

The Development of Videogame Localization in the Czech Republic

Pavel Válek

Bachelor's Thesis
2018



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur
akademický rok: 2017/2018

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Pavel Válek**
Osobní číslo: **H16868**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**
Forma studia: **prezenční**

Téma práce: **Vývoj lokalizace videoher v České republice**

Zásady pro vypracování:

Shromáždění materiálů k lokalizaci a jejímu vývoji v České republice
Studium odborné literatury, formulace cílů práce
Analýza překladu vybraných videoherních titulů
Realizace polostrukturovaných rozhovorů s překladateli, analýza materiálu
Vyvození a formulace závěrů práce

Rozsah bakalářské práce:

Rozsah příloh:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Baker, Mona. 2011. In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation. New York: Routledge.

Bernal-Merino, Miguel Á. 2015. Translation and Localisation in Video Games. New York: Routledge.

Bethke, Erik. 2003. Game Development and Production. Texas: Worldware.

Esselink, Bert. 2000. A Practical Guide to Localization. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Pym, Anthony. 2004. The Moving Text: Localization, Translation and Distribution. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

Mgr. Petr Vinklárek

Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

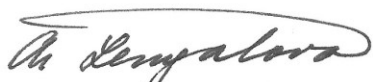
Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

10. listopadu 2017

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

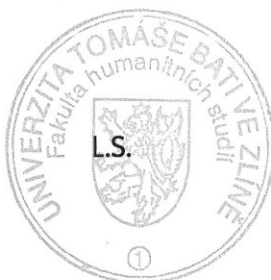
4. května 2018

Ve Zlíně dne 14. prosince 2017



doc. Ing. Anežka Lengálová, Ph.D.

děkanka



PhDr. Katarína Nemčoková, Ph.D.

ředitelka ústavu

PROHLÁŠENÍ AUTORA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Beru na vědomí, že

- odevzdáním bakalářské práce souhlasím se zveřejněním své práce podle zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby ¹⁾;
- beru na vědomí, že bakalářská práce bude uložena v elektronické podobě v univerzitním informačním systému dostupná k nahlédnutí;
- na moji bakalářskou práci se plně vztahuje zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, zejm. § 35 odst. 3 ²⁾;
- podle § 60 ³⁾ odst. 1 autorského zákona má UTB ve Zlíně právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla v rozsahu § 12 odst. 4 autorského zákona;
- podle § 60 ³⁾ odst. 2 a 3 mohu užit své dílo – bakalářskou práci - nebo poskytnout licenci k jejímu využití jen s předchozím písemným souhlasem Univerzity Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně, která je oprávněna v takovém případě ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které byly Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně na vytvoření díla vynaloženy (až do jejich skutečné výše);
- pokud bylo k vypracování bakalářské práce využito softwaru poskytnutého Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně nebo jinými subjekty pouze ke studijním a výzkumným účelům (tj. k nekomerčnímu využití), nelze výsledky bakalářské práce využít ke komerčním účelům.

Prohlašuji, že

- elektronická a tištěná verze bakalářské práce jsou totožné;
- na bakalářské práci jsem pracoval samostatně a použitou literaturu jsem citoval. V případě publikace výsledků budu uveden jako spoluautor.

Ve Zlíně 1.5.2018

.....
Vojtěch

1) zákon č. 111/1998 Sb. o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 47b Zveřejňování závěrečných prací:

(1) Vysoká škola nevydělečně zveřejňuje disertační, diplomové, bakalářské a rigorózní práce, u kterých proběhla obhajoba, včetně posudků oponentů a výsledku obhajoby prostřednictvím databáze kvalifikačních prací, kterou spravuje. Způsob zveřejnění stanoví vnitřní předpis vysoké školy.

(2) Disertační, diplomové, bakalářské a rigorózní práce odevzdané uchazečem k obhajobě musí být též nejméně pět pracovních dnů před konáním obhajoby zveřejněny k nahlížení veřejnosti v místě určeném vnitřním předpisem vysoké školy nebo není-li tak určeno, v místě pracoviště vysoké školy, kde se má konat obhajoba práce. Každý si může ze zveřejněné práce pořizovat na své náklady výpisy, opisy nebo rozmnoženiny.

(3) Platí, že odevzdáním práce autor souhlasí se zveřejněním své práce podle tohoto zákona, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby.

2) zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 35 odst. 3:

(3) Do práva autorského také nezasahuje škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení, užije-li nikoli za účelem přímého nebo nepřímého hospodářského nebo obchodního prospěchu k výuce nebo k vlastní potřebě dílo vytvořené žákem nebo studentem ke splnění školních nebo studijních povinností vyplývajících z jeho právního vztahu ke škole nebo školskému či vzdělávacímu zařízení (školní dílo).

3) zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 60 Školní dílo:

(1) Škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení mají za obvyklých podmínek právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla (§ 35 odst.

3). Odpírá-li autor takového díla udělit svolení bez vážného důvodu, mohou se tyto osoby domáhat nahrazení chybějícího projevu jeho vůle u soudu. Ustanovení § 35 odst. 3 zůstává nedotčeno.

(2) Není-li sjednáno jinak, může autor školního díla své dílo užít či poskytnout jinému licenci, není-li to v rozporu s oprávněnými zájmy školy nebo školského či vzdělávacího zařízení.

(3) Škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení jsou oprávněny požadovat, aby jim autor školního díla z výdělku jím dosaženého v souvislosti s užitím díla či poskytnutím licence podle odstavce 2 přiměřeně přispěl na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložily, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše; přitom se přihlédá k výši výdělku dosaženého školou nebo školským či vzdělávacím zařízením z užití školního díla podle odstavce 1.

ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá historií a vývojem videoherní lokalizace v České republice. Teoretická část se zaměřuje na popis vývoje videoherní lokalizace jak v České republice, tak ve světě. Zabývá se také samotným procesem lokalizace videoher, jeho odlišností od lokalizace jiných médií a komplikacemi specifickými pro tento proces. Praktická část se zabývá procesem videoherní lokalizace z pohledu samotných překladatelů

Klíčová slova: videohra, lokalizace, překlad, Česká republika, software, oficiální lokalizace, fanouškovská lokalizace, vývoj

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with the history and development of videogame localization in the Czech Republic. Theoretical part is aimed at the description of the development of videogame localization in the Czech Republic and internationally. It deals with the process of videogame localization, the differences to localization process of other forms of media and obstacles specific to this process. Practical part deals with the process of videogame localization from the point of view of translators themselves.

Keywords: videogame, localization, translation, Czech Republic, software, official localization, fan localization, development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Mgr. Petr Vinklársek for his guidance during the writing of my thesis. I would also like to thank Vilém Koubek who was available every time I needed to discuss anything and to all the respondents who took time out of their busy schedules to answer my questions and to provide me with valuable information. I would also like to thank my family and my friends who were present during my studies. And last, but certainly not least, to the whole videogame industry for creating worlds and experiences no other medium could even dream of.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
I THEORY	10
1 TYPES OF TRANSLATION.....	11
1.1 TRANSLATION.....	11
1.2 LOCALIZATION	11
1.3 INTERNATIONALIZATION	11
1.4 GLOCALIZATION	12
2 VIDEOGAME LOCALIZATION	13
2.1 INTERNATIONAL LOCALIZATION.....	13
2.1.1 Fan translations	15
2.2 THE ORIGINS OF VIDEOGAME LOCALIZATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC	17
2.2.1 The 1990s	18
2.2.2 The 2000s	19
2.2.3 The 2010s	20
3 THE LOCALIZATION PROCESS OF VIDEO GAMES.....	21
3.1 THE STEPS IN THE PROCESS OF VIDEOGAME LOCALIZATION	21
3.2 THE DIFFICULTIES OF VIDEOGAME LOCALIZATION	22
II PRACTICAL PART.....	24
4 METHODOLOGY	25
4.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE.....	25
4.2 RESPONDENTS	26
4.2.1 Respondent 1	26
4.2.2 Respondent 2	27
4.2.3 Respondent 3	27
4.2.4 Respondent 4	27
5 THE PROCESS OF VIDEOGAME LOCALIZATION.....	28
5.1 FAMILIARITY WITH THE PRODUCT FOR LOCALIZATION	28
5.2 SOLE TRANSLATOR OR A TEAM OF PEOPLE?	29
5.3 SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY	30
5.4 ASSISTANCE FROM THE DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER OF THE GAME	31
5.5 IN-GAME CHECKS FOR ERRORS.....	31
5.6 DIFFICULTIES DURING THE LOCALIZATION PROCESS	32
5.7 MOST NOTABLE DIFFICULTY	33
5.8 USAGE OF PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATION TOOLS	34
5.9 POST-RELEASE PERIOD FOR ERROR CORRECTING	35
5.10 THE PLACE OF CZECH VIDEOGAME LOCALIZATION IN TODAY'S MARKET.....	36
CONCLUSION	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	40
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	44
APPENDICES.....	45

INTRODUCTION

In the short history of videogames in the Czech Republic, many things have changed. From being outright banned during the Communist era, to being the entertainment of a very few people and being called the “kultura křiplů” (culture of cripples) by the rest, to the Czech Republic becoming a home of videogames internationally recognized and held in high regard for their high cultural impact on the whole videogame industry. Czech videogame localization plays a big part in all of this.

The aim of this thesis is to document the development of videogame localization in the Czech Republic from the early 1990s to today pinpointing the changes that have occurred alongside. The theoretical part will contrast the difference in evolution between international videogame localization and the evolution that has occurred in the Czech Republic in the last thirty years. It will also show how videogame localization differs from the localization of movies, books and even regular software.

The practical part of this thesis is going to focus on answers from people who worked on a Czech videogame localization at some point in the past. These answers will be then analysed in order to present their localization process, the difficulties these respondents endured during the localization process and to pinpoint any changes as they occurred.

I. THEORY

1 TYPES OF TRANSLATION

When dealing with terms such as “localization” and “translation” is important to firstly distinguish the differences in the meaning of the term and to understand in which situations are these terms applicable. Even though at first glance similar, these terms clearly differ in the way how the source text is transformed in the target text and which steps are taken along the way. These terms also differ in their use and in many cases cannot be interchanged.

1.1 Translation

Juliane House describes the term Translation as a processing and reproduction of a text, which aims at equivalence between the initial text in a source language and the translated text in a target language. Thus not creating the same text in a different language, rather one that is the closest with its meaning to the original one (2015, 12-16).

1.2 Localization

Localization is not a simple transformation of a text from the source language into the target language. Rather is a complex process of understanding the source text and transforming it in order for any cultural and linguistic differences to be understandable for readers of the target text without the need of being aware about such differences. As Mona Baker mentions, many concepts are culture-specific and simple translation is not enough for the target audience to understand the meaning of the text (2011, 28).

1.3 Internationalization

Internationalization is a type of localization used in a computer software. Instead of typical translation of a text, this type of localization deals with a market specific, or culture specific issues. According to Bert Esselink, it is on the publisher or the developer of the software, or in this case a videogame to ensure these issues are taken care of and ready for the international release (2000, 25-26). This issues are more of the technical side rather than the linguistic one. For example the differences in the displaying of date between Japan, Europe and the United States differs in the order in which the date is shown. Date in European Countries displays a day as the first double digit, whereas the United States use the first double digit for a month and Japan displays the whole date starting with a year, followed by a month and ending with a day. Anthony Pym further adds that the need for Internationalization of a software came through the ever evolving and expanding market, thus creating a need for a unified software able to display different alphabets, date systems,

various display modes etc. without the need for translator to change the code of the given software and resulting in much simpler and faster localization process (2004, 30-32).

In case of video games, the Internationalization process is applied to the core of these games from the start of the development process. All new videogames are built with the Internationalization functions in mind and support all different formats to ensure compatibility in every region in the World (Unreal Engine 2018).

1.4 Glocalization

Glocalization is a portmanteau term of words globalization and localization, combining the thoughts behind both terms into one. The term globalization describes the ever evolving interconnection of the modern World. With localization being a set of complex processes aimed at bringing the product closer to the customers in the target markets. Glocalization, in the sense of software and video game development, is designing the product in a way that said product can be then sold worldwide with very little to no changes. This helps the widespread utilisation of given product and for the creator it means higher revenue without the need to invest more money for localization into specific markets where the product might be otherwise unprofitable (Pym 2004, 165).

2 VIDEOGAME LOCALIZATION

The beginning of video game culture and video games in general can be traced as far back as 1950s in America. As Steven Kent describes in his book, in the early days, only University students and high profile engineers were able to use early room-sized computers to create and execute simple programs which could be considered as precursors to video games as we know them today. On the other hand the limited accessibility of such technologies limited the scope of these early games thus not creating the need for any localization or translation (Kent 2010, chap. 2).

First widely available videogames can be traced to the late 1960s and 1970s in the form of an Arcade Cabinets. These were located in public spaces such as bars, restaurants and lately whole arcades where players could play a variety of games for a small fee. Although these games were made mainly by a single company from the US – Atari (*Pong* (1972), *Pac-Man* (1980)), many Japanese companies saw the potential of success and high profits and started development of their Arcade Cabinets. Again, these titles were simple in nature and did not require any reading for player to understand the rules even without understanding the language (Kent 2010, chap. 3-4).

The same happened with the first home videogame consoles which were essentially the same early videogames such as *Pong* (1972) that were available in Arcades, but physically smaller to allow their usage in people's homes connected to a television set (Kent 2010, chap. 12). One of the first true video consoles *Atari 2600* (1977) that allowed changing the games available to play on the system through the use of cartridges still relied on videogames that were simple in nature. Many of these games were mainly arcade titles where the player's goal is to rack up the highest score by shooting down enemies such as *Missile Command* (1980) and *Space Invaders* (1978) or simple sports games like *International Soccer* (1982). The storytelling and the use of text still was not technically possible as with the older Arcade Machines, so the need for localization still was not there (Cinemassacre 2013).

2.1 International Localization

First need for any sort of videogame translation and localization in particular came in the middle 1980s when Japanese videogame company Nintendo released their videogame system Famicom outside of Japan as Nintendo Entertainment System and with it released games that needed to be translated for the international audience. Localization techniques such as complete renaming of a title and in some cases even changes in a game code would become a norm not only for attracting an interest in international markets, but mainly to

bridge the cultural gaps between Japanese developers and international audiences. As Miguel Á Bernal-Merino describes in his book on the example of *Nier Replicant* (2010) where the title of the game was changed in the international release and the appearance of the main protagonist was changed as well, this process is used even to this day with videogames developed in Japan that eventually receive the international release (2015, 87-88).

As with other mediums, the localization is important for carrying over the humor, or special elements of the source language, that cannot be simply translated into the target language. What is different from the mediums is the technical aspect of localization. Where in the movie or a book the only limitation is the meaning itself, or the length of the dialog in the movie, localization of videogames is much more difficult. Especially in the early days, the lack of memory and limitations of the hardware meant that the translators were limited by the characters that could be drawn on the screen. This brought another obstacle to overcome during the localization process – not only to keep the meaning of the source text, but also achieve this task in the limited space available (Yacht Club Games 2016).

Localization was, however also used as a form of censorship. Nintendo of America had a policy, where any religious reference could not appear in a game released in the United States on the Nintendo Entertainment System, or Super Nintendo Entertainment System. For example, in the game *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (1991), many of the dialogs were rewritten during the translation phase as not to mention mainly any Christian references (The Cutting Room Floor 2018).

Not only Nintendo of America had demands that needed to be fulfilled during the localization process. For example the German release of the computer game *Wolfenstein: The New Order* (2014) was conditioned by the removal of every Nazi memorabilia, likeness of Adolf Hitler and various other changes in order to be approved the release in the country. As is mentioned on the website BBC News, the reason for this censorship is in the law which prohibits the usage of Nazi imagery outside art. The developer went as far, as to geographically block the German players based on their IP address from buying the game from a different market and activating it in Germany (BBC News 2014).

Cases of slight censorship during localization are a common practice. Especially games that are not aimed at the youngest audience see some of their content changed in order to please the International audience. Not always does, however the changed content keep the significance in meaning of the original. During the localization process of a Japanese role-playing game *Megami Ibunroku Persona* (1996) which was in the United States released

under the name *Revelations: Persona* (1996) many elements such as names of the characters, or their appearance were changed and all references to Japanese culture were cut altogether resulting in a product that was altered in order to attract the audience not familiar with Japanese culture, but based on these changes ended up feeling unnatural even for the target audience (Game Informer 2013). This led to the decision to keep the Japanese references in subsequent releases of *Persona* series. The latest instalment of this series, *Persona 5* (2017) keeps all references such as Japanese holidays, local etiquette and most importantly the names and appearances of characters same in both the original and localized versions (*Persona 5* 2017). Although not perfect, this approach is better suited to deliver the original experience to people who are not familiar with the original setting without compromising the source text with unnecessary changes. Even though audience accustomed to heavy localized works may perceive the target text as badly translated, it is in fact only the result of different approach to localization, as senior project manager, Yu Namba described on the Playstation Blog (Namba 2017).

Special case of localization appeared after the release of *Super Mario Bros. 2* (1986) on Nintendo Famicom in Japan, when Nintendo of America found the game to be too hard for the International audience during testing. Nintendo of Japan decided, instead of reprogramming already finished game to lower the difficulty, to use completely different game under the name *Yume Kōjō: Doki Doki Panic* (1987) and releasing it in the United States and Europe as *Super Mario Bros. 2* (1988) (*The Mushroom Kingdom* 2018). This meant, that players in Japan and the rest of the world had completely different experience playing the game. The original Japanese version of *Super Mario Bros. 2* (1986) was, however released outside of the Japan in 1993 under the name *Super Mario Bros.: The Lost Levels* as a part of *Super Mario All-Stars* (1993) collection (Mott 2011, *Super Mario Bros.: The Lost Levels*).

2.1.1 Fan translations

For the videogames that are not officially localized into English also means that there are no distribution rights in place for those international markets. Players intending to play a game released only in one region are forced to import the game from said region without any official translation available. For them to then be able to play these games in English or their native language is to rely on unofficial translations made by players themselves.

These unofficial translations are in the videogame industry defined as Fan Translations, to clearly distinguish them from the official translations produced by the developer or any

other party holding the rights for translation such as the local publisher or contracted independent translators (Polygon 2014). Fan Translations are not endorsed by the licence holders and thus are not legally considered to fall under a Fair Use. To prevent any legal action from a licence holder, it is a common practice to release a localization patch, which means that only the translated portions of the game are distributed free of charge in order to not violate the User End Licence Agreement. However, no legal action against a fan translation has ever been adjudicated by a court so no legal precedent exists to support this issue of legality resulting in a grey area (Helbraun Law Firm 2018). Most notably, the development of a fan translation of a role-playing game *Final Fantasy Type-0* (2011) was shut down by a cease and desist from the licence holder and publisher Square Enix. This threatened a legal action against the team of translators if the work on the translation were to continue and is to this day the only instance of a licence holder preventing the release of a fan translation (Helbraun Law Firm 2018).

The legal problem is not the only obstacle standing in a way of unofficial translations. With the translation not being supported by the developer or the publisher, the team of translators has no access to the text. Programmers are then forced to reverse-engineer the game in question. Meaning, the game data have to be opened in a specialized software in order to find out, where is the text stored in the game files, what format is used and how the game displays the text on the screen. The text then has to be collected and delivered to translators. This process varies from game to game and requires high level of programming knowledge. Especially in the case of older videogames that were programmed on systems not utilising conventional programming languages, this process can be radically different based on the version the team decides to work with and the finished version may not be applicable for other versions due to these programming differences (Chikofsky and Cross 1990). As Artemio Urbina recalls, during the localization process of the videogame *Policenauts* (1996) for the Sony Playstation, the team had to overcome a specific problem with the way how the Japanese Kanji alphabet was programmed into the game. Instead of encoding every single character, only the used characters are encoded making it impossible to decode by software and instead the characters had to be read and decoded by hand (Retroware 2015, 33:30).

Fan localizations also deal with the lack of proper documentation. The official localization team is presented with information concerning the story and other elements in order to answer any question of a meaning or context that may arise during the translation process. The fan localization process is left without this aid. In order to fully understand the

text in the game, the team is forced to play through the game and make notes for the translation process. Furthermore, any issues connected to intention and meaning of the source text cannot be discussed with the development team. Instead, any unclear terminology needs to be thoroughly researched and compared to the context of the story. The team translating *Policenauts* (1996) ran into similar problem during the translation process. In order to accurately translate the vast amount of professional terminology, the team had to familiarize themselves with in specific areas of pharmaceuticals, space travel and technology (Retroware 2015, 38:00).

The positive side of fan translations and the reason why many people prefer them to officially translated works is the attention to detail. Contrary to the official translations that have to adhere to strict deadlines and budget restrictions possibly resulting in a subpar, or inconsistent localization, fan projects are not limited by the length of time it takes to translate. Thanks to this, the team working on said project is often able to release a translation with high level of polish of the target text. With this is also connected the fact that fan translators are fans of the game or the franchise as a whole and are well versed in the themes and possible references to other products. Especially with niche titles is it an important advantage to possible official translation which would lack this level of familiarity with the translated title (Polygon 2014).

2.2 The origins of Videogame Localization in the Czech Republic

The situation in the Czech Republic, or Czechoslovakia as it was known in the 1980s was different from the western world. The communist regime issued a ban on every western technology like computers, VCRs and game consoles. This meant, that there was no easy way for people to be introduced to gaming in the early 1980s. However, during the late 1980s, a few exemplars of older arcade cabinets found their way to the hands of Czech carneys who brought them to various cities and as a by-product helped to spread awareness about videogames (Games.cz 2013). Entertainment during the times of occupation needed to be approved by the Government as not to harm the development of socialist youth. Arcade cabinets were not on the list of approved machines and needed to be bought abroad and transported back. Their high price and difficult transportation made them that more desirable by their customers (Games.cz 2012).

The situation with Personal Computers had a similar development. Not only caused by their astronomical price compared to the wages at the time, but also based on the Governments distaste with western technologies. The computers that were inevitably

brought to the state through various grey markets were property of various technological clubs. These clubs were for many years the sole opportunity for people to be exposed to computer games. Not everyone was able to set up and operate an electrical or computer club. The restriction on assembly meant that in order to receive the proper permission for operating such club, the government had to be involved and monitored the activities of these clubs. With this came other issue – not everybody was allowed to attend these clubs (Games.cz 2013).

The limited accessibility and low numbers of people playing games never warranted the need for translations. For games that were brought from abroad, no Czech translation was provided. Instead, these hobbyists used their new knowledge and instead of translating games from abroad, programmed Czech copies of these games in Czech language (Games.cz 2014). One of these hobbyists was František Fuka, who in the 1980s programmed hundreds of videogames. Many of them fell under the genre of text adventures. This genre is known for its lack of graphics and instead relies on a heavy use of text to describe the complete experience to the player in a way similar to books (Games.cz 2014).

2.2.1 The 1990s

After the fall of Iron Curtain in the November of 1989 and the opening of market in the subsequent years brought higher interest in now easily obtainable personal computers and more importantly videogames that were no longer considered unsuitable entertainment by the Government. However, the high asking price for computers and software imported from Germany or the United Kingdom meant a rapid spread of pirated software that was distributed in its original language (Lupa 2006). The combination of rising numbers of players who did not understand the imported games and lack of resources to translate these titles into Czech lead to creative solution in a form of translated walkthroughs, written by the editors of videogame magazines published at the time that were written in a way to resemble a short story in the videogame world. For example a walkthrough for a futuristic adventure game *Dreamweb* (1994) from a Score Magazine issue 12 in which Andrej Anastasov describes the steps needed to advance in the game as a short story (Anastasov 1994, 64-66). While not completely accurate, people then could follow the written story in the magazine as they played through the game which made these types of articles very popular.

As first Czech videogame publishers started to appear in the middle of 1990s, the editors of videogame magazines were also the first people to translate foreign videogames into

Czech. With them already having a relationship with these publishers and thus early access to many videogames, it was not unusual practice for them to write a review on the foreign version and then start working on the localization for the Czech market. To this day is most renowned a localization of Polish videogame *Teen Agent* (1995) by the ex-editor in chief of SCORE magazine Andrej Anastasov. It was considered a staple in videogame localization by many contemporary critics and general public alike to precede in quality even the original Polish version (Plně Hry 2004). At the same time, this was one of the few instances where the name of the person responsible for the localization is known. With the videogame market being in its infancy, many people did not deem it worthy of connecting their names to these projects or used aliases which was the norm at the time even in printed media (Score 1994).

2.2.2 The 2000s

After the turn of millennia, with the prices of computers falling down and videogames becoming more established in the local culture not only owing to the success of locally developed games such as *Mafia: The City of Lost Heaven* (2002) and *Vietcong* (2003) that were also praised abroad and featured complete Czech localization with both text and dubbing by professional Czech actors (Bonusweb 2014). The need for localized games has risen, thus giving incentive to local publishers such as CD Projekt, Cenega, Playman and others to consider localizing more incoming titles. However, the final decision as what titles to localize was not as easy as choosing the best looking title. As Martin Kovář wrote in his article for a gaming website Hrej.cz, this process involves a lot of calculations. First of all, the publisher needs to know how much is going the localization, testing, and final implementation into the game cost. Then, based on the sales of the previous titles in the series, or based on the interest of potential customers the projected sales are counted. The last step is setting the price of the localized product based on the type of market for which is the game being localized. Especially in the Czech Republic, the price of the localized game cannot be set higher than the International version, because customers do not see the localization as a reason to pay more (Kovář 2015).

The other difficulty that stood against publishers at the time and had a significant impact on the localization abilities was a high level of software piracy in the Czech Republic. Based on the data published by the Business Software Alliance and summarized in an article by Martin Noska for a website Computerworld, in the year 2007 was 39 % of all software used in the Czech Republic obtained illegally. This number included not only operating systems and professional software, but also videogames (Noska 2008). Making it an important point

in the decision process as if the localization would be big enough incentive for people to buy the localized game instead of obtaining it through different sources. To combat the problem with high rate of piracy and to recoup the costs, the publishers often made a deal with Czech videogame magazines to pack in a Czech localized version of, usually an older, videogame and sell it for a reduced price. In some cases, the Czech localization was exclusive to the cheaper magazine release as it was case for example with a *Psychonauts* (2005) which was available with Czech subtitles only in Level magazine issue 174 (Hrej 2009).

2.2.3 The 2010s

After the year 2010, new distribution channels have started to take prominent spot over the typical physical releases available to customers to that day. Instead of buying a localized version of a videogame for a full price, many gamers have instead chose to wait and buy these games on a sale digitally for as much as 90% off from online digital distributors such as Steam or Origin with the encouragement from the media who point out these sales as in the article from Keith Stuart for the website The Guardian (Stuart 2017). Often times, the games are put on these platforms by their original distributors and a local distributor, who put resources into the localization does not receive a cut from the sales of the digital English version and is left with unsold copies of the same game. For this reason, many distributors are not financially able to provide localized version of a game for the Czech market (Kovář 2015).

The rise in popularity of video game systems such as Sony Playstation 3 and Microsoft Xbox 360 in the Czech market put an incentive to localize games even on these platforms. Videogames distributed in the Czech Republic by Microsoft and released on the Xbox 360 platform such as *Fable II* (2008), *Gears of War II* (2008) and *Viva Piñata* (2006) contained full Czech localization. Michala Králová from Czech branch of Microsoft mentioned in an article by Jiří Bigas that the company had a plan to release one fully localized title every quarter (Bigas 2010).

However, due to a need for a specialized and expensive development kits. Which are pieces of hardware used by the videogame developers for a development and a testing of games. Fan translations are not possible on these platforms. This leaves the possibility for localization only in the hands of distributors. Every new version of a game needs to be sent to the manufacturers of these systems for a quality check, further preventing the possibility of an unofficial localization (Bigas 2010; Vortex 2018, 5:35).

3 THE LOCALIZATION PROCESS OF VIDEO GAMES

As was previously mentioned, the translation process of video games is fundamentally different to the translation process of a movie for example. The biggest obstacle in a localization of a movie might be the fact that the production company will send the translator a version of the film that is only a text file of the dialogs or otherwise obstructs the picture as a piracy prevention. František Fuka, prominent figure in Czech movie scene describes on his blog how this approach affects and creates a problem for the translator who is not able to see what is being referenced on the screen in the context of the events in the movie. Creating unintentional mistranslations and directly influencing the quality of localized version (Fuka 2011; Fuka 2012).

Similar problem occurs during localization process of AAA game. Especially role-playing games are bigger in scope, thus need to be localized during the development process. Role playing games feature rich and detailed story that can be in their scope compared to a series of novels. However, contrary to books, players of these games are not obliged to follow the exact path of the story, as is the norm in other types of media. Rather they are presented with a choice of a character they want to play and explore the game world at their own pace and make their own decisions along the way. For this reason, the game needs to contain a different sets of texts for every possible choice path of the player. Vojtěch Schubert in his article mentions how this affects the amount of the text in game. For example the fantasy role playing game *Dragon Age II* (2011) spanned 1800 standardized pages of text that needed to be translated during localization process and a final chapter in a science fiction trilogy *Mass Effect 3* (2012) spanned 2347 standardized pages (Schubert 2014).

3.1 The steps in the process of videogame localization

Based on the information given by Heather Maxwell Chandler and Stephanie O'Malley Deming, the first step in a videogame localization is for the translator to get familiar with the game in question. For a game that was already released it means that the translator is expected to play the game beforehand, familiarize itself with the story, characters, themes and the structure of the game. In case the game is still in development, it is important for the developer to provide enough documentation to the translator and to be able answer all questions that may arise during the localization process (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, 11-12).

During the localization phase it is important for the translator to keep in touch with the developer or the publisher to make sure that the localized text displayable in the game

without any localization or game breaking issues. In the case of localization teams without the support of the developer or publisher, the team has to test for any errors themselves (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, 11-12).

After the localization phase, the localization of other materials is initiated. These materials include the manual and the cover for a physical version. In case any last minute errors in the localization have appeared, either in the localization itself, or in the case of a broken game, the translator works with the developer or publisher to fix these issues and to produce a patch for the game (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, 11-12).

3.2 The difficulties of videogame localization

In the case of video game localization, the localization process is much more complicated than in other types of media. First of all, the technical aspect of localizing a game means that instead of translation of simple text, the translator is presented with a text, usually in a spreadsheet form that is full of variables with which the game operates. Marianna Sacra deals with this issue on her blog. For this text to be displayed in the game, the programmers have to write a specific line of code that searches for the appropriate text and then displays it on the screen. For the translator, the text for translation looks something like this:

%CharacterName picked up an item.

Where the *%CharacterName* is a variable that is in the text as a placeholder and in the game is displayed as the name of a player's character, thus is not translated. However, due to the fact that in English is this sentence gender neutral, translation to a language like a Czech for example cannot be simply translated for each gender differently.

These forms of translation are not possible:

Male: *%CharacterName sebral předmět.*

Female: *%CharacterName sebrala předmět.*

For this translation to be possible, the core of the game would have to be programmed in a way that choosing male or female character would trigger the intended response. The other option would be for the translator to delete this text and replace it with a different text from

the target language. This however may result in an error and render the translation or the game as a whole nonworking (Sacra 2016).

Non-linearity in video games also plays big part during the translation process. With the interactive nature of videogames and in many cases letting the player to be able to talk to different characters at different times, the text does not follow the same structure as in the movies or books. For example, the text being translated might reference a text that is still to be translated but is in a different group, or the translated text might be description of an item in a menu where even the length of the translated description matters. For this reason it is very important to have an access to a reference guide to tell the translator what is being translated and how it corresponds to the context of the game (Sacra 2016).

With games being a software, any minor change in the code can result in a product that no longer works with one click of a button. The state of brokenness might range from a text that no longer shows up when is supposed to, to the point that it can render the game unplayable due to constant errors. Thus is important to regularly check for compatibility errors. In particular when the localization process occurs at the same time as the development of the game. In his book, Erik Bethe goes to the detail of the development process of a videogame. Thus, during the development phase, the code can be drastically different from day to day and the translated text can result in a game that no longer works (2003, 75-77).

II. PRACTICAL PART

4 METHODOLOGY

The practical part of this thesis is based on information gathered from respondents. The questions for respondents were based on a semi-structured questionnaire which was slightly altered to exactly match the position of the translator and the type of localization they worked on. Due to high number of potential respondents, their location and busy schedules, all of the information was gathered through an email communication with respondents. The respondents were encouraged to elaborate on the questions they were asked and to share information they deemed important.

The selection of respondents was aimed at equal representation of videogame localization in the Czech Republic from the early 1990s until present day. However, fan translators from the 1990s and early 2000s used aliases and did not provide any contact information, making them unreachable. From all the respondents I reached to, only a select few found the time and were willing to answer my questions. The rest of the respondents either did not respond back or kindly declined to answer my questions due to possible interference between my questions and the Non-Disclosure Agreement they most likely signed. One of the respondents who were willing to answer my questions expressed a demand not to be named and for the title of the localized game also to be omitted due to similar concerns. This request was fulfilled, thus for the sake of anonymity the name of this person and the title of the localized product are omitted.

The answers from respondents were collected and processed to suit the process of comparison for the practical part of this thesis. In the comparison, the respondents are labelled as **Respondent 1**, **Respondent 2**, **Respondent 3** and **Respondent 4**. The ideas of respondents on a specific question are presented, followed by a summary of the general idea of these answers.

4.1 Semi-structured questionnaire

The questions for the respondents were thought of as to give the respondent the possibility to describe the process of localization, difficulties during the localization, etc. and at the same time to be able to be adjusted to correspond to the respondent. All answers were collected in Czech.

The questions were as following:

1. What was the process of localization? Was there time to get familiar with the game in any way before process started or were you forced to use only the text for translation?
2. During the localization process, did you work alone or did you work in a team of translators?
3. According to a theme of a videogame, was there any specific terminology you had to adhere to during the localization process?
4. Did you receive any assistance from the development team during the localization process of the videogame?
5. How often was the translation checked in-game for any errors?
6. Time restraints aside, which difficulties arose during the localization process and had to be overcome?
7. Was there any special obstacle that stands above any else?
8. During the localization process, did you use professional software like MemoQ/Trados or did you use only Microsoft Excel or any free alternative?
9. After the release of the localized version, was there any time reserved solely to correct any errors that emerged? If yes, how long was this period?
10. Do you think, that in the times of higher difficulty to be profitable and rising popularity of online marketplaces like Steam, has Czech videogame localization its place?

4.2 Respondents

Each of the following respondent have a different position in the Czech videogame localization scene and in their answers have described the steps they take during a localization process. To elaborate on the process, their answers were based on a localization process of a specific title, rather than general steps.

4.2.1 Respondent 1

Respondent 1 is Mgr. Zuzana Marie Kostičová, Ph.D. who worked on the official Czech localization for a videogame *Dex* (2015). This game was created by Czech developer Dreadlocks Ltd. and falls under the umbrella of role playing games. The game is set in a futuristic world and encourages the player to explore the world in which the game is set in order to fully immerse itself to the experience (*Dex* 2015).

4.2.2 Respondent 2

Respondent 2 is a member of a group of fan translators who worked on various localization projects, some with full support from the original developer or the publisher of the game. The game, the respondent was asked about is an interactive experience with heavy focus on storytelling and released as an episodic content. On the request of the respondent, name of this person and the title of the game are not mentioned in this thesis.

4.2.3 Respondent 3

Vojtěch Trmal was a one of the translators of the group of fans who localized Fallout 1 and Fallout 2 at the end of the 1990s into Czech language. Both games are focused on open world experience set in a post-apocalyptic world and feature heavy emphasis on a story telling (*Fallout: A Post Nuclear Role Playing Game* 1997; *Fallout 2: A Post Nuclear Role Playing Game* 1998).

4.2.4 Respondent 4

Respondent 4 is a member of a fan dubbing group Fénix ProDabing. This group was formed in 2011 and specializes in a high quality voiceovers not only for videogames, but also for TV shows, movies, online video content and audiobooks (Fénix Prodabing 2018). Respondent was asked about their work on a videogame Prey, which was released in 2006. Prey is a science fiction action shooter from the point of view of a Cherokee and aims to provide movie-like experience to the player (*Prey* 2006).

5 THE PROCESS OF VIDEOGAME LOCALIZATION

5.1 Familiarity with the product for localization

Respondent 1 mentioned that due to the localization process taking place at the same time as the development of the game, there was no finished version of the game to play and get familiar with the characters, the tone of the story and the feel of the game. So on her own request she received the first playable version of the game, in the industry this version is called alpha version, in order to get familiar with the setting of the game, and to know how the characters look, how they feel and most importantly, how they interact with the protagonist. However, due to the nature of game development and the changes in story and characters that inevitably occur, the first playable version was not enough to localize the game properly. For this reason, as she mentioned, the studio provided a beta version of the game, which is a version where all the core components are in place and any changes that occur are of a smaller scale. At the end of the localization process, she mentioned that she had access to the fully finished and released English version of the game.

Respondent 2 described that the process of localization the game took a different approach from a classical one. With the game being released in an episodic style similar to the release cycle of a television show there were two choices the localization team could have made. The first is to localize every episode right after it comes out, or the second was to wait for all the episodes to come out and then localize the product as a whole. The team have decided to localize every episode right after it came out and the team had the opportunity to play through that episode. This made the localization process for every episode quicker, since each episode is shorter than a full game, thus having less text to localize.

Respondent 3 remembered that before working on the localizations for both titles, he did not have any way as to play through both games and to get familiar with the setting, the humor that plays a big part in the storytelling and dialogs with other characters. As he mentioned, he believes that the members of the localization team who were in charge in both projects spend enough time with both titles to ensure enough familiarity before the localization process started. However, he and many other translators on this project were simply sent a file with English text which was probably extracted from the game and were forced to translate it without the knowledge of context.

Respondent 4 told me that the localization process of *Prey* (2006) was a combination of both examples. He, as a leader of the team working on the localization was familiar with

the game beforehand. However, the members of the team were given translated texts for dubbing, which were further adjusted to fit their use case.

Three respondents confirmed that they were able to get familiar with the game in question before the start of localization process. **Respondent 1** was even able to receive and play various versions of the game in development. Only **respondent 3** was not able to play through the game he was working on due to the poor communication between the leaders of the project and translators.

5.2 Sole translator or a team of people?

Respondent 1 informed me that she worked alone during the whole localization process. However, she also shared that she was able to communicate with the author of the original English script when she had any questions and who answered every single one of these questions willingly and helpfully as to keep the localization as true to the original vision as possible. To add, she also shared that she was able to communicate with the head of production and his successor in a case where even the author of the original script could not be of any help.

Respondent 2 remembers that due to the localization process being spread out due to the release cycle of the game, every episode was localized by different group of people. However, as he assured me, even though the members of the groups were different, the process of localization was the same through the whole game. All the groups had a translator who translated the text, then there was a member who checked the translated text for translation or spelling errors and the last person was looking for inconsistencies in translations and fixed them.

As **respondent 3** mentioned previously, the localization process of both titles required a group of people for the localization to be finished in a reasonable time. However, the respondent was not able to specify how many people were part of the localization team for the reason that he was one of the translators who did not have access to the information about the team that was available to people in charge. The whole group was also highly fragmented, with everyone working from home on the specific part of the text they were assigned to translate.

Respondent 4 shared that at the time this localization took place, the usual process of any project was managed solely by the leader of said localization. This included dividing audio files based on character, assigning texts to these audio files and adjusted the length of

both audio and text files. After the dubbing process was concluded, the leader sent all the files to audio engineer who then imported everything to the game based on the original.

5.3 Specific terminology

Respondent 1 shared with me the information that she did not receive any specific terminology from the development team, even though the game is set in a futuristic science fiction world. Even though the respondent did not receive any guidance to what terminology to use, according to her, she was able to contact the head of production in the case when she was not sure what a specific term means and how to translate it to Czech. In other cases, as she told me, she translated everything as she felt appropriate and the head of the production made changes that better suited the vision of the finished product.

Respondent 2 agreed that the creation of a specific terminology for every localized product is very important to keep the localization consistent. He also mentioned, that in cases where there is an already established specific vocabulary, for example in a case of sequel of a title, the team chooses to use the already existing terminology to keep the localization consistent. In other cases, as he pointed out, the team does not start by creating a list of terms, rather during the localization process, every member of the team is encouraged to point out terms that should be added to that list and the head of localization is then in charge of keeping sure that the team is following the agreed way of translation of these words.

Respondent 3 mentioned that he did not receive any guidance in the way as to translate certain things, nor was he given a specific terminology to adhere to. As he mentioned, he believes that no translator from the team had any specific guidance in this way and that the terminology was most likely checked during the next step of localization process. During which editors received all the translated texts from translators and began the decision process on how to unify these translations and make them consistent.

Respondent 4 specified that during the dubbing process, the only reason to have a specialized list of words is for the dubbers to adhere to the same pronunciation for the specific terminology that is closely linked to the localized game. The process for picking the words that will need to be unified is as follows – every dubber reads through the texts before the process starts and points out words with debatable pronunciation which is then unified and adhered to during the rest of the process.

All respondents agreed that on every project mentioned, there was in some way performed unification of terminology. However, the way in which this was carried out differs for every respondent. **Respondent 2** and **respondent 4** encourage the translators to note any

words that could be debatable which are then unified for everyone. **Respondent 1** and **respondent 3** on the other hand, did not have this approach during the process. **Respondent 1** was able to contact members of the development team with any questions regarding the terminology, however in both cases the unification in terminology was done during the correcting phase of localization process.

5.4 Assistance from the developer/publisher of the game

The localization process of the videogame *Dex* (2015) was a professional one, endorsed and supported by the developer of the game. As the **respondent 1** mentioned previously, even though she worked on the localization process alone, she was in a close contact with the development team. Be it the writer of the English script for the game, or the head of the production or his successor, the respondent was able to contact anyone she felt was needed to help the Czech localization to be the best experience for the player. As she also mentioned, the rest of the inconsistencies that arose during the localization process were checked and changed accordingly by the successor to the head of the development team and other members of the team who were in charge of delivering the best experience to players.

Respondent 2 decided not to answer this question in relation to this specific title, however he assured me that in the past, the team was able to negotiate an active support from the publisher during the localization process on several occasions.

Respondent 3 was not able to answer this question correctly due to the fact that he was not one of the people in charge of the localization process, thus not having the relevant information in order to answer. Respondent was also not able to contact members of the group who would be able to answer this question due to the age of this project. The project the **respondent 4** was a part of, was a completely fan organized and executed work. Thus no assistance from the developer of the game, or publisher was provided.

5.5 In-game checks for errors

As **respondent 1** remembers, any in-game localization checks for localization errors or game breaking errors did not occur under her supervision, rather the development team received the localized documents and carried out these checks without the presence of the respondent. As the respondent recalled, the only feedback received was that the localization was met with a great response and everyone was happy with the work. However, any errors and other inconsistencies were out of the respondents reach to change or correct as the

development team handled this part of the process internally. **Respondent 2** decided not to answer this question.

As with some previous questions, **respondent 3** could not answer how frequent was translated text checked in game due to him not being a part of the team that implemented the translated texts back into the game and corrected any errors that occurred.

At the time when the localization process of *Prey* (2006) took place, **respondent 4** remembers that the process of checking for in game errors was different from the one the team carries out during current projects. At the time, the localization was checked by two members of the team who then wrote a list of things that were wrong and subsequently changed. One person then further checked the final version to make sure everything worked as intended. Nowadays, as respondent mentioned, the process is quite different. Instead of checking the game for errors, videos are made and those are checked in case any errors are present. The in-game testing is carried out during the final parts of the localization process.

From all respondents, only **respondent 4** was able to describe the process of in-game checks for any errors. He even described how the process looked during the localization process of the game in question and how this process has changed nowadays. Other respondents either did not comment on the way how the in-game checks are carried out or did not have the relevant knowledge to answer the question accordingly.

5.6 Difficulties during the localization process

As the **respondent 1** remembers, the localization process of the videogame was according to her own word the easiest and the most enjoyable one that she ever carried out. She mentioned the ease of communication with the writer of the script and also the friendly communication with the development team is a big part which contributed to the high quality of the localized product. The respondent was not able to recall any difficulties which she was not able to overcome easily with the help of the team or the writer of the script.

As someone who works with a group of other translators on a project, **Respondent 2** sees difficulties in the fact, that especially during the localization of games with a lot of text, the motivation of the team to finish the project starts to decline and many of them have to force themselves to finish the project. Respondent also pointed out that criticism from the community of players aimed specifically at the localization is a difficulty, especially when they demand a quick release of said localization without the knowledge of steps that are needed to take in order to present a high-quality localization. When a game receives a fix for errors during the localization, it can also mean that the localization will stop working and

the team is forced to check what has changed in the core of the game and start making corrections in the localization to accommodate for these changes, resulting in longer production of said localization.

Respondent 3 mentioned that difficulties during the localization of both titles were mostly resulting from the fact that he had context to the text he was given to translate. He did not know where is the text present in the game, in the case of dialogs, he did not know the characters and how is the final text going to be presented in the finished version. Respondent also shared what are the qualities that are recommended for the translator of games such as *Fallout 1* (1997) and *Fallout 2* (1998) in order to present high-quality translated text and to avoid difficulties. The translator should be very well versed in pop culture, since games like these are full of references to whole range of topics and to realize what is being referenced and to translate it to the correct language correctly is essential in avoiding any major difficulties in the localization process.

Respondent 4 shared that similarly to the answer given by **respondent 2**, are difficulties during the localization process connected to the human factor. As he mentioned, the difficulties arise from the laziness of people who are assigned the work on the project and then are not willing to work on their parts, prolonging the localization process. He also believes, that the time consuming nature of audio editing is a difficulty that needs to be overcome with every project. And similarly to respondent 3, he shared what he thinks is important in order to prevent difficulties. He believes that every project needs to have a strong planner who prepares the needed documents, chooses people for the team, then overlooks the whole process and makes sure the finished localization is of a high quality.

Thanks to having a close relationship with the developer of the game who were able to answer every question **respondent 1** had, she could not recall having any difficulties. On the other hand, **respondent 2** and **respondent 4** described the difficulties stemming mostly from the translators themselves, who start losing the motivation to continue with the work. This is most likely caused by the fact, that these projects are not financially backed and people working on them are doing that in their free time and for free.

5.7 Most notable difficulty

In previous question **respondent 1** mentioned that she was not able to recall any difficulties that arose during the localization process and that were not easily overcome with the help of the development team. Thus, there was no difficulty during the localization process that she would consider to be a major obstacle that needed to be overcome in order

to present a fully developed localization for the Czech market thanks to the close connection with the rest of the people working on the game.

As the **respondent 2** mentioned previously, he feels that there are difficulties during the localization process especially for games with passionate fanbase who are not willing to see the amount of a hard work that goes to the localization of a videogame and have unreasonable expectations towards the localization team. He, however, was not able to recall any incident that would stand out as the most notable difficulty during the work on a localization.

Respondent 3 shared that due to the amount of time that has passed since the localization process took place, if there was any specific difficulty or frustration other than the lack of communication as he answered in previous questions.

Respondent 4 agreed that every project can present itself with a specific set of difficulties that the team working on said project did not encounter before. At the same time, he was happy to say, that during the localization process of *Prey* (2006) there were no major difficulties and the process ran smoothly.

5.8 Usage of professional translation tools

Respondent 1 described herself as conservative when it comes to using tools for a computer aided translation such as Trados or MemoQ. She believes that these tools are best suited for a translation work in the technological sphere where accuracy of the translation is the most important part. However, she believes that for a videogame localization or any other literary works, these tools are not beneficial and their usage can result in a localization that does not feel right in the target language. During the localization process, the respondent used text files for the translation of general texts and dialogs in order to keep the flow of the text intact as she believed that using table editor would break this flow. She then worked with table editor in which she translated the parts of the game that required it, such as names of the items in the game or abilities of the protagonist.

Respondent 2 is a member of a group of fan translators, which means that they do not have funding which would able them to purchase a paid software. For this reason, the team uses alternatives which are free and available for every member of the team. During the localization process, the team uses Google spreadsheets for its availability and also for the reason that the whole team can work on a single spreadsheet file at the same time and can keep an eye on the progress of the localization. For final export of the localized text, the team uses another free alternative to Microsoft Excel, in this case it is software called a LibreOffice. **Respondent 2** also agrees with **respondent 1** on the opinion that use of the

computer aided translation tools is not suitable for a videogame localization. Adding, that especially with less experienced translators, the risk of low-quality translation is higher since the translator is counting on the automatic translation and does not focus on a context and specific phrases.

Respondent 3 shared that at the time when the localization process took place, he was not aware about the existence of professional computer aided localization tools which he found and started using many years later. For the localization process, he mentions, the original texts were send out to translators as simple text files and the finished translations were also sent out back in the form of a text file.

Respondent 4 revealed that just like previous respondents, the team he works with do not use any specialized software for computer aided translation. He mentioned, that to keep the text more suitable for voiceover they send the text for dubbing in a spreadsheet form to the members of the team.

All respondents have agreed in that they did not use any professional tools for computer aided translation, supporting it with reasoning that these tools are not suitable for translation where is important to take the context in consideration during the translation process, not only the translated part itself. All respondents have also confirmed that their localization process involves using either Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel or their free alternatives.

5.9 Post-release period for error correcting

Respondent 1 mentioned that this was the only part of the whole localization process, she was displeased with. As she turned in the finished translation for the videogame, she did not receive any feedback, nor was she part of the corrections that occurred during that period. The head of production checked localized text and made corrections and further changes without the knowledge of the respondent. This, according to the respondent, resulted in many mistakes in the localized version of the game which she was not aware of. Few months after the release of the localized version, the respondent was contacted and asked if she would be able to check the localized texts and make corrections for the errors that occurred in the final text for the Czech version of the game. This resulted in a specific case, where the respondent was able to not only go through the text and correct any mistakes, but also physically check the finished localization in game to make sure that no more errors occurred.

Respondent 2 confirmed that every project the team works at is after the release modified in order to correct any localization mistakes that may have found its way to the finished product. The team also acts as a support for players that are not able to get the

localization functioning with their game, and as respondent mentioned earlier, in the case that the developer of the videogame releases a fix that changes the core structure of the game, which makes the localization no longer functioning, the team makes any necessary changes to make sure the localization works with the changes made to the game. As with other questions concerning later parts of localization process, the **respondent 3** was not able to share any information.

Respondent 4 shared that the team he is a member of does not usually fix any errors after the localization is released, claiming that players have the possibility to report any errors they find during the game, however very few choose to do so. If there is an important change made to the localization, they inform about it on their website. Otherwise, they mostly fix only small errors that occur with installation of the localization.

5.10 The place of Czech videogame localization in today's market

Respondent 1 believes that the relevancy of Czech localized videogames in today's market highly depends on the quality of the localization provided. As she mentioned, in the case of a lazy translation without feedback and created solely through the use of spreadsheet it only motivates the player to further study English and to enjoy the game in the language it was created. She believes that for a Czech localized videogames to be relevant in today's market, the localization needs to be high-quality and funny, with proper corrections made before the release of the localized videogame. The respondent also remarked that the Czech localization has declined in the recent years, with some exceptions proving the point, due to the fast paced turnover of these attempts for localization which hinder the further development of Czech localization in general, not only in the videogame industry.

Respondent 2 argued that the price for professional translation has not risen in the recent years and further mentions that especially Czech localization made by fan groups do not cost the developer or the publisher anything, which makes them free and according to the respondent, still keeps them relevant even in today's market. The respondent also argues, that the rise of popularity of online marketplaces where people can purchase videogames for much lower prices than in Czech shops is in no way connected to the relevancy of the Czech localized videogames.

Respondent 3 feels that for Czech videogame localization to keep its relevancy in today's market, the most important part is the interest from the players themselves. It is important for players to not only play games in Czech, but to actively support it. He even mentioned two examples where the Czech localization was a big part of the immersion of

the game. First was a recent title from a Czech based videogame developer *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* (2018) which featured Czech subtitles even though professional Czech dubbing was not available due to financial reasons. The other example was another recent title *Subnautica* (2018) which received Czech localization only thanks to the community whose interest and passion in the game was a big enough reason for the localization.

Respondent 4, similarly to **respondent 2** is a part of fan group that is not paid for the localization work they do. He said that the group only needs for the game to support the audio files they generate during the localization process and for a translated texts to be available to them. Otherwise, as he claimed, the work that the team provides is not influenced by these external factors.

Answers to this question differed according to the connection of respondent to the way they localize games. **Respondent 2** and **respondent 4** are members of fan groups who do not receive financial reward for their work, thus from their point of view the way people obtain videogames does not change anything for these groups. On the other hand, **respondent 1** and **respondent 3** see the issue that would stem from local distributors deciding to spend less money on Czech localization for new titles. Quickly put together localizations without enough proofreading and testing before release would only hinder the further development of Czech localization in general.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to document the development of the videogame localization in Czech Republic. The theoretical part of this thesis focused on the differences in the evolution of videogame localization internationally with the emphasis on distinguishing between official localization and fan made localization compared to the evolution in the Czech Republic. This part also showcased the steps that are necessary for the localization team to take in order to present a finished localization to the end user, this part also dealt with the issues specific to videogame localization that are not present in other media.

The practical part of this thesis focused on the process of videogame localization from the point of view of the translators themselves. The aim was to acquire answers from translators who worked on localization projects at different time periods in order to show the evolution of videogame localization in the Czech Republic. However, due to limited number of respondents it was possible to only compare the process of videogame localization in the late 1990s to the process nowadays.

The biggest difference that is visible from the answers that were provided by respondents, is the way how even teams of fan translators are structured and well-coordinated in order to present a high quality localization to the players. Contrary to the late 1990s when the communication between members working on the same localization project was lacking. This change ensures that all members on the project are able to present for example questionable terminology they found during the localization process and the whole team gets to decide on overcoming this issue.

Respondents have also agreed with each other in that professional tools for computer aided translation are in no way suited for the use during this type of localization process, proving that translators working on videogame localizations are aware of the need to translate the text according to the context in videogame rather than on the meaning of the text itself in isolation.

The idea if Czech localized videogames have their place in today's market was met with strong answers that differed based on the type of localization work the respondent was involved in. Fan translators were strongly set on the idea that Czech localization is still viable and does not show any signs of losing its relevancy. On the other hand, professional translator is aware of the dangerous effects that cheaply made localization can have on the future of Czech localization in general and advised against it.

From the answers is clear that in the near future Czech videogame localization is not in a direct danger of becoming irrelevant, however to stay relevant in the long term, local distributors need to invest more to professionally created localization or to support groups of fans who dedicate their free time to present gamers with Czech localization for their favourite titles to further continue their passion. In other case, Czech gamers will be forced to play games in a different language and Czech localized videogames will become a rarity rather than a norm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anastasov, Andrej. 1994. "Dreamweb." *Score*, December, 1994.
- Baker, Mona. 2011. *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. New York: Routledge.
- BBC News. 2014. "Wolfenstein Has First German Release." Accessed April 29, 2018.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-27488254>.
- Bernal-Merino, Miguel Á. 2015. *Translation and Localisation in Video Games*. New York: Routledge.
- Bethke, Erik. 2003. *Game Development and Production*. Texas: Worldware.
- Bigas, Jiří. 2010. "Proč konzolové hry neumějí česky?." *Hrej.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018.
<http://www.hrej.cz/clanky/lokalizace-na-konzolich-pocesku-3334/>.
- Bonusweb. 2014. "Nejlepší česko-slovenská hra? Že neuhádnete, kdo na plné řáře vyhrál." *Bonusweb.Idnes.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. https://bonusweb.idnes.cz/nejlepsi-cesko-slovenska-hra-vyhlaseni-ankety-fqo-/Magazin.aspx?c=A141203_154335_bw-magazin_anb.
- Cinemassacre. 2013. *Atari Video Games (Part 1) James & Mike*. Video.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGsckFydtXc>.
- Chikofsky, E.J., and J.H. Cross. 1990. "Reverse Engineering and Design Recovery: A Taxonomy." *IEEE Software* 7 (1): 13-17. doi:10.1109/52.43044.
- Dex. 2015. Windows. Dreadlocks Ltd.
- Esselink, Bert. 2000. *A Practical Guide to Localization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Fallout: A Post Nuclear Role Playing Game*. 1997. Windows. Interplay Inc.
- Fallout 2: A Post Nuclear Role Playing Game*. 1998. Windows. Black Isle Studios.
- Fénix Prodabing. 2018. "O Nás." Accessed April 29, 2018.
<http://www.fenixprodabing.cz/onas>.
- Fuka, František. 2011. "Konec titulků v Čechách?." *Fffilm.Name*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.fffilm.name/2011/05/konec-titulku-v-cechach.html>.
- Fuka, František. 2012. "Ohledně těch českých titulků u Batmana...." *Fffilm.Name*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.fffilm.name/2012/07/ohledne-tech-ceskych-titulku-u-batmana.html>.
- Game Informer. 2013. "Perfecting Persona: How Atlus USA Bloomed." Accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.gameinformer.com/b/features/archive/2013/09/17/perfecting-persona-how-atlus-usa-bloomed.aspx?PostPageIndex=1>.

- Games.cz. 2012. "Muž, který bastlil v Československu herní automaty." *Games.Tiscali.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://games.tiscali.cz/tema/muz-ktery-bastlil-v-ceskoslovensku-herni-automaty-60695>.
- Games.cz. 2013. "Vítejte v Klubu - Kde se v normalizačním Československu scházeli počítačovní nadšenci?." *Games.Tiscali.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://games.tiscali.cz/tema/vitejte-v-klubu-kde-se-v-normalizacnim-ceskoslovensku-schazeli-pocitacovi-nadsenci-64408>.
- Games.cz. 2014. "České a Slovenské hry pod koly času." *Games.Tiscali.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://games.tiscali.cz/tema/ceske-a-slovenske-hry-pod-koly-casu-245471>.
- Helbraun Law Firm. 2018. "Reviewing The Questionable Legality Of Fan-Made Translations Of Video Games." *Helbraunlaw.Com*. Accessed April 29. <https://www.helbraunlaw.com/reviewing-the-questionable-legality-of-fan-made-translations-of.html>.
- House, Juliane. 2016. *Translation As Communication Across Languages And Cultures*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Hrej. 2009. "Level 174: Psychonauts CZ." *Hrej.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.hrej.cz/clanky/level-174-psychonauts-cz-2305/>.
- Kent, Steven. 2010. *The Ultimate History Of Videogames*. Ebook. 1st ed. Three Rivers Press.
- Kovář, Martin. 2015. "Jak se překládají hry do češtiny: Episode 1." *Hrej.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.hrej.cz/clanky/jak-se-prekladaji-hry-do-cestiny-episode-1-5247/>.
- Kovář, Martin. 2015. "Jak se překládají hry do češtiny: Episode 2." *Hrej.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.hrej.cz/clanky/jak-se-prekladaji-hry-do-cestiny-episode-2-5250/>.
- Lupa. 2006. "Případy softwarového pirátství." *Lupa.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://www.lupa.cz/clanky/pripady-softwaroveho-piratstvi/>.
- Maxwell Chandler, Heather, and Stephanie O'Malley Deming. 2011. *The Game Localization Handbook 2Nd Edition*. 1st ed. Sudbury: Jones & Bartlett.
- Mott, Tony. 2011. *1001 Video Games You Must Play Before You Die*. Ebook. 1st ed. Cassell Illustrated.

- Namba, Yu. 2017. "Persona 5: How Atlus USA Localized An Instant Classic." *Playstation.Blog*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://blog.us.playstation.com/2017/04/04/persona-5-how-atlus-usa-localized-an-instant-classic/>.
- Noska, Martin. 2008. "Počítačové pirátství: jaká se situace v ČR?" *Computerworld.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://computerworld.cz/udalosti/pocitacove-piratstvi-jaka-se-situace-v-cr-1225>.
- Persona 5*. 2017. Playstation 4. Atlus.
- Plné Hry. 2004. "Agent Mlíčňák." *Plnehry.Idnes.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. https://plnehry.idnes.cz/agent-mlicnak-001-/Clanek.aspx?c=A000129_045003_bw-plneHry-adventury_bw.
- Polygon. 2014. "A Peek Into The Underground World Of Fan-Translated Games." Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://www.polygon.com/2014/5/14/5335288/fan-translations-japanese-western-localization-translation-games>.
- Prey*. 2006. Windows. Human Head Studios, Inc.
- Pym, Anthony. 2004. *The Moving Text: Localization, Translation and Distribution*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Retroware. 2015. *Policenauts Retrospective - Retroware Rewind (Full Length)*. Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBfWUMDqVbg>.
- Sacra, Marianna. 2016. "How To Translate A Game—A Beginner's Guide For Your Locjam Success." *IUP TRANSLATIONS*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <http://iuptranslations.com/en/localization-blog/2016/03/how-to-translate-a-game-for-locjam>.
- Schubert, Vojtěch. 2014. "Mračna nad hrami v češtině." *Games.Tiscali.Cz*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://games.tiscali.cz/tema/mracna-nad-hrami-v-cestine-problematika-profesionalnich-i-amaterskych-lokalizaci-245220>.
- Score. 1994. *Score*, September, 1994.
- Stuart, Keith. 2017. "17 Top Bargains in The Steam Summer Sale." *The Guardian*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/23/17-bargains-in-the-steam-summer-sale>.
- The Cutting Room Floor. 2018. "The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past." Accessed April 29, 2018. https://tcrf.net/The_Legend_of_Zelda:_A_Link_to_the_Past#Regional_Differences.

The Mushroom Kingdom. "Super Mario Bros. 2." Accessed April 29, 2018.

https://themushroomkingdom.net/smb2_ddp.shtml.

Unreal Engine. 2018. "Localization System Overview." <https://docs.unrealengine.com/en-us/Gameplay/Localization/Overview>.

Vortex. 2018. *Dokument/Documentary - Epilogue: Kingdom Come: Deliverance [ENG SUB]*. Video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sRvKRATNf0&feature=youtu.be&t=330>.

Yacht Club Games. 2016. "Japan Localization." *Yachtclubgames.Com*. Accessed April 29, 2018. <http://yachtclubgames.com/2016/07/japan-localization/>.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- IP Internet Protocol
Ltd. Private company limited by shares
s.r.o. Limited liability company

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – RESPONDENT 1

Appendix 2 – RESPONDENT 2

Appendix 3 – RESPONDENT 3

Appendix 4 – RESPONDENT 4

APPENDIX P I: RESPONDENT 1

1. I have received an alpha version, which gave me clear ideas how which characters look and function. Later I have received a beta version and at the end I have worked with the first released version.
2. I worked on my own. I had contact info on Morris Stuttard, the author of the original script who willingly answered all my questions. Plus communication with Jan Jirkovský and later with Václav Sahula was great.
3. I did not. However, every time I was not sure, we solved it with J. Jirkovský via mail, the rest he changed himself.
4. Yes. Even after the death of J. Jirkovský with Václav Sahula and other members of Dreadlocks.
- 5-7. I have received scripts mostly in MS Word format and spreadsheet with the names of objects and abilities which I translated. The work did not follow the usual process of translation of technical software, but rather work for voiceover studio – this allowed perfectly translate dialogs and avoid translating terms without context which can happen with spreadsheet translation. These dialogs were sent to J. Jirkovský in two halves. All feedback I have received, was via email initiated by me and not formal in nature. However I had all the support I have needed with the assurance that the translation is good and the studio likes it. This with the willingness of Morris Stuttard to answer my harder questions based on linguistically more difficult parts made the work on Dex one of the most enjoyable and most entertaining commercial translations I have created. I can't recall any difficulties which would not be overcome with ease, even after J. Jirkovský left Dreadlocks.
8. I am pretty conservative – I think that Trados and other software are ideal for technical and other specialized translations, but for more literary text are not suitable. Nobody would stop me if I wanted to use it, but my aim was to create a creative translation that was adapted for Czech audience and not machine perfect localization.
9. This part was badly conceived. J. Jirkovský looked through the translation and corrected it himself without sending the corrected text my way (this would be called first proofreading) nor was I able to test the game with the localization implemented (this would be second proofreading). The process was similar to voiceover studio work – translator created a translation, editor corrects it and then is the text implemented. Even in dubbing, this process creates problems not to mention videogame. Logically Dex was full of grammatical errors. J. Jirkovský was then let go from Dreadlocks and after that died. A few months after that I

got contacted by Václav Sahula if I could correct the localization. I gladly accepted, studio met my requirements and I was able to go through the corrected texts and even to visit the studio and check the localization in the game. I am aware that this was special process and normally studios don't do this, however I am sure that this was for the best.

10. It will depend on the fact, if studios will put emphasis on the quality of translation. Clumsy localization without feedback, created only from spreadsheets without the game will only motivate players to learn English and played the game in its original language. On the other hand, quality and funny translation with literary ambitions, where the translator has access to the game and with quality corrections, would be a big contribution. Sadly, Czech translation has fallen in recent years – yes there are still a quality literary translations, but for example dubbing produces mostly cheaply made, low quality and clumsy final products which support viewers in learning English to be able to watch the original dubbing. Czech localization of this “quality” is not going to help.

APPENDIX P II: RESPONDENT 2

1. The localization process started after the release of every single episode.
2. Every episode was different. Everybody had their part, somebody else checked for errors and third one fixed inconsistencies in the final product.
3. Terminology is very important, but the table is usually being created during the localization process, when people start finding interesting terminology. If it is possible, we try to use a vocabulary from previous instalment. One person (usually the leader of the project) is then controlling other members of the team, if they adhere to this terminology.
4. Yes, we have received support for some projects.
- 6-7. Updates that change the structure of the game and text files. Lack of desire of team members to work after some time. Hate from the community that do not understand that we cannot provide finished localization as fast as they would like.
8. We use Google Sheets and LibreOffice for export. Since most projects are without any monetary help or the sponsorship is very small, we are not able to pay for professional tools. And from the experience of others, I know that these tools lead to worse product when used by non-professionals who are then counting on the automatic translation and do not think about the phrases and context.
9. After the release, we offer support. It takes as long as long are people willing to send us reports or work on the texts themselves. This process is different with every project. We deal similarly with the updates from the developers of the games, which often render the installation of localization non-functional.
10. The price for normalized page of text is the same for years. And fan translations are pretty much free, so here the cost do not rise either. I also don't see the connection with Steam and Czech localization.

APPENDIX P III: RESPONDENT 3

1. More experienced colleagues played through the game even before the start of the localization process. Rest of the team, like me, were only given text which was most likely extracted from the game.
2. I can't answer, the team was pretty fragmented during the whole process. From what I know, everybody received their part of the text on which they then worked.
3. The terminology was checked in the next step, when editors and more experienced members of the team compiled texts from all the translators.
- 4-7. Important is the knowledge of popculture – in this case for references, allusions, etc. Then was important to have someone who was able to translate rhymes for the use in riddles, mission objectives etc. I, myself, was not part of the proofreading, so I don't know how often or if the localization was checked in game. And the hardest part was certainly the lack of context. When I did not know where and in what form is the translated term going to be used in the game. Other than that I can't think of anything.
8. Everything was done in text form and for correctors it must have been hell to keep everything consistent. I did not know about the existence of CAT tools for the next ten years when I started using them professionally.
9. I was not part of this process. I can't tell.
10. When there is enough players willing to support full immersion into the story and setting of a game in their native language, the future is there. Can you imagine this year's Kingdome Come: Deliverance by Warhorse Studios without Czech subtitles? Or Subnautica by Unknown Worlds Entertainment – if there wasn't big enough interest by the community, the localization would never exist.

APPENDIX P IV: RESPONDENT 4

1. Both. I knew the game, but for members of the team, we used already existing texts which we modified.
2. At the time, it was a norm that the leader of the project did mostly everything. Sorted audio files according to the character, linked text files and cut them to length. After the dubbing process, everything was sent to the audio engineer who implemented the sound files according to the original.
3. If it's meant united pronunciation, this is taken care of before the dubbing process. Every member goes through his texts and makes notes of words which are then unified.
4. It is important to have leader who prepares the texts, chooses members of the team, controls the dubbing process and is in contact with the sound engineer, plans the testing of the dubbing and the release of finished product.
5. It used to be done, that two people played through the game and made notes of everything "wrong", then was everything corrected and one person did another round of testing to make sure everything was corrected. Nowadays, the first round of testing is done in form of a videos that are created from the game and based on that, the errors are noted, after that is everything checked in game.
6. Laziness of members of the team and time occupation for the sound engineer.
7. Every game brings different surprise which slows the progress. With PREY, there was nothing unusual. This game was easy to work with.
8. We do not use anything special, the texts are created in Excel to be better arranged.
9. After the release of the finished product is usually nothing changed. It is mostly because we do not have any reports. People play the game but do not mention any errors. It happens very rarely and is usually some technical problem with installation rather than the localization. If there is something important, we correct it and inform about it on the web.
10. For us, nothing changes. We work for free. We only need the Czech texts and for the game to be able to be edited. We do not need anything else.