

A Study on Game Localization Translation of VALORANT from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract

In today's information age, the game industry has developed rapidly, and a large number of professional game events have been held internationally. In such a context, high-quality game localization translation is of Paramount importance. Based on Skopos theory, this paper takes some of Chinese translations of the game content of VALORANT as an example to study the translation strategies and methods during the process of game localization translation, and points out the problems therein, with a view to improving the quality of the translation and, to a certain extent, to provide reference for the game localization industry.

Keywords

VALORANT; Translation; Skopos Theory; Game Localization Translation; Translation Strategy.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of science and technology, game development has become more and more powerful, and the game industry has been growing vigorously. A variety of excellent games developed by large and small manufacturers are coming out in an endless stream, and how these games can connect with the world and enter the markets around the world involves the important process of game localization translation.

VALORANT is a phenomenal game in the overseas market, winning the 2023 BEST ESPORTS GAME and hosting a number of professional tournaments, including the Global Championship, a major international tournament. The game was introduced into China and became a popular game, triggering a hot debate among Chinese players. Its localization translation is one of the factors essential to the game's explosion. From the perspective of Skopos Theory, this paper will take the Chinese translation of the game content of VALORANT as the object of study, explore the translation strategies and translation methods adopted in the Chinese translation of the game content, point out the problems existing in the localization translation, and put forward the corresponding suggestions in order to improve the quality of the localization translation.

2. Introduction to Skopos Theory

Hans Vermeer proposed the Skopos Theory. The theory suggests that the act of translation is humanly purposeful[1]. Moreover, the translation process needs to follow three rules: skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule.

The skopos rule is the first and overriding rule for all translation activities[2]. The skopos rule refers to the fact that in the whole translation process, the purpose of translation determines the choice of translation strategy and translation method, and whether the target text achieves the purpose of translation is taken as the criterion.

The coherence rule refers to the readability and acceptability of the target text, so that it can be understood by the reader and make sense in the target language culture and in the communicative context in which it is used.

The fidelity rule means that the target text is faithful to the original text, but the degree and form of fidelity to the original text hinges on the intention of the translation and the translator's understanding of the original text.

3. Introduction to VALORANT

VALORANT is a tactical shooter game developed by Riot Games for the personal computer. The game is based on the '5V5' mode. Agents from both camps, each with their own skills and firearms, engage in a real-time shooting duel. The game modes are plentiful and the game maps are numerous. The names and skills of the agents, the firearms and the battle words are important components of the game content. How to better translate them into Chinese, which is deeply related to the game experience of Chinese players, needs to be carefully considered. The following article selects some representative examples of Chinese translations from these important factors, and conducts translation research on some of Chinese translations, with a view to optimizing the translations and enhancing the game experience of Chinese players.

4. Localization Translation of Game Content from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

VALORANT has a wealth of content that encompasses many characteristics, and the cultures involved are colourful. Therefore, based on the Skopos Theory, this paper flexibly applies the two translation strategies of domestication and foreignization as well as their translation methods to analyse the essence of some of the Chinese translations so as to enhance the players' gaming experience.

4.1. Domestication

Domestication requires translators to adopt the expressions to which the target language reader is accustomed so as to achieve cultural equivalence[3]. In the process of game localization translation, the use of domestication strategy allows players to quickly get used to the content of the game, eliminating their sense of unfamiliarity and further enhancing their gaming experience.

4.1.1. Imitative Translation

Imitative translation requires translators to refer to the original text, but it is not a word-for-word translation of the original text; by adding or reducing information, it expresses the information of the source text with the cultural content of the target language readers[4]. In the process of game localization translation, the original text is translated with Chinese unique cultural contents such as idioms, sayings, poems and songs, so that the target text will be more familiar to the Chinese players, and the players will be immersed in the culture, which will bring the players a good sense of game experience.

Example(1) Pearl

Chinese Translation: 深海明珠

It is the name of a city map. The word "Pearl" means "珍珠". In the translation of "深海明珠", the word "明珠" is an adaptation of the Chinese idiom "掌上明珠", and it means extremely precious and very important. The word "深海" refers to the city's geographical location in the deep sea. The translation "深海明珠" is modelled on the idiom "掌上明珠", so that it is more readable than "珍珠", and more likely to arouse players' interest in exploration.

Moreover, the translation “深海明珠” has three more meanings. The first meaning is that the city is placed under the shield of polymerized carbon material reinforced with energy crystals, and the shield is transparent and has the shape of half a sphere, so that it corresponds to the literal meaning of the surface of the word “pearl”: a transparent orb. The second meaning is that this city is the seat of the Industrial Kingdom Corporation in the Omega World, which is responsible for most of the power supply in the Omega World. Naturally, this city is of vital importance to the entire omega world, and therefore corresponds to the importance of the “Pearl”. The third meaning is that the city was hit by a huge tsunami, and the four agents in the Omega World used their powers to rescue the people and save the city, and the people built statues of the four agents out of gratitude to commemorate these heroes who saved the people from danger. This city carries the important spirit of the agents to protect the people with no fear of death, and is a special existence in the Omega World with an extremely important spiritual significance. Therefore, this corresponds to the importance of the “Pearl” from a spiritual point of view. The translation “深海明珠” not only retains the precious and important meaning of “pearl”, but also contains a wealth of information about the city, which is worthy of players' careful consideration and brings them spiritual pleasure.

4.1.2. Conversion

Conversion requires translators to convert the linguistic units or structures of the original language to match the habits of thought and expression of the target language readers[5]. There are too many differences between the English and Chinese languages, therefore, in the process of game localization translation, the characteristics of the English and Chinese languages need to be taken into consideration. Since English is a static language and Chinese is a dynamic language, it is necessary to convert the word classes and sentence structures between the two languages to form a game text that conforms to the expression habits of the Chinese language, so as to achieve the purpose of the game to develop the target market.

Example(2) No secret is safe. No maneuver goes unseen. Cypher is always watching.

Chinese Translation: 在他的眼皮底下没有秘密，也没有人能瞒天过海。

These are several sentences from the introductory information about an agent Zero, who serves as a sentry. If the English sentence is translated word-for-word according to the order of the English sentence structure, it would read: “没有秘密是安全的。没有手段伎俩可隐形。零一直在监视。” Such a translation is semantically able to enable the players to access the information, but it does not conform to the Chinese expression habits of the players. This will make the players feel the awkwardness of the language and make it difficult for them to fully comprehend the information, which in turn will affect the attractiveness of the character Zero to the players. In the original text, “No secret is safe.” is a negative sentence. “No manoeuvre goes unseen.” is a sentence that is double negative in form but affirmative in meaning. “Cypher is always watching.” is a sentence made up of subject and predicative. The translation can only be judged to be appropriate after the sentence structure has been familiarized and the context of the character has been understood. The translation did not follow the structure of the original text, which was not translated into three sentences. The original text has been translated into a sentence “在他的眼皮底下没有秘密，也没有人能瞒天过海。” The translation is a split and reorganization of the information in the original text. The sentence “Cypher is always watching.” was processed into a gerund structure “在他的眼皮底下”. The sentence “No secret is safe.” was processed into a verb phrase structure “没有秘密” The sentence “No manoeuvre goes unseen.” was processed into a clause in which the word “也” was used to follow the previous sentence. Eventually, the entire translated sentence was formed. The translation have adjusted the word order of the original text and converted the grammatical components in the original text, which has been more in line with the thinking habits of Chinese players.

4.2. Foreignization

Foreignization requires translators to start from the original language and retain the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the original text, so that the readers of the target text can intuitively experience the foreign culture[6]. In the process of game localization translation, the use of foreignization allows players to intuitively feel the linguistic and cultural connotations of VALORANT, and then understand the spiritual core of the game, so as to increase the players' sense of identity and immersion in the game.

4.2.1. Literal Translation

Literal translation requires that the target text maintains the content and form of expression of the original text, but it is not a word-by-word translation of the original text[7]. In the process of game localization translation, the use of literal translation will preserve the linguistic characteristics of the source language and the culture therein, allowing players to enjoy exotic cultures in the course of playing game and bringing them a sense of freshness.

Example(3) POISON CLOUD

Chinese Translation: 瘴云

It is a skill name from the introductory information about an agent Viper. When Viper uses the "POISON CLOUD" skill, she throws a air-jet device that creates a large cloud of poisonous mist. In the noun phrase "POISON CLOUD", the word "POISON" means 毒物、毒素, and the word "CLOUD" means 云. The noun phrase "POISON CLOUD" has not been directly translated as "毒云", but it has been further optimized and directly translated as "瘴云", which is still faithful to the original meaning. The word "瘴" is short for "瘴气", and the translation "瘴云" uses the word "瘴" to mean disease-causing and harmful. The translation "瘴云" not only matches the effect of Viper's skills, but also mobilizes the players' visual sense and consciousness. This makes the players get a sense of being there, and increases the players' sense of immersion in the game.

4.2.2. Transliteration

Transliteration requires translators to express the content of the original language in the target language with a similar pronunciation[8]. In the process of game localization translation, translators often use transliteration for names of persons, places and words containing cultural information, so that players can understand their meaning through pronunciation and have an impression of them.

Example(4) Yoru

Chinese Translation: 夜露

It is the name of a male agent who is tasked with fighting a duel with the enemy. Yoru is able to move silently behind numerous enemies and launch surprise attacks to defeat them. The name Yoru has been aptly transliterated into the Chinese word "夜露". The translation of "夜露" can be interpreted as "Cold Dew in the Night", which has brought players a chilling sense of tenderness and piercing the bones. Moreover, the cold dew in the night dropped on the earth and disappeared into the void, like a ghostly killer who approached without casting a shadow, leaved without leaving a trace and left without a sound after completing his mission. This reminds players of Yoru's martial arts skills are so strong that it is hard to meet an opponent. The sharp fighting style of the agent "Yoru", who combines the real and the virtual, corresponds to the coldness of the cold dew in the night and the disappearance of traces. Therefore, the essence of name "Yoru" has been translated. The translation "夜露" indicates the characteristics of the agent "Yoru", who kills the enemies like a ghost and gives them a bone-chilling sense of cold. The translation "夜露" also touches the vision and perception of many players, giving them a picture in their minds and leaving a deep impression on them without

even realizing it.

5. Conclusion

VALORANT has been already a phenomenal game, and it has generated a great deal of discussion among gamers, so that the successful completion of the game localization translation is very important for the longevity of the game's operation. Therefore, in the process of game localization translation, the players' gaming experience is the first thing to be considered in the translation process, and it is inevitably guided by the Skopos Theory. This paper analyses some of the Chinese translation of the game content, aiming to provide some reference ideas for game translators, with a view to improving the quality of game localization translation and opening up a new future for the industry.

Notes

All translation examples were drawn from the game content of VALORANT.

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