

Walnuts and Python: Analyzing Game Localization Protests on Twitter

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Keywords

Localization, Video Games, Twitter, Methodology, #TorrentialDownpour

INTRODUCTION

In February of 2016, angry gamers began to use a new hashtag on Twitter to announce their displeasure about game localization. This new hashtag, #TorrentialDownpour, was initially created to protest Nintendo of America's Japanese to English localization of *Fire Emblem: Fates* (2016), but gamers continued to use the hashtag for the duration of 2016 to protest the localizations of a variety of Japanese role-playing games. Often declaiming localization as a form of censorship, this Twitter Protest had an overwhelmingly negative view of both game localization in general, and the localization of Japanese RPGs in particular. This paper uses an original, but easily replicable method for looking closely at the discourse of #TorrentialDownpour in order to understand what gamers think and write about game localization.

Video game localization, as form of media translation, has historically been hidden from consumer view (Venuti 2008; Mandiberg 2012). However, alongside many industry practices of game production, localization has become increasingly visible to game players through recent academic, corporate, and popular accounts that discuss game production as a practice, not simply games as a form of entertainment or commodity (O'Donnell 2014; Hsu 2014). This increased visibility has been particularly troublesome for game localization, as some game players have rejected the industry efforts to culturally and linguistically adapt games for local consumption (Carlson and Corliss 2011; Consalvo 2016). This rejection of game localization has been most visible through Internet protests like the 2016 #TorrentialDownpour movement.

In focusing on the #TorrentialDownpour movement, which is also linked with the #GamerGate hashtag, this paper pays attention to the recent friction between hegemonic and resistant gamer cultures (Chess and Shaw 2015; Fron et al. 2007). We approach game

Extended Abstract Presented at DiGRA 2017

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localization as a point of friction in the global flow of video games that can help us understand that games are not simply about universal rules and/or narratives, but commodities that are able to flow around the globe only through day-to-day decisions of industry workers that sometimes are approved, but are often met with disapproval when seen by players.

While this paper does important theoretical work in terms of studying game localization, it also breaks important ground methodologically (Zimmer and Proferes 2014). Unable to find an available system for studying thousands of tweets over months of previous use, the authors created a methodology to pull, sort, and analyze the hashtag that includes walnuts, a Python script, and a simple Excel Spreadsheet. This simple hack breaks methodological ground in that it creates an easily duplicable system for media scholars to approach Twitter hashtags as a readable text that can go back further than the single week available through Twitter's standard API.

BIO

Stephen Mandiberg is a media studies scholar focusing on the intersections between digital video games and the global flow through media translation. Currently, he focuses on the Japan/United States translational nexus to argue that there are "responsible" practices of digital video game localization that are not always followed. Michael Mandiberg is an artist, programmer, designer and educator. His work varies from web applications about environmental impact to conceptual performances about subjectivity, to laser cut lampshades for Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs.

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