The Localization and Translation of *Habitica*

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Abstract

The present article deals with the *Habitica* website and offers an look into the process of the localization and translation of the website from the viewpoint of a volunteer translator. The article discusses a localizer's steps in the localization process and the content specifics of translation from English into Slovak. For this article, the part of the website entitled "quests" was translated; it includes game elements from the role-playing genre, and it is one of the integral parts of the website.

Keywords: localization, websites, game elements, RPG, gamification

Introduction

Habitica (2013)*,* previously called *HabitRPG*, was one of the first websites mentioned in various productivity-focused communities as a means of motivating players. *Habitica* develops the concept of gamification, which forms an integral part of the website. What does this mean for a localizer or translator? What are the specifics of translating a website with a focus on game features? This article focuses primarily on the specifics of localization and translation that were encountered while researching the website. The article is based on professional literature and personal experience.

Websites generally differ from each other in the amount of text for translation. Texts will differ for the websites of commercial, governmental, academic, and other organizations and for the set of subsites collected under a single website (Ardelean 2014). Websites may differ from other software by a set of different types of texts within a single site (Sandrini 2008). Websites are mostly used for active communication with the user. They contain information that relates directly to things like the website, product, services, and legal information. Also, the competences of the translator depend on the content of the website (Kabát 2020; Kabát & Koscelníková 2021). When localizing and

translating the *Habitica* website, the present author took into consideration and then applied the general and typical localization elements presented by Kabát (2019). The selected and analyzed elements are fragmentation, blind translation, spatial constraints, testing, and updates (Kabát 2019).

According to Kabát (2019), fragmentation means that the text will be split into smaller units (strings) in the CAT tool. A blind translation is a situation where the localizer does not know the context of the translated strings. The translated text may be limited by the space in which it will be displayed, such as when translating the title page, tables, and menus. Using the monitoring method, it was found that the *Habitica* website is used to communicate between developers and users in the online space in real time. Updates are therefore important to maintain the user community. Developers regularly add new content that can affect an existing translation because the localizer could opt for alternative translation solutions when presented with access to new information. After translation, testing will determine the adequacy of the translated strings. In the case of the monitored site, updates take place at least once a month. After an update, the original text is replaced with a translation which can be found and reviewed by the localizer in the Slovak version of the website. The downside is that it is necessary to wait for the update; in the case of volunteer translation, the localizer can return to their own translation at any time (Ardelean 2014; Kabát 2019).

Habitica is created according to the classic genre of the roleplaying game (RPG). This genre is typical for many dialogues, descriptions, and general text that develops the plot line of the game world and the personality of the hero. The RPG is set in a fantasy world, and magic is no stranger to this realm (Bernal-Merino 2015; Búry 2015). After reaching a certain level, the player can choose from several classes. On the *Habitica* website, there are four specific classes: warrior, wizard, thief, and healer. *Habitica* is a task planner set in the game world. It creates monsters in the game world out of ordinary life tasks, and the player defeats them by completing the tasks in the real world. Completing the task is then transferred to the game world as damage caused to the game monsters, and experience, gold, and other items are awarded. The to-do list is divided into habits, daily tasks, and one-time tasks.

Gamification has been dealt with in recent years by Yu-kai Chou (2014–2019). Its goal is to connect the game world with the real world and apply the game elements to real tasks. Game company developers have figured out ways to keep the player's attention for a long time, and other organizations are trying to apply these mechanisms and techniques in other areas of life to motivate employees and attract customers. Gamification addresses the question of how to use this knowledge and apply it to tasks so that the

recipient can keep their attention in the time required to fulfill them; also, interesting tasks are created out of boring or difficult ones so that they are easier to accomplish (Chou 2019). In this way, *Habitica* tries to overcome the initial resistance of doing the given tasks and create enough motivation to turn the tasks into habits.

The present research was conducted in 2020 upon the basis of volunteer translation. The *Habitica* website is a continuously updated entity, so some presented information may not be current at the time of the publication of this article. The aim of the article is to show which aspects of localization can be encountered when translating a game-themed website and to practically show the progress of localization and translation on a selected example of quests, which are one of the main components of the game mechanics of this website.

1 Basic information about the *Habitica* website

The *Habitica* website is specific for gameplay features from the RPG genre and gamification. It looks like a video game simplified into written form and transferred to a website, but it retains the mechanism of video games. Video games have their own world and their own rules. One important aspect of the video game is interactivity (Bernal-Merino 2015), be it interactivity between the player and the game, the player and the game characters, the player and other players, or all types of interaction combined. The player is transferred to the video game world via their own avatar (a game character that represents the player) through which they communicate with the video game. Thanks to this, the player subconsciously learns how the video game works, what they can and cannot do, and what consequences their actions have in this world. The video game responds to the player and adapts programmatically, using language and textual changes (Bernal-Merino 2015).

After registering on the *Habitica* website, the first step is to create your own avatar. The player appears in the video game world and can interact with video game elements of the website, such as characters, items, and other users. The avatar has its own life, magical energy, and experience, and it acquires levels, various objects, and animals. In the *Habitica* video game world, the player first interacts with the video game by earning rewards after completing tasks and by meeting characters (other users) in different parts of the website (stores and taverns) as a part of quests. Active quests are in the Party section, where it is possible to create your own group, be it alone or with other users with whom it is possible to complete quests. It is possible to create challenges on different topics according to your own needs. Both the challenges and guilds are divided

into official, public, and private ones. The community is based on creating a safe environment for all users indiscriminately, and this is how the part of the website that was translated and analyzed herein works.

For research purposes, quests were translated; since the present author has experience in translating other parts of the website, it was easier to find correlations to the overall philosophy of the website and other information hidden in the game world. While some texts and expressions that have already been translated by other volunteers have been retained, others have been edited. In the world of the *Habitica* website, the user receives quests as a reward for reaching a certain level, or they can buy them in the store. Quests are tasks in which the user and their party has to collect items, defeat monsters, and the like. The quest is activated in the Party section, and there is a waiting period for other users in the group to accept the quest. After the quest starts, the number of completed personal tasks for each user is added at the end of each day. This activity is then converted into progress in completing the quest. For a translator, this means that one quest will be divided into several strings in the CAT tool while only some parts are provided on the website when buying and when completing the quest. There are the names of the quests in the store, and the same strings with the names of the quests will also be displayed when the quest starts. Another group of strings will appear during the quest and then after the quest is completed. Not all strings that appear after quest completion are in the same group of quest strings in the CAT tool. Reward strings can be found in different groups of strings, the equipment name can be found in a group of strings with items and experience, and gold can be found in a string group with a different name. If the given equipment is in the reward list, it can also be mentioned directly in the quest text. This means that it is necessary to check whether the translation of given equipment is the same across different groups of strings, either by searching in the CAT tool or by subsequent testing on the website. Testing will only take place after the website has been updated, which can take several days or even weeks.

2 *Habitica* — localization and used software

In the pre-translation analysis, information about the website was gathered, including what it contains, how its video game mechanism works, and where help and information can be found about possible localization and translation. Based on personal experience, the monitoring method, and responses from moderators on the forum, it was found that localization to other languages already existed and that translations were being actively (or inactively, depending on the specific language) worked on by

volunteers. Localization to Slovak exists, but, even if it did not exist, it would be possible to apply for it in the Commonwealth of i18n, which on the forum of the website is presented as the official guild for linguists. Additional information is available in this guild to help the localizer translate, such as where to translate (Weblate translation software), how to translate (a translation style guide), where to ask questions (a website forum, GitHub), and what translation reward (a game reward in the form of a badge and gems) they receive.

Developers localize the website and make content available to volunteers for translation using Weblate translation software. This is free and open-source software under the GNU General Public License, which means that the software can be freely distributed and modified but remains protected by copyright. For the localizer, this means that they can use it to translate without a fee and only need to register. Translation and quality control are provided by the community. For larger languages such as German (as well as Czech), it is more likely to find an editor within the community than for smaller languages, where volunteers work sporadically. The software itself contains many functions that other translation software also possesses. It is possible to download a text for translation in various formats, translate it directly in the software, create a glossary, and find translations of similar strings. The content of the website is divided into thematic groups in the software. These thematic groups can be searched on the website based on the strings they contain. In doing so, it is necessary to have at least some programming knowledge in order for the localizer to be able to decipher the names of the thematic groups.

3 An analysis of quests in terms of content

The goal of quests is to captivate, create an experience, keep the user's attention, and teach them something in a playful way. The quests selected in the research sample are divided into several groups. The first group comprises quest series, mostly three scrolls per group, which are further divided into series that unlock when the game starts and when a higher level is reached. These quests have a storyline that is specialized in gamifying real tasks in the game world; the player combats materialized stress, bad habits, and household chores, which are presented as monsters. In addition to gold and experience, rewards include another quest in the series, regular eggs, "hatching potions," and pieces of equipment. The other two groups of quests are aimed at obtaining special hatching potions and animal eggs. These quests consist of one scroll, and the player usually combats an angry animal, which they defeat and then loot eggs or hatching

potions. The following table shows the string division and several specifics, such as quest names, fights with angry animals, the start and the end of the quest, rewards, HTML formatting, and the names of the users who participated in the quest creation, who are tagged with the @ sign.

The Fowl Frost	Operený mráz
Although it's a hot summer day in the southernmost tip of Habitica, an unnatural chill has fallen upon Lively Lake. Strong, frigid winds rush around as the shore begins to freeze over. Ice spikes jut up from the ground, pushing grass and dirt away. @Melynnrose and @Breadstrings run up to you. "Help!" says @Melynnrose. "We brought a giant penguin in to freeze the lake so we could all go ice skating, but we ran out of fish to feed him!" "He got angry and is using his freeze breath on everything he sees!" says @Breadstrings. "Please, you have to subdue him before all of us are covered in ice!" Looks like you need this penguin to… cool down.	Na Svieže jazero padol neprirodzený chlad, hoci na najjužnejšom konci Habitici bol horúci letný deň. Pobrežie začalo zamŕzať pod silným ľadovým vetrom. Ľadové ostne vyrastajú zo zeme a prerážajú trávu. @Melynnrose a @Breadstrings bežia za tebou. „Pomoc!" prosí @Melynnrose, „priviedli sme sem obrieho tučniaka, aby zmrazil jazero a mohli sme sa korčuľovať, ale minuli sa nám ryby, s ktorými sme ho kŕmili." „Nahneval sa a teraz fúka svoj mrazivý dych na všetko, čo vidí," povie @Breadstrings, „Prosím, musíš ho premôcť skôr, než nás všetkých zmrazí!" Vyzerá to, že tento tučniak potrebuje… schladiť.
Upon the penguin's defeat, the ice melts away. The giant penguin settles down in the sunshine, slurping up an extra bucket of fish you found. He skates off across the lake, blowing gently downwards to create smooth, sparkling ice. What an odd bird! "It appears he left behind a few eggs, as well," says @Painter de Cluster. @Rattify laughs. "Maybe these penguins will be a little more… chill?"	Ľad sa po tučniakovej porážke rozmrazí. Obrí tučniak sa usadí na slnku a zje dodatočné vedro rýb, ktoré si preňho našiel. Potom sa preklže po jazere, pričom jemne pod seba fúka, aby vytvoril hladkú vrstvu trblietavého ľadu. Aký zvláštny vták! „Vyzerá to, že za sebou nechal aj zopár vajíčok," hovorí @Painter de Cluster. @Rattify sa zasmeje, „Možno tieto tučniaky majú o niečo… chladnejší úsudok?"
Frost Penguin	Mrazivý tučniak
Penguin (Egg)	Tučniak (vajíčko)
Unlocks Penguin Eggs for purchase in the Market	Odomkne vajíčka tučniakov na predaj na trhu

These quests are an artistic text with specific puns and other artistic devices. These are assignments of tasks or short story texts that occur in RPGs. The first text contains information intended to introduce the issue, and the other text aims to reflect how the struggle has turned out, with these texts being segmented through strings with scroll names, quests, and monsters.

3.1 Names, video game elements, and gamification

Habitica covers both the name of the website and the name of the game world. There is also the eponymous Mt. Habitica, which is a notable topographical feature. The biggest problem in translation was the preferred non-inflection of this name, which sounds unnatural in Slovak. While this problem can be addressed in other parts of the website by inflecting the noun "website" before "Habitica," the texts in the story have the frequent use of "the land of Habitica," which sounds intrusive; therefore, this rule was violated with permission. Other names are often associated with something that is related to the game world, to real-world tasks, or to both of these.

The "Vice the Shadow Wyrm" quest is a typical example of what can be expected, and, together with the other series of quests in the Unlockable Quests section, it is an example of gamification in practice. The direct addressing of individual users and wholes groups in the second person singular and plural and in the present tense are typical specifics. The first part of the quest invites the user to defeat the Shadow Wyrm, which is a personified bad habit or vice, and informs the user of ways to defeat it. Here there is an interconnection between the game and the real world. There is a reference to game rules, which state that by completing the tasks entered in the to-do list on the website, the monsters will receive damage inflicted by the users, or that a certain number of essential items can be collected for the completion of the quest.

They say there lies a terrible evil in the caverns of Mt. Habitica. A monster whose presence twists the wills of the strong heroes of the land, turning them towards bad habits and laziness! The beast is a grand dragon of immense power and comprised of the shadows themselves: Vice, the treacherous Shadow Wyrm. Brave Habiteers, stand up and defeat this foul beast once and for all, but only if you believe you can stand against its immense power. Vice Part 1: How can you expect to fight the beast if it already has control over you? Don't fall victim to laziness and vice! Work hard to fight against the dragon's dark influence and dispel his hold on you!	Vraví sa, že v jaskyniach na vrchu Habitica sa nachádza strašné zlo – príšera, ktorá si podmaňuje vôľu tých najsilnejších hrdinov v kraji a obracia ich k zlozvykom a lenivosti! Je to veľká dračica s obrovskou silou, ktorá má podobu samotného tieňa: temná dračica Neresť. Odvážny Habitier, postav sa tejto zlovestnej príšere a poraz ju raz a navždy, ale len ak veríš, že to dokážeš. Neresť, 1. časť: Ako máš bojovať proti príšere, ktorá ťa ovláda? Vyvaruj sa lenivosti a zlozvykom! Poctivo pracuj, aby si odolal temnému dračiemu vplyvu a dostal sa spod jeho kúzla.

When translating the name of the quest, the grammatical gender of the dragon was considered, as was the noun *neresť,* which is a literal translation of "vice." This is

knowingly personifying a bad habit. As is known with another series of quests (Recidivate Rising), Recidivate the Necromancer will be magically connected to the dragon. According to the way the dragon speaks, the name Neresť was thus chosen.

Vice's Shade	Tieň Neresti
With Vice's influence over you dispelled, you feel a surge of strength you didn't know you had return to you. Congratulations! But a more frightening foe awaits…	Keď sa kúzlo nad tebou zlomí, vráti sa ti sila, o ktorej si ani netušil, že si ju mal. Gratulujeme! Avšak teraz ťa čaká ešte hrozivejší nepriateľ…
Vice Part 2 (Scroll)	Neresť, 2. časť (zvitok)

Other strings include the name of the monster, the text that is shown when the dragon is defeated, and a scroll with the next part of the quest, which is one reward for completing the first part of the quest. In these strings, the formatting in HTML code is also present. This needs to be kept when translating so that the website shows everything as it does in the original. The vocabulary connects the game world with the real one: "dragon's influence," "twists the wills," "turning toward bad habits and laziness," don't fall victim to laziness and vice," "work hard," and "dispel his hold." In various quests, various themes, such as magic, fashion, and law, are encountered. Bad habits with specific undesirable properties, household chores, and the like are combated.

The Recidivate Rising quest is a free continuation of the previous series of quests, where *Habitica* points out the repeatability of bad habits. Throughout the quest, there are references to fashion and necromancy (magic in which dead beings are revived). There was an attempt to preserve the double meaning of the word "fashion," which in context means "remaking."

Recidivate, Part 1: The Moonstone Chain	Recidiva, 1. časť: Retiazka z mesačného kameňa
A terrible affliction has struck Habiticans. Bad Habits thought long-dead are rising back up with a vengeance. Dishes lie unwashed, textbooks linger unread, and procrastination runs rampant! You track some of your own returning Bad Habits to the Swamps of Stagnation and discover the culprit: the ghostly Necromancer, Recidivate. You rush in, weapons swinging, but they slide through her specter uselessly. "Don't bother," she hisses with a dry rasp. "Without a chain of moonstones, nothing can harm me — and master jeweler @aurakami scattered all the moonstones across Habitica long ago!" Panting, you retreat… but you know what you must do.	Habitičanov postihla strašná nákaza. Zlé návyky, o ktorých sme si mysleli, že sú dávno mŕtve, sa znovu prebúdzajú k životu, aby sa pomstili. Riady ležia neumyté, knihy sa potulujú neprečítané a prokrastinácia behá ako šialená! Vystopuješ niektoré zo svojich vlastných zlozvykov až do Močiara stagnácie a nájdeš vinníka: ducha nekromancerky Recidivy. Vrhneš sa na ňu mávajúc zbraňami, no tie cez ňu neškodne prejdú. „Neunúvaj sa," nepríjemne zasipí, „Bez retiazky z mesačného kameňa mi nič neublíži – a majster klenotník @aurakami už veľmi dávno porozhadzoval všetky mesačné kamene po celej Habitice!" Zadýchane ustúpiš… vieš, čo musíš urobiť.

Moonstones	Mesačné kamene
At last, you manage to pull the final moonstone from the swampy sludge. It's time to go fashion your collection into a weapon that can finally defeat Recidivate!	Z močaristého bahna sa ti podarí vyloviť posledný mesačný kameň. Prišiel čas na módu, teda, prerobiť tvoju kolekciu kameňov na zbraň, ktorá konečne premôže Recidivu!

The English verb "recidivate" contains the word "diva," which the present author wanted to preserve in combination with an ancient necromancer in the name of Recidiva. Next, the tunic gained from Baconsaur (Jean Chalard's Noble Tunic) is a reward in the final part of the quest, but this has to be found in another group of strings in the CAT tool.

Your breath comes hard and sweat stings your eyes as the undead Wyrm collapses. The remains of Recidivate dissipate into a thin grey mist that clears quickly under the onslaught of a refreshing breeze, and you hear the distant, rallying cries of Habiticans defeating their Bad Habits for once and for all. @Baconsaur the beast master swoops down on a gryphon. "I saw the end of your battle from the sky, and I was greatly moved. Please, take this enchanted tunic — your bravery speaks of a noble heart, and I believe you were meant to have it."	Ťažko dýchaš a pot ťa štípe v očiach, keď nemŕtva dračica konečne padá k zemi. Pozostatky Recidivy sa rozplynú v riedkej šedej hmle, ktorá sa rýchlo vyparí v závane čerstvého vzduchu. V diaľke začuješ ozvenu boja, v ktorom Habitičania porážajú svoje zlé návyky raz a navždy. Krotiteľ šeliem @Baconsaur zletí k tebe na gryfovi. „Videl som koniec tvojho boja z oblohy a hlboko ma to dojalo. Vezmi si, prosím, túto čarovnú tuniku. Tvoja odvaha svedčí o šľachetnom srdci a ja verím, že bola stvorená práve pre teba."

In the quest, the user is addressed in the second person singular. The present tense is used, indicating that the action takes place in the moment when the user is presented the text. The present tense in the texts of the RPG genre serves to bring the player into the storyline and make them feel that the story will develop based on the choices made by them, thereby stimulating the interactivity of the player with the game world (Bernal-Merino 2015).

The last series of quests within the research sample is Attack of the Mundane. This series is humorous and includes three quests. In the first quest, the task is to wash the dishes; the second quest sees a new version of the mythical Loch Ness monster, which was created from food leftovers and waste; and the last quest sees the user combat a wizard who hates washing and the sight of clean clothes.

Attack of the Mundane	Útok monotónnosti
Attack of the Mundane, Part 1: Dish Disaster!	Útok monotónnosti, 1. časť: Neporiadok z riadov!
You reach the shores of Washed-Up Lake for some well-earned relaxation… But the lake is polluted with unwashed dishes! How did this happen? Well, you simply cannot allow the lake to be in this state. There is only one thing you can do: clean the dishes and save your vacation spot! Better find some soap to clean up this mess. A lot of soap…	Dorazíš k brehom Umytého jazera, aby si si konečne oddýchol… Lenže jazero je znečistené neumytými riadmi! Ako sa to mohlo stať? Nuž, nemôžeš predsa dovoliť, aby jazero ostalo v tomto stave. Je len jedna vec, ktorú môžeš urobiť: umy všetky riady a zachráň svoje dovolenkové miesto! Najskôr by si mal nájsť mydlo na riad, ktoré ti pomôže s týmto neporiadkom. Veľa mydla…
Bars of Soap	Mydlo na riad
The SnackLess Monster (Scroll)	Nenažraná príšera (zvitok)
After some thorough scrubbing, all the dishes are stacked safely on the shore! You stand back and proudly survey your hard work.	Všetky riady si po dôkladnom poumývaní bezpečne porozkladal po pobreží! Ustúpiš o pár krokov a hrdo obdivuješ výsledky svojej námahy.

The text includes funny names such as Washed-Up Lake, the SnackLess Monster, the Laundromancer, and anti-laundry magic. A colloquial expressive style was used throughout the quest in the attempt to preserve the humorous style of the entire quest series. In some cases, such as with the translation of the Bars of Soap string, it was necessary to find out what illustrations accompany the quest so that the translation would not create associations with objects different to those shown in the quests. This section has the task of collecting bars of soap, and the given string will be displayed under the image of a bar of blue soap. For this reason, *mydlo* (soap) was chosen instead of *jar* (a Slovak word for dishwashing liquid based on the name of a particular brand), which would more likely be used to wash dishes.

3.2 Features specific to the localization of the *Habitica* website

The *Habitica* website offers users the possibility of assistance associated with its development. Nearly every month, new content comes out in the form of new gear, a quest, or an event with associated rewards and challenges. As with translation, the community is involved in this content. In the translated text, this is shown in written names such as @aurakami, @InspectorCaracal, @Baconsair, and others. These are the usernames of the people who helped with the creation of the quests. Their names were tagged using the @ sign as they would appear in a group chat if one wanted to address one of them. At the same time, their names were not inflected so that the system would recognize them. It can be concluded that the website is being worked on by a collective of authors.

As already mentioned, the text contains formatting in the form of HTML code (e.g., <p>...</p> and <h3>...</h3>) that are shown on the website in the form of a paragraph separation, a larger font for the heading, italics, a bold font, and so on. If the code is not written correctly, the correct formatting will not appear on the website and the translation software will report that the string has an error. There was also an occasional problem of inflection, although this is not very common in the quests. In the Egg Hunt quest, there is a string that contains the phrase "Plain Eggs," but during testing it turned out that this string did not indicate the reward but rather a part of the quest description under the full name "Collect: 40 Plain Eggs." Here, it was necessary to inflect this string so that the whole phrase made sense: i.e., *Zozbieraj: 40 bezfarebných vajíčok*. The Plain Eggs string can be translated as *bezfarebných vajíčok* instead of *bezfarebné vajíčka*. This is a case of fragmentation and blind translation (Kabát 2019).

There were no spatial constraints when translating quests, but they are present when translating the menu, task headers, and other parts of the website. In these cases, it is necessary to use a word of the same length and of the same or similar meaning so that it does not break the constraints of the defined space even though some expressions would be more appropriate to translate using a description. Three columns on the main page state which tasks belong to which column. In the third column, titled Tasks, there are three more filters: active, scheduled, and finished tasks. "Scheduled" stands for the tasks that are put in the calendar on the website. Finally, it is necessary to wait for the website update and check if the translated text matches the context of other texts and elements of the website.

Conclusion

This article highlights how the localization and translation of the *Habitica* website takes place. This website has its own specifics, which were examined in separate parts of the work. The research sample was subject to the following localization specifics: fragmentation, blind translation, spatial constraints, testing, and updates. The website examined contains game elements and a system was presented in more detail, focusing on quests as one of the essential components of the game system alongside their characteristics, role, functioning, and their translatability. The *Habitica* website is an imaginary intermediate point between the fun and the useful and between a simple website and a game.

Although the scope of the article did not allow for an expansion of the research sample, the *Habitica* website has potential and contains other elements that can be analyzed or

compared with other websites or games. The research offers an insight into localization problems and the translation of websites with gamification elements. It is hoped that it will serve as a stepping stone for novice translators or translators who have no experience with website localization.

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