases."[30]

Dryden does not consider 'imitation' as the appropriate mode of translation and that a translator should at most amplify, but not alter the original text and meaning. Dryden's 'imitation' is most evident in Character #4, whereas in the last example the original words and sense were altered by the localisation team to make it more linguistically and culturally appropriate to its target audience. This is not to say that the change made by the localisation team was wrong, but whether or not it was considered necessary, both from a translator's perspective and a consumer's perspective.

From a translator's perspective, one have to first consider if it was really necessary to alter the personalities of these characters. And if you did consider it necessary, was your replacement sufficient enough to satisfy your target audience? It is important to trust your audience on whether or not they can understand and handle certain materials, especially from such a long running franchise like Final Fantasy, where most of your audience have been loyal since earlier installments. From a consumer's perspective, it is also important to understand why some changes have to be made. Not everyone reacts the same way to a certain event and if necessary, translators may have to choose the safer route in order to avoid stirring up negative reactions.

Localisation is not about simply translating words or the author's intentions, it is about being able to provide the same kind of experience. Each translation is done with a certain purpose in mind. When it comes to video games, translators need to be able to invoke the same kind of reactions in players as the original version did to its native audience. It can be both difficult and enduring as it doesn't just require a translator's knowledge of the source and target language, the translator also needs to understand the target demographic and how the experience would be received by players coming from different cultural backgrounds. And lastly, a translator in charge of localisation must also at times display some creativity in writing ability to ensure that all players will have a comparable experience without causing a rift in the fanbase.

With a comparative analysis of four characters, this small sample should provide a rough outline of some the translation issues and strategies applied in video game translation. As mentioned earlier, software and video game localisation is still considered a relatively new field and contains many questionable areas and loopholes that may at times make us question its place within the areas of translation studies. With that said, this subject should hopefully spark some interesting thoughts and discussion regarding the relationship between translation and localisation.

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