Video Games and Localisation

Video Games

The term 'video game' did not appear until the late 1960s when the idea came up of making "home video games" or "TV games", using regular television sets. Although similar terms such as 'video arcade games' had already been in circulation for some time. (www.ralphbaer.com)

Definition in Dectionaries

As for defining videogames, most general sources seem to agree:

• The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) : **"a game played by electronically manipulating images displayed on a television screen".** (www.oed.com)

• The Merriam-Webster Dictionary : **"an electronic game played by means of images on a video screen and often emphasizing fast action".** (www.merriam-webster.com)

• The Encyclopaedia Britannica : **"also called computer game or electronic game, it is any interactive game operated by computer circuitry".** (www.britannica.com)

Localisation

The adaptation of software products for distribution in untapped markets is generally referred to as 'localisation' (Bernal-Merino 2015, p.106). According to the OED, the noun 'localization' comes from the noun 'locale' (adopted from the French noun 'local' in the late eighteenth century).

Localisation

The term 'localisation' is used nowadays in different disciplines such as geography, medicine or economics, but it has also been appropriated by the software industry to designate the process of **"taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be distributed"** (Esselink in Bernal-Merino 2015, p.106).

Localisation

The quick development and devaluation of computer technology in the mid-1980s lead to a rapid growth in hardware and software demand from many countries around the world in the so-called digital revolution (Cooke in O'Hagan, M. 2006). Software developers and publishers soon realized that it was difficult to cope with the development of applications and their preparation for international markets at the same time, since it required teams of writers and translators for each language version.

Localisation

The term 'localisation' went hand in hand with 'globalisation' and 'internationalisation', both these terms originally used in business strategy and global economics circles after World War II (Cooke 1992). The free-trade beyond national frontiers highlighted the need to design products in origin that could easily accommodate the requisites and tastes of potential importing countries. This realization of this need is in the process of 'internationalisation' which can be applied to all types of products. Once the product has been 'internationalized' in its core design, it can be adapted linguistically, technically, culturally and legally to each of the receiving countries, i.e. it can be 'localised'. Pym (2014, p.122) states that (Internationalisation) is an essential characteristic of localisation .

Localisation

In the eye of Translation Studies this sense, video games Localisers show a clear preference for **domesticating** over **foreignising** strategies (Venuti 1995).

In a globalized marketplace, the acceptance of the product by the receiving culture is often perceived as more important than its nationality, which on many occasions may be difficult to determine because production is often spread over various countries anyway. So 'localisation' is a target-oriented translation that calls for many non-linguistic, technical adaptations.

Localisation

In this view, localisation involves, among other things, renaming characters and reallocating places to suit the target culture as **the main emphasis of game translation and localisation is not linguistic faithfulness to the original but entertainment, and anything that might interfere negatively with the player's enjoyment of the product is likely to be either substantially changed or deleted.**

Localisation

Opposed to this way of translating, there is also a counterargument put forward by those who defend a source-oriented translation, arguing that children (and audience in general) should encounter cultural differences to some degree in order to encourage curiosity and awareness of the Other, as well as to attract consumers who are genuinely interested in the foreign. In the translation of video games, the final decision as to which of the two approaches should be prioritized usually lies with marketing departments and localisation strategists, who act on what is popular in the local market and what the fan-base is saying in official game sites and informal chat rooms.

Game Localisation

'Game localisation is the actual process of translating the language assets in a game into other languages"

Text translation is only a part of the process of adapting a software product for its distribution in different countries (Bernal-Merino 2015, p.56). Changes and modifications to the video games may occur at any stage of the production process and this would affect their localisation. For example, **Atari**, one of the leading game developer companies, estimates that in Japan, sales of one of its US driving games increased by 20 per cent as a result of switching the soundtrack from dance in the US to rock in Japan (ibid).

Game Localisation

How To Avoid The Biggest Mistakes
Made In Game Localisation

WORDBERRY
SOFTWARE TRANSLATION & LOCALIZATION

Game Localisation

Game Localisation

The 'localisation kit' is a selection of assets included in the full closing kit of the project. It only contains those files that are absolutely necessary for translating (ibid).

Vendors often need to divide the kit further into 'translation kits' for both their in-house and their freelance translators containing essential information about the game, the files they need to work on and instructions concerning how to deal with specific technical and stylistic issues, word count and schedule of delivery.

Game Localisation

Maxwell-Chandler´s (in Bernal-Merino 2015, p64) four-way categorization in "assets, documentation, tools and code" includes all the assets. An amalgamated list of the elements that an ideal localisation kit might include.

1.   **Assets**: These are the actual files and supporting reference material that need to be translated:(Text files, Voiceover with audio file duration, Art assets, Cinematics: all pre-rendered videos in the game,

2.   **Game documentation** refers to all documents that are somehow technical and conceptual: Table of contents for the localisation kit, Design documents: gameplay mechanics, UI flow chart, Technical guidelines, International keyboard implementation for PCs and Macs, Product information).

Game Localisation

3.	**Software tools** or applications necessary to fully test the game and relevant technical documentation (Any plugins to third-party editing tools, Proprietary tools for specific file formats, Game-specific text editors, File naming conventions, Localisation integration tools, Compatibility information on proprietary formats, Portable build environment to other machines).

4.	**Code**, entire game code and other applications to fully test the game also from the viewpoint of the novice user: (Original English master, Game engine debug mode, Source-code tools, 'Autorun' and 'installer' applications with build instructions).

New development in Game Localisation

Nowadays, most of the major game companies (such as Sony Online Entertainment, Disney Interactive, and BioWare) have developed their own tools to help them manage the growing number of complex multilingual projects with the variety of text and multimedia files that video games entail so as to entertain players the world over. The most widely used tools are localisation project management tools, translation memory programs and terminology databases. There is obviously no single tool to deal with every stage and professional aspect of the multifaceted game localisation process, but there are several applications that, when adequately combined, can alleviate most tasks.
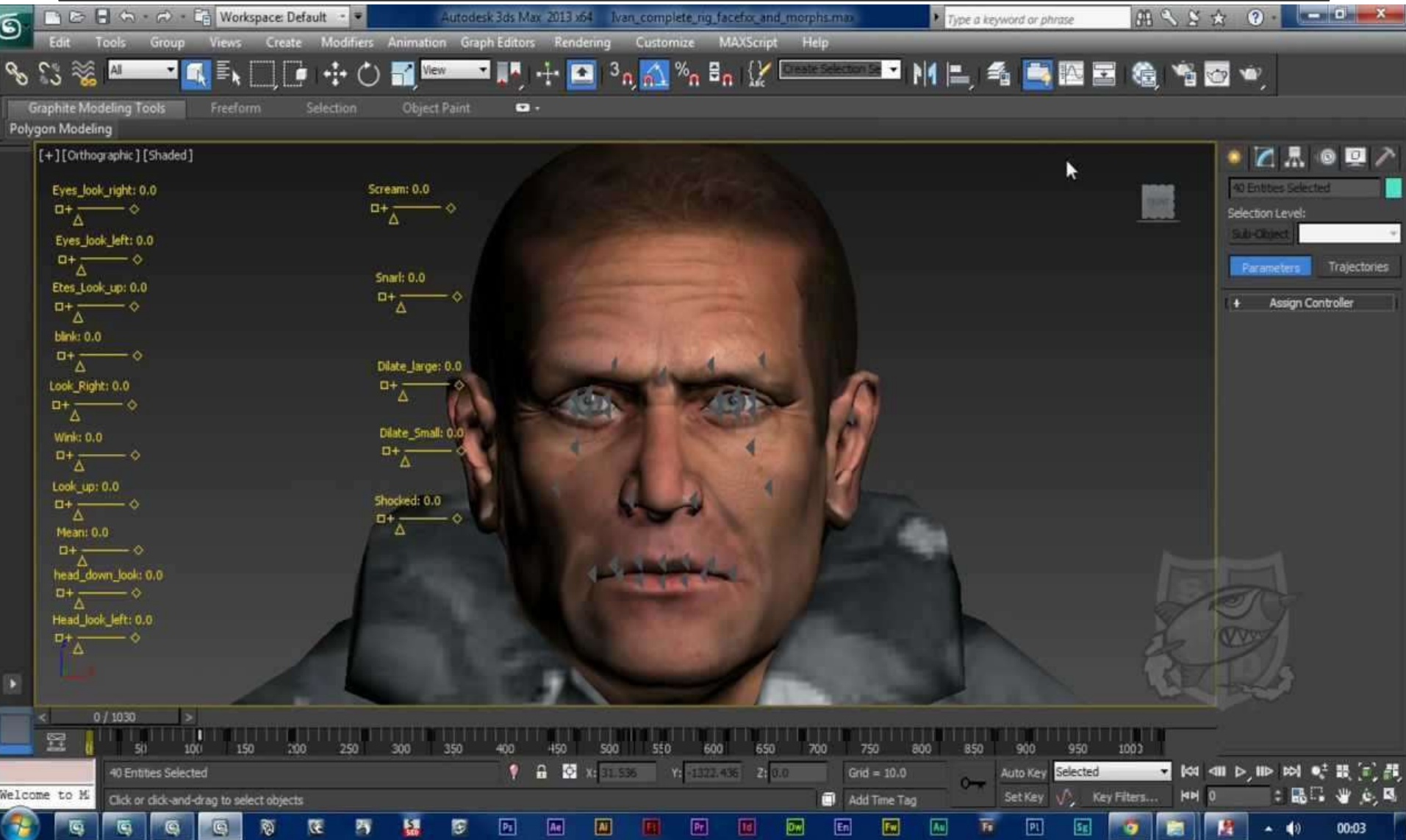
New development in Game Localisation

1) **project management tools**: powerful databases that contain all the assets of the game, including follow-ups on updates, automatic deadlines, reminders, etc., mainly used by project managers and coordinators (Project, Hansoft, XLOC),

 2) **translation and bug reporting tools**: based on databases containing all the previous translations segments (Déjà Vu, SDL Trados, WordFast, and Test Track Pro, DevTrack, BugZilla),

3) **engine tools**: often work as plugins that are compatible with off-the-shelf game-building engines articulating all the behaviours and content of the game in real time (Unreal, Cry)

 4) **proprietary localisation tools**: developed internally and are not available to the general public (T4, LocStudio, Helium, Devon, HAL).

Middleware Tools

Middleware is the label given to computer software that develops or enhances features in other software applications and operating systems. This is the case with FaceFX. This software creates 3-D facial movements with phonetically articulated lip-synchronization from audio files in nine languages: Czech, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin and Spanish. Klischewski (in Bernal-Merino 2015, p 231)

FaceFX