The Paradigm Shift of Indirect Translation in Contemporary Video Game Development and Localization

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Abstract

This article aims to introduce new insights into the utilization of indirect translation in video game localization by uncovering a new potential localization process unique to video games. It presents indirect translation as a pivotal way to spread language accessibility in smaller languages and markets, focusing on Japanese video games and their accessibility using English as a pivot language. It offers an overview of the Slovak gaming market and the state of Japanese-to-Slovak translation in Slovakia. It then leads to showcasing indirect translation in video game localization in the past and introduces a new way of integrating indirect translation based on the localization of *Final Fantasy XVI*.

Keywords: indirect translation, video game localization, pivot translation, game development

1 Introduction

Even though the topic of accessibility in video games has become widely discussed in recent years, more often than not, the main topic is accessibility for people with various physical special needs, and language accessibility is mentioned less frequently in this context. Product availability, or in this case video game availability in different languages, is a major factor in making games accessible to players from all around the world who may not speak English or other major languages, and therefore should be discussed as a matter of accessibility. Rather than expecting players to understand or learn a foreign language, some video game developers strive to make their products as linguistically accessible as possible. Three major obstacles in this case are finances, time constraints, and a limited number of qualified employees – translators. Although not a perfect solution, indirect translation could potentially address at least two of these issues if given the proper priority and care. This type of translation not unknown in video game localization practices but it has always been seen as "inferior" or secondary to direct translation. However, due to recent innovative strategies, this may change in

the future. This is illustrated on the example of the *Final Fantasy* series by Square Enix, with *Final Fantasy XVI* proving to be a major turning point in the potential use of indirect localization in the future. This study specifically examines this potential with Japanese video games on the Slovak market, but it is likely that the same conclusions could be drawn for other language combinations as well.

The first section examines indirect translation and its place in translation studies, as well as its significance in the context of Slovak translation. The second section explores the relationship between Japanese video games and Slovak gamers, focusing on the demand and current state of localization. The third and final section briefly discusses the history of video game localization using the example of *Final Fantasy* and introduces the process of localizing *Final Fantasy XVI* from Japanese into English, as well as its potential for other developers to follow in its footsteps and utilize this process to indirectly localize their video games into lesser-known languages.

2 Indirect translation and its status in translation studies

Indirect translation, also known as pivot translation or second-hand translation, has been loosely defined as "translation communication through already-made translation" (Popovič 1975, p. 58), "the historical process of translation from an intermediary version" (Pym 2011, p. 80) or "a mediation from source to target language in which the translational product has been realized in another language than that of the original; the defining feature is that the intermediary translation has an audience, that is consumers of its own" (Dollerup 1998, p. 3). Although these definitions seem slightly different, they all agree that there must be an existing source text for the secondary (intermediary) text. In other words, indirect translation can only start once there is a complete, unchanging source text.

Bubnášová (2011) describes indirect translation as a one-direction process with three (six) main actors – Source Text (ST) and Source Language (SL), Intermediary Text (IT) and Intermediary Language (IL), and Target Text (TT) and Target Language (TL), but for simplicity, this article will focus on the text itself. She presents the process as such:

$$\text{ST (SL)} \rightarrow \text{IT (IL)} \rightarrow \text{TT (TL)}$$

In this scheme, the ST is the "starting line," the "original", and the IT is simply what follows to reach the TT. This process, naturally occurring only in one direction, means IT cannot influence ST, must follow what ST already established, and should not deviate too much to fluently translate the meaning of ST into TT. With regard to this one-direction process, video games seem to be a rare – or perhaps even the only – exception.

Indirect translation is most commonly used when the need arises due to a lack of suitable translators, either because of a specific language combination or a specialized

genre or topic of translation (Velecký 2024). However, this statement has been somewhat disproven by Bubnášová (2011) when it comes to Slovak literature.

2.1 Indirect translation in Slovakia

The vast majority of indirect translation usage comes from the literary field, which has a long history of translating literary works in Slovakia since the 1950s, peaking between 1990 and 1999. As for the languages, Russian, Czech, and Polish were the three main intermediary languages up until the 1990s, confirming that indirect translation in literary translation is most often done through an intermediary language as closely related to the target language as possible. After the 1990s, the main intermediary languages switched to German, Czech, and English. Bubnášová (2011) notes that out of all the records from the Slovak National Bibliography, only 2% of all translated texts were translated indirectly.

We can therefore see that indirect translation has been utilized in Slovakia, but while this is true for literary translation, the same cannot be said for other sectors, such as video game localization. However, it should be noted that in the case of video game localization, the small quantity of localized products does not only concern indirectly localized ones, but also directly localized ones.

2.2 Methodology

The following section focuses on the demand (or lack thereof) for Japanese video games in Slovakia and their accessibility in the Slovak language. Gathering specific statistics proved somewhat difficult, as many e-shops specializing in video games do not have the option to sort video games based on their sales performance, and the only option close enough is the vague category of *popularity*. Furthermore, well-known platforms such as Steam, GOG, or Epic Games Store offer statistics for larger[38] countries and territories, but not for Slovakia. Console-specific stores, such as PS Store, Nintendo Store, or Xbox Store, also tend to group statistics into even larger regions, such as the US, Europe, Asia, and Africa, making it difficult to gauge a game's popularity in a specific country. However, due to the overwhelming popularity of these platforms, especially Steam, further research would be beneficial.

As such, this research was mainly conducted on platforms and e-shops considered well-known and widely used among Slovak gamers, namely:

1. Smarty (formerly Brloh)
2. PGS
3. Xzone
4. Herný svet

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[38] "Larger" in this context refers to countries with larger population and therefore more language users.

Due to the unclear sorting options on these platforms, this research does not aim to provide concrete numbers in terms of sales or genre and developer preferences, but rather a general overview of where Japanese video games stand as a whole. We collected data by browsing the selection of Japanese video games in these four online shops and analyzed whether these games are localized into the Slovak language based on the product description.

Concerning the issue of accessibility of these video games in Slovak, there are currently no Japanese video games localized into Slovak, as discussed in subsection 2.2. For this purpose, websites and communities with unofficial localizations, specifically *lokalizacie.sk*, were examined in addition to the e-shops and platforms mentioned above.

3 Japanese video games and the Slovak market

While Slovakia is inarguably a small market compared to its larger European neighbors and markets further afield, it still houses many active gamers. This section provides an overview of the Slovak gaming market focusing on Japanese video games, and addresses the question of their popularity in Slovakia and availability in Slovak.

3.1 The demand for Japanese video games

The results show that while Japanese video games tend to be left out of the top spots, they are still popular. The most notable examples come from Nintendo, with franchises such as *Super Mario, Pokémon, The Legend of Zelda, Animal Crossing*, and Sup*er Smash Bros.* Another successful studio is FromSoftware, with games from the *Dark Souls* franchise, *Elden Ring*, and *Bloodborne*. Fighting games such as *Tekken* or *Street Fighter* are also often found on the top-selling pages, with the survival horror genre led by *Resident Evil* closely behind. Other franchises, such as *Sonic the Hedgehog, Metroid, Pikmin, Splatoon, Kirby,* and *Monster Hunter*, confirm that rather than stand-alone video games, Slovak gamers tend to show interest in franchises of Japanese production.

As the number of video games officially localized into Slovak is very small, the fact that none of the video games localized into Slovak were localized from Japanese or came from a Japanese developer was not surprising.

These results show that while Japanese video games are not always localized into Slovak, they are still popular enough to be actively sold on the Slovak market. It is therefore possible to conclude that the absence of Slovak localizations of these games is not due to the lack of interest among players, but rather to other factors, which will be discussed later.

3.2 The current state of Japanese video games localized into Slovak

As discussed in the previous subsection, Slovak players buy and play Japanese video games despite the lack of language availability on the market. The two other major contributors to the absence of Slovak localization of these games are:

1. Economic reasons – the high cost of investment into localization vs. low financial gain due to the small size of the target market (further developed in Velecký 2024)

2. The lack of Japanese-to-Slovak translators equipped to work in video game localization

With a population of roughly 5.4 million people, Slovakia is undoubtedly a very small market compared to many other countries, but also all its neighbors. This makes video game localization a rather difficult task, as Slovakia is the only country in the world where Slovak is officially spoken. The target audience and potential profit are thin in comparison to larger language markets and the required cost of localization. As Koscelníková also noted (2020), studios tend to prioritize Czech over Slovak due to several factors, most notably larger population, higher demand for Czech localizations, and mutual understanding of Czech and Slovak languages, making it difficult to demand Slovak localizations in the first place.

However, the research also looked into community localization, or fan-localization, specifically on the popular website *lokalizacie.sk*, where players unofficially localize selected video games into Slovak for other players. Due to the volunteer nature of this community, it can be assumed that the selection of video games is based on their popularity in the gaming community and the capabilities of the (potential) localizers. According to an interview with Mário Csaplár, one of the founding members of the website, the choice of which video games to localize is first and foremost based on the team's capabilities, but also on cooperation with Czech localization teams, so as not to work on a duplicate project (Velecký 2022). It is then worth examining whether Japanese-made video games appear in Czech localizations, so the community on *lokalizace.net* was the next point of interest. This community houses a considerable number of Japanese-made video games localized into Czech, including games from the *Resident Evil* franchise, *NieR: Automata*, and *Kingdom Hearts III*. According to the forum, all of them were likely localized indirectly from English rather than directly from Japanese. This confirms the assumption that even in Slovakia, the main reason for the absence of Japanese to Slovak localizations is not the games' unpopularity, but the low number of qualified or interested translators. An important note is that while the method of indirectly localizing video games proposed in this article is suitable for official localizations, it is not applicable to fan-localization, as its main point of success lies in the cooperation between translators and programmers, which is impossible in fan-localization, at least not on the same level.

It is then important examine the factors contributing to stagnating number of potential Japanese-to-Slovak localizers, the main factor being inadequate opportunities for higher translation education in this specific language combination. In Slovakia, it is currently only possible to study Japanese at Comenius University in Bratislava as a major called Japanese Studies. According to the information on the website of the Faculty of Arts (Filozofická fakulta UK, 2024), the main focus of this major is learning the Japanese language and studying cultural aspects of the country, such as literature, history, geography, and more. This, however, means that although students may work as translators in the future, they do not receive translation education during their studies, making jobs as specialized as video game localization difficult. Noteworthy skills and knowledge include translation theory, working with CAT tools, and experience in localizing digital products, which students of Philology Aimed at Training of Translators and Interpreters receive during their studies in other language combinations. Furthermore, Japanese Studies only opens every three years, regularly rotating with Chinese Studies and Korean Studies. All these factors contribute to a gap in the translation market, which could potentially be filled by indirect translation.

4 Indirect translation in video game localization

This section first discusses the history of indirect translation in video game localization, specifically using the example of the *Final Fantasy* series by Square Enix, and then examines the localization practices of Square Enix subdivision, Creative Business Unit III, leading to the localization of *Final Fantasy XVI* and its potential to become a precedent for future projects based on its new, innovative approach to localizing the video game directly.

4.1 A brief historical overview of the development of video game localization

The lack of video game localizers working with Japanese is not unique to smaller languages, such as Slovak, but has also been documented in relation to languages with more speakers in the past. For the purposes of this article, the main – although not sole – example, will be the Japanese studio Square Enix, not only for their long history and pioneering contributions to the field of video game localization as a whole but also for their open approach to communicating with their player base and willingness to include players in behind-the-scenes processes through interviews and live streams.

Before localization became an important process in video game development, studios often treated it as a secondary process to be done only after the product was complete or even released. This approach led to not only lower-quality localizations but also dissatisfied players who often had to wait several months to play a video game, as "translation and localization have been placed firmly in the post-production stage of the process, together with packaging" (Bernal-Merino 2014, p. 150) in their desired

language, on top of quality issues with the translations. As O'Hagan states, "as a business procedure developed in the localization industry, GILT foregrounded localization and translation as part of the globalization process, with a specific aim to manage time-sensitive product rollouts in an increasing range of target languages across different markets." (2022, p. 444), meaning localization became an integral part of video game development and subsequent release. Another important part of this strategy was the idea of "sim-ship" releases, the plan to release all language versions of a video game at once, or at dates as close as possible, to maximize profit.

5 Indirect translation in the Final Fantasy series

The main part of this article focuses on *Final Fantasy XVI* (Square Enix 2023), and as such, it is important to look back on how the localization of this series was handled in the past, although only briefly, as O'Hagan (2022) has already provided a thorough overview of this series. The most important aspects for this article are the differences and developments leading up to the release of *Final Fantasy XVI*.

When looking at the localization history of *Final Fantasy* as a whole, it is important to note some significant milestones. One of those was *Final Fantasy VII* (Square 1997), which was, up until that point, the series' first major success worldwide, as well as the first Square game to be localized into FIGS[39]. It was also a good example of issues stemming from indirect localization, as the game was first localized from Japanese to English and then into FIGS using English as a pivot language, which led to criticism from the player base. However, the company quickly addressed this, and the next two video games in the series were localized into FIGS directly from Japanese. This quick reaction to the player feedback also included finding and training teams of in-house localizers rather than relying on freelancers or external translation agencies. According to former video game localizer James Honeywood:

> "We had several projects running simultaneously, and newbies to train etc., so after the other staff and I who helped run the department selected the EFIGS translators, we handed it over to them and backed them up in whatever way was needed. (At this point we actually were translating directly from J->FIGS instead of going via English. It had taken us a lot of effort to find and train such translators so we started to bring them in-house wherever possible.)"
>
> (The Chrono Compendium 2015)

This effort to train translators and offer them in-house positions was a significant step toward ensuring quality localization, but also an apparent disdain for indirect

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[39] *French, Italian, German, Spanish* have traditionally been considered the most common target languages from English in software localization.

localization, proving that Square Enix would rather spend more resources to find and train translators properly suited for the tasks than rely on indirect translation.

Although Square Enix seems to prefer direct localization wherever possible, it is not always feasible. This has led to some more interesting approaches to localization, as was the case with *Final Fantasy X* (Square Enix 2001), where the video game was directly translated into English, and FIGS, with the exception of subtitles in cutscenes, which, in FIGS versions, were based on the English voice-over rather than the Japanese one. Similarly, *Final Fantasy XV* (Square Enix 2016) was translated directly into English, French, German, Chinese, and Korean, but for Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Portuguese, only the non-voiced text was localized directly, while the voiced text was localized indirectly through English.

If a studio as involved in localization as Square Enix still struggles to find and keep enough localizers able to work directly from Japanese, it may be more sensible to embrace indirect localization and implement ways to make it work better than considering it "inferior", and it seems this company has been taking steps toward this for some time, ultimately culminating in the unique and potentially revolutionary localization process of *Final Fantasy XVI* (Square Enix 2023).

Aside from training and keeping translators in-house, the localization process itself also changed, most importantly by providing the localization team with the option to work more closely with the developers and communicate directly with them. As Honeywood states:

> *"FFX, FFXI, FFX-2, FFXII and onwards we had the translators move to sit within the dev team at an earlier stage and there was more collaboration. For instance, over time some dev teams became very good at choosing product and character names that work in all regions by discussing them with us. That way we could release information on their games to all regions simultaneously rather than having the press coin their own working names which could confuse the international audience."*

<div align="right">(The Chrono Compendium 2015)</div>

This meant the gap between localizers and the rest of the development team narrowed slightly but, interestingly, also came with its setbacks:

> *"What people probably don't realize is that, although we gained a lot more insight into the original by working closer with the dev teams, there was a flip side. The more involved they are in the translation approval, the more they would push their will on a language they don't fully understand. So we now had to make new compromises, like when you take localized names back to the original creator and he would veto ideas you'd want to put in, taking you back to the drawing board over and over."*

<div align="right">(ibid.)</div>

This illustrates that despite the team's best efforts, there were still many obstacles to overcome, and these would indeed be addressed in the future installments of the series.

That is not to say these changes were not significant improvements, especially considering they took place during a time when video game localization was still relatively new and technology continued to advance at a rapid pace. According to Honeywood:

> *"... there were a lot of amazing improvements over the years. The dev teams went from being very hands off and just farming out the translations to any random vendor to working in with our Loc Dept to improve the quality of the game in all regions. They started to allow us to not just translate the text, but to do true localization by adjusting the difficulty, graphics, or other content to better match differing target audiences. So while it was never perfect, it was way better than when I first joined the company."*

(ibid.)

The concept of "true localization" over "just translating the text" would be taken a step further in the future, reaching a stage where localization would become equally important as the source text itself, as will be shown in *Final Fantasy XVI* (FFXVI).

5.1 The localization process of Creative Business Unit III

Before taking a closer look at the development process of *Final Fantasy XVI*, it should be noted that it was handled by Creative Business Unit III, and the internal development division of Square Enix, also responsible for *Final Fantasy XI, Final Fantasy XIV*, and the *Dragon Quest Builders* series. As such, there are many similarities between the localization processes of *FFXIV* and *FFXVI*, arguably due to the involvement of the localization director Michael-Christopher Koji Fox, who has also worked on numerous *Final Fantasy* localizations before. However, the most notable one is the direct involvement of the localization team in the development and creative freedom that stems from it. Kathryn Cwynar, one of the translators working on *FFXIV* at that time, stated:

> *"We translators are very fortunate to have an ongoing dialogue with the devs regarding the lore, UI, cutscenes, and more. This allows us to spot potential localization pitfalls, but also helps us have a more sound understanding of what we're translating, and allows the dev team to ask us questions in turn."*

(Final Fantasy Portal Site 2021)

Even outside of CBU3, this practice of close collaboration between Japanese writers and English localizers is not new to Square Enix. Richard Honeywood, who has worked on several titles by Square Enix, stated:

> *"We had to rework all the spell names in both English and Japanese to have a compromise that worked in both languages. I sat next to the Japanese name planner for 4 years and we worked together to name everything rather than simply translating what*

> *the Japanese team came up with.", and that "...there were great benefits of having the translators sit within each dev team and work side-by-side with the original writers."*

<div align="right">(The Chrono Compendium 2015)</div>

From this, it is evident that such close collaboration between the developers and localizers is highly beneficial for ensuring a high-quality localization and a smoother development process. That being said, this was taken a step further with the development of *FFXVI*, creating a shift in the video game localization, and changing the possibilities of indirect localization as a whole.

Final Fantasy XVI, released in 2023 under Square Enix, takes a somewhat unique approach to localization. The game's pre-release livestream, where the team presented the game's development to players, revealed some interesting facts from the Localization Director himself. According to him, the English version of the game was given the same priority as the Japanese source text, and the Japanese writers collaborated closely with the localization team. However, this collaboration was so close that not only did the localization team get to ask questions and discuss their solutions with the writers, but they also to sat down to go over the two scripts line by line and even mutually exchanged ideas, as described in the interviews.

As discussed in the previous section, localizers' work with writers has slowly become a more common practice in recent years, but this is still largely a one-direction process, where the localizers can ask questions or comment on culturally (in)appropriate parts of the text but only rarely directly influence the source script themselves, as is the case with *FFXIV*, where "the English team is actively involved in naming of skills and location names, etc. and the wider localization team is invited to provide ideas and concepts for new creatures from their various cultures" (Final Fantasy Portal Site 2021). In the case of *FFXVI*, however, the source text was written concurrently with the target text, and both influenced each other – in other words, just as the target text changed to accommodate the source text, the source text also changed based on the target text. It should be noted that this was not the first time this happened, as Honeywood stated:

> *"Interestingly there were times where the dev team took our translator's ideas and re-applied them into the Japanese original. Alex and Joe who translated FFX coined the term "machina" to refer to the machinery in that game's world. In the sequel, FFX-2, the dev team thought the word cool and used it elsewhere in their new game. While our translators were chuffed at the team borrowing back the idea, they now had to come up with new ideas for translating around two different "machina" terms."*

<div align="right">(The Chrono Compendium 2015)</div>

In the case of *FFXVI*, the motivation for this kind of creative freedom and importance placed on English localization may be, at least partially, due to the fact that FFXVI was inspired by Western fantasy, such as *Game of Thrones* and the developers wanted to match this feeling and atmosphere as closely as possible. According to the localization

director Michael-Christopher Koji Fox, "the team chose to record dialogue and complete facial capture in English first." (Gameinformer 2023), and the localization director worked directly with the motion capture team and the voice cast. Fox mentions that this decision to record in English first was why "normal" localization – waiting for the Japanese script to be finalized and then localizing it – was not possible with this game.

He then states that Kazutoyo Maehiro, who first wrote the main screenplay, told him that he could "translate it however he likes and do whatever he wants", checking with each other every day and changing each script based on mutual agreement, taking into consideration aspects such as line length, the overall atmosphere, or impression on the players. For example, if something sounded better in the English script, the Japanese would be changed to match it more closely, or if a specific line was important in the Japanese script, the English one would be changed to match. This kind of teamwork meant that one language wasn't "superior" and one was not an afterthought, but that any language felt natural to play in.

5.2 Implications in the context of indirect translation and FFXVI

As previously discussed, developers try to use indirect translation only when necessary, mostly due to a lack of manpower, since it can lead to issues and negative feedback from players. However, the localization process used in *FFXVI* changes the established scheme when it comes to indirect translation.

In this context, there are three ways to illustrate the process of indirect translation:

$$ST (SL) \rightarrow IT (IL) \rightarrow TT (TL)$$

Classic indirect translation, as seen in FFVII

$$ST (SL) \atop IT (IL) \searrow \rightarrow TT (TL)$$

Combined indirect translation, as seen in FFX

$$ST (SL) \atop = \atop IT (IL) \longrightarrow TT (TL)$$

Collaborative indirect translation, as possible in FFXVI

In the case of classic indirect translation, the source text is always created first. It is deemed the original and therefore superior. The intermediary text only bridges the gap between the source text and the target text, but it does not influence the source text in any way. Meanwhile, the target text rarely interacts with the source text and has to rely on the intermediary text to be fully realized. This is where most translation issues stem from, and why companies try to avoid it as much as possible, because this is the cause

of most misunderstandings, mistranslations, and omissions due to the lack of context and insight into the source text.

The combined case is more specific and cannot be used in every medium but has found its use in video game localization. Here, the ST and the IT both directly influence the TT, with the main difference being the area where they are used (written text vs. voiced lines in FFX). The main issues stemming from this approach are differences between the various versions of the product, leading to potential criticism from the recipients, as well as possible inconsistencies between the written text and subtitles, as they were localized from two different languages – therefore two different cultures, linguistic bases, etc. Mangiron (2004) states that "if the translators had worked from the original Japanese script instead of the English version when producing the subtitles, there would have been considerable differences between the English dialogues and the target language subtitles," which "would have been picked up as translation errors by the users of the localized versions with good knowledge of English" (ibid.). In fact, such was the case with another Japanese-made video game sold on the Slovak market, *Dark Souls 3* (FromSoftware 2016).

The Japanese video game, similar to *FFXVI*, is set in a world resembling classic European fantasy, and has placed importance on English localization. The various localizations were done both directly and indirectly, with English, Chinese, and Korean being done directly, and FIGS, Portuguese, Polish, and Russian being done indirectly from English. The problem arose due to the fact that the voice-over was only done in English, but not Japanese. Players who played in a language other than English only heard English audio, despite it not being the original text of the game. This became problematic in the Chinese community, as:

> "Although simplified Chinese and English are both direct translations from Japanese, there are noticeable discrepancies between them. Different translation approaches are taken in the localization of the simplified Chinese and the English versions. The Chinese version is translated more closely to the Japanese source text than the way the voiced-over game text in English is rendered. Meanwhile, the pivot translations via English, taking French as an example, are conveyed more faithfully to English than to Japanese."

(Zhang, Song 2023)

The third case is somewhat unique in the industry, and while the English localization of *Dark Souls 3* was done in collaboration with the lead writer, and even influenced the source script in some ways, as is the case with FFXIV, the extent to which this happened is limited, often only to names of fictional places or items found in the games. The collaborative effort of localizing FFXVI, however, affects the source text to such a degree that it is possible to talk about having two source texts – the Japanese one and the English one. Here, instead of having one source text superior to the pivot text, the pivot text becomes equal to the source text, and can serve as a whole new source text for other translations. This could lead to a completely new kind of indirect translation that

eliminates all the negative aspects of indirect translation and not only increases the quality of the process but also makes it more accessible to smaller markets or languages. By elevating English from its position as a pivot language to a completely new source language equal to the original, studios could rely on "indirect" translation to further extend their market to other language areas, where translators skilled in video game localization from languages other than English are scarce.

6 Conclusion

Although indirect translation has a rich history of use in video game localization, it has mainly been used in larger[40] languages, and even there it is slowly disappearing due to companies preferring direct translation whenever possible. The gap in smaller markets still remains, and while this research only dealt with a relatively small Slovak market, it is clear that players in this small country enjoy these video games and that, if they were localized, they would sell. As one of the main reasons for the lack of Japanese to Slovak localizations on the market is the unavailability of Japanese-to-Slovak translators, indirect translation could offer a solution not only for this market, but also for all other markets facing a similar issue. It should be noted, however, that one of the most prominent factors is likely economic, which requires further research on whether localizing video games into smaller languages would be profitable, even with the presumed lowered costs of localization thanks to indirect translation.

Strictly speaking in terms of language accessibility, however, indirect translation offers a great opportunity for players around the world to enjoy video games in their native or preferred language. With the localization model of *FFXVI*, it would be possible to avoid some of the potential negative aspects of indirect translation.

The use of "collaborative translation", where the localization team was not only offered a high degree of freedom, but also worked closely with the rest of the developers – even given priority in terms of motion capture – managed to elevate what would normally be considered localized text to what can be called a whole new source text, making it more than suitable to be used as a source text to be localized further. By replacing the intermediary text with a new source text, the English version of the video game is more detached from the Japanese version, and new target texts do not have to consider possible mistranslations, omissions, or misunderstandings that can normally stem from translating through a pivotal (intermediary) text.

Whether implementation of this type of localization is possible or sustainable for other video game developers is still questionable, as Square Enix has the advantage of employing in-house translators, which allows them not only to train them from the ground up, but also keep their workflow and style consistent, making communication

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[40] Languages with more speakers than the Slovak language.

between each team easier. This would presumably be much more difficult if they outsourced their localization to external agencies. Independent developers would also face more issues, as they often do not have the option to employ in-house translators. However, even considering all these obstacles, utilizing this kind of collaborative translation would be beneficial to everyone involved where possible.

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