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Visual Novel

and Its Translation

(Bachelor Thesis)

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Olomouc 2019

I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently and that I have listed all primary and secondary sources.

In Olomouc   ……………………………………

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Josefína Zubáková, Ph.D., for all her help; PhDr. Pavel Král for his willingness and encouragement; Brianna Lei for allowing me to translate *Butterfly Soup*, for her help and feedback; and lastly, the kind souls who took the time to test the translation, suggest improvements, and listen to my woes – most of all Anna Michalcová, Nate Lindgren and Toby Švédů.

List of Abbreviations

CR   Culture-bound Reference

ECR   Extralinguistic Culture-bound Reference

RPG   Role Playing Game

SL   Source Language

TL   Target Language

UI   User Interface

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Introduction

The visual novel is a video game genre that has been only marginally explored in translation studies. Existing materials deal with Japanese video games as a whole, their localisation from Japanese to English and the issues rising from intercultural transfer between Japan and the West, namely North America and Europe (Di Marco, 2007; Mandiberg, 2015; Mangiron, 2012; O'Hagan, 2009a and 2009b; O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2004). This thesis aims to introduce the original Japanese visual novel as a medium which is gaining ground in the West and compare it to the recent trend of the Western visual novel. The focal point of the thesis is the translation and commentary of the Western visual novel *Butterfly Soup* as an example of the medium of the visual novel seamlessly adapted to a new environment and used to convey a Western narrative. The main factor in choosing this particular visual novel title is the notable degree of attention required to be paid to the transfer of *Butterfly Soup's* Culture-bound References, which is a quality typical for Japanese visual novels.

Cavallaro (2010) focuses on visual novel titles adapted from anime and manga. Consulted sources in the field of Japanese video game localisation count Di Marco (2007) as an outlook on "the multifaceted work of a localiser"; Mandiberg (2015) on the residual traces of source culture; Mangiron (2012) on the international adaptation of Japanese video games; O'Hagan (2009a) on the history and specifics of Japanese video game localisation; O'Hagan (2009b) on the focus on the player experience as a means to improve Japanese video game localisation; O'Hagan & Mangiron (2004) on the insufficiency of typical localisation and conventional translation as individual approaches to video game localisation. Related sources dealing with intercultural strategies and video game localisation count Chandler (2005), Kohler (2005), Mangiron (2006; 2010; 2013), Muñoz Sánchez (2009), O'Hagan (2007; 2011), O'Hagan & Mangiron (2006; 2013). This thesis does not aim to explore each individual source; additional publications are introduced in relevant chapters as viable background reading. The thesis also references online sources, communities, interviews with Western Japanese visual novel publishers,

and personal experience in the gaming sphere as a means of bridging the academic gap in the given area and context.

Chapter 1 introduces the origins and history of the visual novel in Japan and the West respectively. The graphic layout, gameplay and narrative format are explained; specific titles are showcased as representative examples chosen on the basis of their popularity recorded on the video game platform Steam and gaming portals. Comparisons are drawn between typical Japanese visual novels and the trends in Western titles; the medium of the visual novel is also compared to Western video game titles which operate on similar principles. Due to the ongoing discourse in gamer spaces as to whether the visual novel constitutes a video game, it is notable that for the purposes of the thesis, the visual novel is treated as a distinguished video game genre.

Chapter 2 explains the basics of localisation as per Esselink (2000) and the principles and levels of video game localisation, including the GILT model and its occurrence in Japanese and Western visual novels. The inherent support for localisation of the Ren'Py Visual Novel Engine as the most popular choice of engine for Western visual novels is pointed out, in comparison to Japanese titles, where localisation support cannot be automatically expected. The constraints of subtitles are compared against the constraints expected in Japanese visual novel localisation. The process of interlingual and intercultural transfer of a visual novel title is defined as localisation on account of its software status; and as translation in regard to titles created in Ren'Py Visual Novel Engine on account of text string translation and Ren'Py's terminology. Translation process in Ren'Py is presented. Chapters 1 and 2 include visual aid, the need for which arises from the visual nature of the visual novel. Additional visual aid for chapters 1 and 2 is provided in the Annex and serves to illustrate the variety of visual novel titles. Figures introduced within the text of the thesis itself and figures attached in the Annex are numbered separately for convenience.

Chapter 3 further introduces *Butterfly Soup*, a title set in a first-generation Asian American neighbourhood published by Brianna Lei in 2017, and its translation into Czech with a focus on retaining Culture-bound References (CRs) as well as the player experience. The sociocultural context of the game as a whole is described first, followed by closer descriptions of individual characters and the specifics of their language use. Further, a case study is introduced to demonstrate

the strategies and procedures used in the translation process of CRs to fully retain the intended atmosphere of the game. The characters' language use is reintroduced from a translator's point of view on account of language being a known component of character characteristic. The relevant layers of the Czech vocabulary, as described by Sgall (2002), assigned to individual characters are identified. Translation strategies are defined in terms of Pedersen's (2005) model of rendition of Extralinguistic Culture-bound References (ECRs); furthermore, the contemporary, online-culture oriented nature of *Butterfly Soup* and the resulting sociocultural knowledge required of the player presents a case for retention and transcultural substitution as the dominant strategies in bridging the gap between the trends in modern Western visual novel titles – represented by *Butterfly Soup* – and contemporary entertainment media in general. *Butterfly Soup* also represents the contemporary trend in the localisation of Western visual novels as an activity of professional and fan translation in one. The chapter also includes visual aid necessary to enhance the text.

The author of this thesis has provided *Butterfly Soup* with a full Czech translation as a part of this thesis. The latest build of the game with said Czech translation is officially available on the game's website as of June 2019. Finally, the full game is provided on a CD enclosed with the thesis.

1   Visual Novel

1.1   Visual Novel and the Genre's Development

The visual novel is a narrative and dialogue-based role-playing genre of Japanese origin that relies on static visuals to portray its characters and locations and that is on occasion accompanied by action gameplay. Its roots and visual style are firmly interconnected with anime, which remains closely connected to the genre to this day. Cavallaro (2010, 8) describes the visual novel as a type of interactive narrative-focused video game medium executed through a combination of text and accompanying images. The text carries the entirety of the narrative, predominantly in the form of dialogue, while the visual side serves as an illustrative device, depicting the speakers and the backgrounds of the scenes, which can become more detailed and enhanced by CGI and cinematic camera angles in pivotal story moments. The visuals of Japanese video games have been deeply influenced by anime [1] "practically from [the Japanese video game industry's] inception," according to Cavallaro (2010, 7). The anime style characteristic for Japan extends not only to titles such as the RPG[2] series *Kingdom Hearts* or *Final Fantasy*, but to the visual novel as well. There are many popular visual novel adaptations which were later adapted to anime, such as *Clannad* (**Figure 1**), or the *Higurashi: When They Cry*[3] and *Danganronpa*[4] series, and vice versa.

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[1] Anime is a genre of Japanese animated shows typically based on a "manga" comic. They have become quite popular in the West as well over the past decades. Some, such as *Pokémon*, have even become worldwide phenomena.

[2] Initialism denoting "Role Playing Game", a genre where the player's decisions (in dialogue, actions, skills etc) influence the game. The player is either given a pre-set character to play or allowed to create their own at different degrees of customization. "JRPG" is often used to denote Japanese RPGs, such as *Final Fantasy*.

[3] *Higurashi: When They Cry* a series of murder mystery sound novels by 07th Expansion. The adaptations count drama CDs, novels, manga, anime, and live action.

[4] *Danganronpa* is a Spike Chunsoft series about a group of teenagers forced into a murderous game. There have been spin-offs and adaptations such as mobile games, novels, anime, and manga. The game's visuals are influenced by anime.

Figure 1: A scene from *Clannad.*[5]

The first visual novel titles date back to the 1980s and early 1990s. They featured hand-drawn characters and set themselves apart from contemporary video games in that they did not shy away from pornographic elements and invoking what was – and is – considered provocative, "taboo" content. To a certain degree, the genre still fills that role today. The original "bishoujo" ("pretty girl") genre where the player character, a young man, meets attractive women was soon followed by other genres, such as its counterpart marketed to women, "bishounen" ("pretty boy"). The superordinate term for titles marketed to women is "otome"; another genre within the category is the "boy's love" (also "BL", or the pornographic "yaoi") genre, which presents gay relationships between men, and its notably rarer female counterpart, "girl's love" ("yuri"). The four genres, among others, are often executed as "dating simulators". More commonly referred to as "dating sims", the titles present the player with more than one "love interest", a character that can be pursued romantically to reach one or more relationship outcomes; the rating ranges from child-friendly to mature audiences only. Other genres include "nakige" ("crying game"); games that awaken a strong emotional response – not necessarily sadness. The related genre "utsuge" ("depressing game"), unlike "nakige", does not

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[5] The visual novel by Key whose popularity spawned manga, anime and film adaptations. The male player, a senior in high school, meets five girls and assists in solving their unique problems. The game uses typical anime visuals.

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typically achieve a happy ending. The last mention belongs to the "nukige" ("masturbation game") genre, which describes games explicitly and solely focused on pornographic content (see also "Logan M"; 2013, and Mai; 2014).

Despite the visual novel's pornographic beginnings and the continued popularity of the "eroge" ("erotic game") genre, not all visual novels include (explicit) pornographic content, such as the visual novels named in this thesis. However, it is the popularity of erotic content among customers that funds the localisation and publication of other genres, as revealed in a 2014 interview with a Western publisher of Japanese visual novels, MangaGamer (see also "Ishaan"; 2014). The combination of the genre's history and the number and popularity of visual novels that do indulge in pornography results in negative associations with the genre among a broader Western audience. Cavallaro (2010, 8) notes that many Westerners continue to label the medium as "Japanese sex games" or are only aware of the "dating sim" genre. It is also possible for Western players to simply not be familiar with the term "visual novel" while generally being aware of the more popular visual novels that have succeeded on the Western market, namely the *Ace Attorney* series and other titles. Regardless, the visual novel remains popular primarily in Japan where, according to the Anime News Network, 70% of Japan's video game releases in 2006 consisted of visual novels. Visual novel titles have been receiving more popularity among Western audiences in the recent years; regardless, visual novels are still more of a niche market in the West, and as such the majority of Japanese titles are translated from Japanese to English only. There are exceptions, such as *Hatoful Boyfriend*[6] or the third *Danganronpa* title.[7]

1.2   Visual Novel in the West

Over time the medium of the visual novel left Japan and entered the West. What likely started as a trend among fans of Japanese media – passed on from (often amateur) fan translators to their peers – has gone on to appeal to a wider variety of

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[6] English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish localisation; notably, the title can be viewed as an exception, as the remake was published by an American publisher, Devolver Digital, which without a doubt plays a role. The sequel, *Hatoful Boyfriend: Holiday Star* (2015), only offers English, French and German.
[7] *Danganronpa V3: Killing Harmony* (2017) is the third title of the visual novel series. The game is available in English (interface, subtitles and full audio) and French (interface and subtitles).

the Western public. That is in part due to Western creators embracing the medium and producing their own titles that then proceed to catch the public's eye. *Dream Daddy: A Dad Dating Simulator*[8] was highly anticipated at its release. *Doki Doki Literature Club* has earned over 104,000 reviews and an "Overwhelmingly Positive" rating on Steam[9] (as of June 17th, 2019). At the same time, some of the more – as perceived in the West – bizarre Japanese titles have awakened waves of interest. *Hatoful Boyfriend* (on Steam in 2014), a dating simulator where the player takes the role of the only human student enrolled in St. PigeoNation's Institute, a school for birds evolved to possess human intelligence, released a sequel on Steam in 2015.

Along with the medium, many Western creators have adopted the characteristic anime style for their own projects. *Doki Doki Literature Club* (Figure 2) or *Long Live The Queen* (see Annex Figure 1) are some of the titles that pay homage to the traditional visuals of the medium. As a rule, visual novels from both hemispheres tend to adhere to various animated and comic-like art styles[10] over pushing the medium into the realm of live action; photography may also be observed. That makes visual novels, which might follow contemporary trends and styles in animation, the ideological opposite of the modern tendency and direction of AAA video games,[11] which strive for hyperrealism and increasingly model their characters using the help of motion capture technology.

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[8] *Dream Daddy: A Dad Dating Simulator* is a dating simulator by Game Grumps where the player creates their character, a single dad, and meets and dates other dads.
[9] A digital video game distribution platform developed by Valve, a video game publisher.
[10] The Western visual novel *Monster Prom* is one such example of a comic-like art style (see Annex Figure 2).
[11] Video games produced and promoted by major publishers on a high budget.

Figure 2: A scene from *Doki Doki Literature Club.*[12]

visual novel creation in the West is more likely to be the work of independent individuals and small teams rather than large well-funded studios. The easy accessibility of software that is either conceived as a visual novel creator – or in the least allows such creation – for affordable prices (or as freeware) allows virtually anyone who has the time to create their own visual novel. That allows for a great variety of titles to be made; following the Japanese model, Western visual novels cover a wide range of genres. The visual novel introduced in this thesis, *Butterfly Soup*, is one such example of a visual novel notably Western in its themes and brand of humour.

1.3   Visual Novel as a Video Game

While all visual novels focus on story and/or characters, various types of the medium offer different degrees of player input and interaction. Unlike a film, the visual novel will only progress to the next frame when prompted. A comparison can be drawn to turning the pages of a picture book. Some engines (such as Ren'Py Visual Novel Engine) even allow the player to return up to a certain number of previous frames.

The basic layout of a visual novel consists of a dialogue box in the bottom third of the window with the scenery and character sprites portrayed in the

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[12] The Western visual novel showcases a typical anime style.

remaining space above (and possibly around). The dialogue box presents the player with dialogue, narrative text, inner monologue, closed captions, etc (Figure 3; see also previous figures). The length of the text presented varies from one word to a small number of sentences. Visually, text may borrow from the tradition of anime fansubbing, which assigns different colours to the speech of each character or differentiates between dialogue and inner monologue in colour; the latter appears in *Butterfly Soup*. Visual novel titles also enjoy sound effects and title and credits screen soundtrack. More elaborate visual novels incorporate voice acting, and popular visual novel creation engines like Ren'Py enable self-voicing, that is, the utilization of "a speech synthesizer that reads out text and other interface elements",[13] allowing the visually impaired to access the games.

Figure 3: Dialogue from *Ace Attorney*.[14]

The visual novel can be divided into two categories based on the degree of interactivity presented to the player. The kinetic novel[15] focuses on telling one linear story with minimal to no player input. The entirety of the kinetic novel hinges on narrative text and dialogue. The player might have the option to choose

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[13] See also Ren'py (Undated), "Self-Voicing".

[14] *Ace Attorney* is a series of visual novel developed by Capcom since 2001. The player takes the role of a defence attorney, who investigates cases and defends their clients in court. Several spin-offs and adaptations across various media have been made.

[15] May also be referred to as "sound novel" by some. However, a difference can be noted between kinetic and sound novels, where sound novels focus on creating an atmospheric effect. There is also a visual difference in that sound novels place their text over the game pictures (see Annex Figure 3). (See also Lada, 2018).

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additional dialogue options, input text or progress the story by clicking a prompt rather than the traditional "next frame" control key. This type does, in fact, resemble a novel with visual aspects rather than a video game. The second category is the typical visual novel with a branching narrative in which the player is presented with choices that ultimately lead them to one of several endings. These different branches are commonly referred to as "routes" or "storylines", which are terms associated with roleplaying games in general. The appeal of these games lies in the replay value, as depending on the game, a different route can take the player on a path with slight or major differences from the previous one. Cavallaro (2010, 8) points to the motivation to explore the game to the maximum. Dedicated players will spend hours upon hours replaying the same video game to get all the alternative branches, endings and dialogue options. In this light we can see the visual novel as a natural evolution of the gamebook,[16] or as its counterpart in the East. An argument could be made that the visual novel is to comics, or even films, what modern hypertext games and text-based games[17] are to traditional books – in that a linear static (here meaning: non-interactive) medium becomes interactive and potentially offers two different experiences to two different consumers.

In the respect of a branching narrative, the visual novel has much in common with Western RPG games, their dialogue-based interactions and focus on the player's relationships with the non-playable characters. As one of the interviews with MangaGamer, a localised Japanese visual novel publisher points out, the *Dragon Age* and *Mass Effect* series (Figure 4 and Figure 5), stripped of combat and similar mechanics, would not be that different from a typical visual novel (see also "Ishaan"; 2011a).

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[16] A branching novel that takes the player on a choose-your-own adventure through the use of "if you want to take action A, go to page X" commands. May require dice.
[17] Such as games made through the use of free tools (e.g. Twine) or those published by Choice of Games.
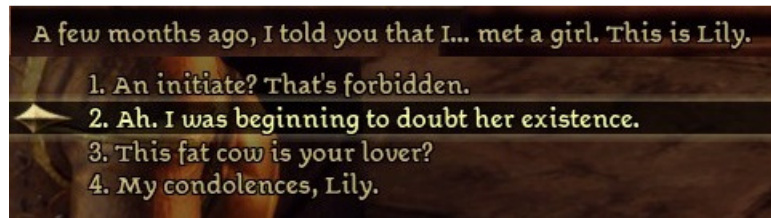
Figure 4: The dialogue and dialogue options in *Dragon Age: Origins* as pictured in-game and separately.[18]

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[18] *Dragon Age* is a video game fantasy RPG series developed by BioWare. The later *Dragon Age* titles abandon the dialogue mechanics pictured in this figure and use a dialogue wheel system pictured in the following figure. The expansive dialogue and net of choices in *Dragon Age: Origins* has spawned a number of "mods" (fan-made game modifications) that allow the player to skip combat, as a vast portion of fans replay the game for the choices and the relationships they develop with the characters.

Figure 5: The dialogue wheel used in *Mass Effect* and the later *Dragon Age* games as pictured in-game and separately.[19]

BioWare was also one of the first Western video game producers to bring the option to pursue romance in their titles – bringing the idea that dating sims operate on into their medium – and caught the attention of a broader audience. In fact, virtual romance and RPG elements have become so popular that other video game developers, AAA and ind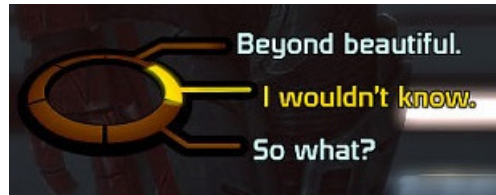ie alike, have begun to implement them into their video games. The gaming giant Ubisoft has joined this trend with their latest installation of the *Assassin's Creed* series, *Assassin's Creed: Odyssey*. Prior, Bethesda's long-awaited *Fallout 4* also implemented romance options for the first time in the *Fallout*[20] series. Indie titles participate in romance mechanics as well, such as *Stardew Valley*.[21] Western dating sims include *Dream Daddy: A Dad Dating Simulator*, *Monster Prom*, or the fan-made *Love is Strange*.[22]

Visual novels may incorporate various gameplay elements, such as action minigames, puzzles, quests and objectives etc, which move the medium closer to a typical video game. Of Western examples, *Dream Daddy: A Dad Dating Simulator* includes a number of unique minigames (see Annex Figure 4), the successful completion of which influences the total amount of points earned on each date. The simpler minigames have the player carve wood by moving their mouse up and down, play the piano by striking their keyboard at random, or fix a radio by picking up the presented items and placing them into the box of the radio. The more complicated minigames require the player to be precise and react fast, such as in

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[19] *Mass Effect* is a video game science fiction RPG series developed by BioWare. Its standing with fans in terms of mod and popularity of relationships with the characters is equivalent to that of *Dragon Age*.

[20] A post-apocalyptic retro-future RPG series developed by several publishers since 1997. The titles are set beyond the 21st centuries after a nuclear blast ruined the surface in 2077. *Fallout 4* follows the fate of the Sole Survivor, who entered an atomic shelter prior to the blast and woke up from cryo-induced sleep two centuries later.

[21] A ChuckleFish title where the player inherits their grandfather's farm in Stardew Valley and works to restore it and become part of the local community.

[22] See chapter 2.3.

the minigolf and fishing minigames, or the one where the player character needs to dive through a frenzied crowd, survive, and locate their companion.

Pyre, a party-based RPG released by the publisher Supergiant Games, uses visual novel dialogue and choice mechanics, and has for that reason been branded a visual novel on the platform Steam. *Pyre*'s dynamic action sequences have the player control a group of characters in a game reminiscent of basketball (see Annex Figure 5), further reaffirming the flexibility of the medium.

2 Visual Novel and Its Translation

The terms "translation" and "localisation" are often used interchangeably by the general public. This thesis, as a contribution to translation studies, deems it necessary to define and distinguish between the two in order to communicate its points effectively.

Esselink (2000, 1) describes localisation as "the translation and adaptation of a software or web product, which includes the software application itself and all related product documentation" that before the Internet and World Wide Web would typically "encompass full translation and engineering of a software application, its online help files, a set of printed manuals, and reference and registration cards included in the product box" and can now "also include the translation and adaptation of web-based applications and database-driven websites." In contrast to translation, Esselink (2000) goes on to point out that translation typically works with a finished product, while localisation is often a process parallel to the product's development. O'Hagan & Mangiron (2004, 57) state that "while translation still is the largest single component of the localization process, localization requires translation to be embedded within the software itself and calls for specialized processes and tools to support such tasks. It also involves wider considerations of international marketing."

Esselink (2000) identifies software as the type of product which is transformed through the process of localisation; the visual novel unquestionably belongs under software. This classifies the process of transferring visual novel titles from one language and culture to another as inherently within the realm of localisation, namely video game localisation.

Chandler (2005) names four levels of video game localisation. The first level is no localisation, regardless of the intent to sell the product abroad. The second level is box and documentation localisation; the game's packaging is localised, but the game itself is not. The third level is partial localisation; game text is translated, and voiceover subtitled, but voiceover itself stays in the original language. The final, fourth level is full localisation, including voiceover, game text, graphics and manuals. The focal point of this thesis is the translation of the game text (text strings) in the Western visual novel *Butterfly Soup*, which is the decisive factor in

the thesis' title as "translation" rather than "localisation". Additionally, the most popular choice for the creation of Western visual novels and the engine of *Butterfly Soup*, Ren'Py Visual Novel Engine, allows for its titles to offer different languages – the process of transformation is referred to as translation by the engine and its website.

2.1   Japanese Visual Novel and Video Game Localisation

Video game localisation, while a relatively young field, has sparked the interest of many publications, such as O'Hagan (2007; 2009a; 2009b; 2011) and Mangiron (2006; 2010; 2012; 2013); together O'Hagan & Mangiron (2004; 2006; 2013); further, Dietz (2003; 2006; 2007), Di Marco (2007), Díaz Montón (2007), Muñoz Sánchez (2009), Honeywood & Fung (2012), Muñoz Sánchez & López Sánchez (2016), and more. Mangiron (2006, 310) notes that video game localisation "is used as an analogy to software localisation, because the translation of the game needs to conform to the local standards of the target culture and it also has to be integrated within the game software". Di Marco (2007, 1) describes video game localisation in terms of required skills as "a multi-layered process that requires localization staff to have many of the same skills as the original developers of the game, thus making programming expertise and linguistic and cultural knowledge alike necessary." The concept connected to video game localisation is GILT – globalisation, internationalisation, localisation and translation. Globalisation represents the decision to make a product or service available in more countries than that of its origin and the steps taken to ensure and prepare it for international release without a need for major changes. As such, the decision and the necessary steps need to be included since early development stages. Internationalisation is then the process of ensuring that the given product or service can be seamlessly localised – and translated.

> "[Game localisation consists of] adapting a game technically, linguistically and culturally in order to sell it successfully in other territories, and it involves complex technical, linguistic, cultural, legal and marketing processes. (…) From a translation studies perspective, game localisation is a functional type of translation, the objective of which is to provide the target players with a

similar game play experience to that of the players of the original." (Mangiron, 2012, 3)

Mangiron (2012), Di Marco (2007) and O'Hagan (2007) agree that video game localisation is not about translating the text, but rather translating the experience. The localised version of a video game should retain "the 'look and feel' of the original", in the words of Mangiron & O'Hagan (2006, 14). An instance of the player experiencing confusion upon encountering an item, text or scene that would have been understood if their nationality aligned with that of the country origin of the game is referred to as failure of translation by game localisation specialists such as Smith (2012) or Judd (2013) in their personal interviews with Mandiberg (2015). Esselink (2000), Chandler & Deming (2011) and Honeywood & Fung (2012) are also in favour of the erasure of any cultural contexts and iconography. This view is opposed by Mandiberg (2015), who sees these moments as an opportunity for the player to educate themselves on the original culture. The study used the example of a Japanese visual novel from the *Ace Attorney* series. Similarly, in opposition to the traditional stance taken by aforementioned scholars, recent years have seen a rise in Western fans of Japanese media calling for "translation, not localisation" – meaning that Western consumers want to experience Japanese media in English with no other changes (see also Diño, 2017).

Adapting a video game for release outside of its country of origin includes changes both small – as sometimes the mere translation of all text involved is needed – and extensive – e.g. in order to comply with the laws of the target country. The difference in the scope of a given localisation project means that sometimes video game localisation consists of providing the user interface (UI)[23] and the dialogue in the target language, and sometimes of a complete character or scene overhaul as well; O'Hagan & Mangiron (2004; 2006) have found the latter to provide a considerable amount of freedom of expression to the translator, as the aim of game localisation is, above all, to provide the target audience with the highest possible entertainment value. O'Hagan & Mangiron (2006) express the degree of freedom granted in a translation and a localisation project respectively as follows:

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[23] Functions related to game settings and gameplay, i.e. the main menu, various notifications and tips issued to the player by the game, the systems used for – among others – inventory and crafting, etc.

"(…) translators are often given carte blanche to modify, adapt, and remove any cultural references, puns, as well as jokes that would not work in the target language. Localisers are given the liberty of including new cultural references, jokes, or any other element they deem necessary to preserve the game experience and to produce a fresh and engaging translation. This type of creative licence granted to game localisers would be the exception rather than the rule in any other types of translation." (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2006, 15)

This freedom is dubbed as "transcreation"; where the aim is to recreate the product to seamlessly blend into the target culture. Japanese visual novels, like Japanese games in general, are a prime example of the need for transcreative endeavour. Japan, a superpower in gaming, has established a reputation of being unwilling to release video games to the Western market, due to fear that the titles would be misunderstood by their Western audience and that sales would suffer from the cultural differences between the two worlds. That is especially true for visual novels, as evidenced by the trouble Western visual novel publishers go through in obtaining new titles through official channels.

"(…) On the subject of collaborating with Japanese developers, MangaGamer say that convincing companies to publish their games overseas is very difficult unless they get them to visit western countries and interact with fans in the west. In the case of other publishers, interest depends on sales. When a Japanese publisher is approached with a proposal, their first question regarding the project is: "Will it sell?" The struggle in this case is proving that the business is sustainable. (…) On the subject of Key games, MangaGamer say Key are interested in licensing titles out for Asia, but not for western territories. Visual Art's president, Takahiro Baba, has even shown his disapproval for people outside of Japan importing their games, due to cultural differences." ("Ishaan", 2011b)

"'Sory it's a rule of Japan computer ethics,' Baba tweeted, after the fan expressed disappointment. Following a suggestion that fans would like for Visual Art's to publish their games globally, he elaborated: 'Ethics is different from country to country. So we are in our product abroad, I cannot guarantee that the ethical concept is correct.'" ("Ishaan", 2011c)

The eroge genre is popular in the West, but raises the most pressing issues of ethics and acceptability at the same time. Namely the portrayal of underage girls in erotic scenarios presents a concern for the Western consumer. Localisation in that case includes the aging up of characters. O'Hagan (2009b) cites the results found by Yahiro (2005) and affirmed by Di Marco (2007) and Kohler (2005), which point to the most drastic changes to localised Japanese games being in "religious, sexual, racial and other references concerning moral stances." The transformation of young characters into older versions in the localisation of non-erotic content addresses the simple fact that a Japanese audience relates more to a different type of character than the Western counterpart.

2.2 Japanese Visual Novel and Subtitling

The process of translating the text of the visual novel dialogue boxes is occasionally referred to as subtitling. Unlike subtitles which prefer to blend in with the background so as not to disturb the consumer, written text is the most essential part of the storytelling in a visual novel, and therefore is always present in its designated space. In kind with other text dialogue-based games, such as the Western 2017 adventure *Night in the Woods*[24] by studio Infinity Fall, the very medium of the visual novel relies on player input to advance the text of the dialogue. By its very nature, narrative text in contemporary visual novels offers fewer constraints than subtitling does. While the text can be dynamic – using an animated effect that displays one letter after another at a different speed, mimicking reading speed in letter appearance – it will remain on screen until the reader has elected to continue to the next frame. The six-second rule of subtitling established by Díaz Cintas & Remael (2014) – or its seven-second counterpart preferred by Carroll & Ivarsson (1998) – does not apply, neither does reading speed. The problem that does remain is that of limitations on the space available for text, more so where Japanese visual novels are concerned. The nature of the written Japanese language allows for minimal space usage in comparison to alphabet systems such as the Latin alphabet. Translators need to express all translatable units as concisely as possible in order to contain their translation within the confines of the allocated space.

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[24] See Annex Figure 6.

With the visual novel still primarily seen as a Japanese medium, until quite recently developers saw no need to make their games accessible to Western languages, failing the step of globalisation and internalisation. American companies looking to localise Japanese titles often found that support of any other but the Japanese alphabet was not built into the game engine at all, and the process of localisation required the developers to essentially remake their game, or make extensive changes, simply to allow Latin alphabet usage and enable English localisation.[25] Understandably, not all Japanese developers are open to the idea of an extensive remake of their game for the purpose of localisation. As previously mentioned, even today, now that the usage of separate text files to input language into games is the dominant practice and massive remake operations to support Western languages are less necessary, many Japanese developers object to making their games accessible to a Western audience still. Short of learning Japanese, there are two options for a fan looking to play a Japanese visual novel that does not have an official localisation. They can either find a fan translation, or they can use Visual Novel Reader. The program allows the player to display a machine translation, user-submitted translation, and a dictionary, along with spelling out the individual Japanese signs in Latin alphabet (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: The various functions provided by Visual Novel Reader.

The program displays the original Japanese text with Latin alphabet transcription above Japanese signs, subtitles submitted by the program's users on the program website, machine translation, and a Japanese dictionary.

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[25] In the case of unofficial localisation, romhackers (fan translators of video games' ROM data) and fan translators need to perform this task themselves (Muñoz Sánchez, 2009).

https://vnrpg.wordpress.com/2018/07/07/tutorial-vnr-how-to-play-any-japanese-vn-and-understand-it/

Fan translation/localisation (dubbed "fansubbing") is a popular phenomenon among Western consumers of all Japanese media, as official translation/localisation is rarer. Díaz Cintas & Remael (2014) date the origins of fansubbing to the 1980s, as a direct response to the lack of access to Japanese manga and anime for Western audiences. The factor of fans looking for "translation, not localisation" also applies. The phenomenon has been a subject of many publications since then, such as Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez (2006), Hellekson & Busse (2006), Denison (2011), O'Hagan (2011) or Vazquez-Calvo, Zhang, Pascual & Cassan (2019), to name a few. Fan translation has proven to be innovative; the practice of anime fansubbing has brought diversity into subtitles, such as the use of different subtitle colours for different speakers instead of the recommended shared white colour. This trend (among others) has transferred into visual novels and other media as well.

Much can be said about the quality comparison between official and unofficial localisation, as their resources and options differ, and both groups may face a different disadvantage. Muñoz Sánchez (2009) names one of these, in that unless a romhacker knows how to modify internal game codes that affect the display of dialogues, they will be forced to keep their translation brief, as any additional characters that exceed the original character number may find themselves off-screen. The fan translator (or romhacker) may be forced to build in Latin alphabet support in the first place. On the other hand, translators for game developer companies such as EA are disadvantaged in that they are not provided with the game itself, and thus are not as familiar with the context as fan translators, who will likely have played the game already and have it at their disposal, and who, by definition, are fans of the title. That proves to be the key factor in the case mentioned by Mangiron (2006), where the English fan translation of *Final Fantasy IV* overshadows the official translation precisely for that reason. Further comparisons between fan and professional video game localisation are made in the diploma thesis by Krombholzová (2014).

2.3 Western Visual Novel and Translation

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The phenomenon of Western-made visual novels has opened the door to a type of localisation which can be considered both official and fan translation at the same time. The difference between official and fan translation as understood in this thesis is the involvement of the author and the matter of monetary compensation. Fan translation is notoriously an activity carried out for free and regardless of the author's knowledge, permission, or endorsement, done out of one's enjoyment of a media. In official translation, the author (or representatives) hires the translator; the translation is the product of an agreement between the translator and the author and is part of the game package offered to consumers. While some Western visual novels are published on platforms such as Steam for profit and hire professional translators, others remain free, open to anyone to play, and should they wish, to localise – offering a combination of the fan and official approach. The author in that case typically asks potential translators to contact them, either to receive the materials necessary for the translation and/or to send the final product. The translation is then offered to the fans alongside the game.

The obvious example of such a title is *Butterfly Soup*, the Western visual novel introduced in the practical part of this thesis. Another title to mention is *Love is Strange*, the visual novel created by a small team of fans of the Dontnod Entertainment episodic RPG title, *Life is Strange*. *Love is Strange* takes several of the existing characters from the original game and places them into a dating sim (see Annex Figure 7 and Annex Figure 8). The title has gained fast popularity and received many localisation offers from its fans – confirming that fan translation is a way of showing appreciation for someone else's work, as its entire premise relies on a fan's love for a title being so high as to voluntarily put in hours of their free time into hard work to make said title available to a broader audience. Muñoz Sánchez (2009, 182) is correct in his assertion that fan translators do not see what they do as a job and simply carry out the tedious task of translation and localisation as an enjoyable hobby. The same applies to the creation of the original game title as well, making this medium a space for fans to cooperate and create something of their own, whether the creation is the game project itself of its localisation. Many original creators of Western visual novels use it as one of the tools to create the

representation they wish to see,[26] and translators volunteer their efforts for the same reason, in addition to enjoying the content.

As mentioned in the first paragraph, however, it is unclear whether the localisation of this kind of a Western visual novel may be considered fan translation, as it carries traits of both a fan translation and an official localisation project. The translators are typically fans of the visual novel who work to localise a title for no pay in their free time; what notably sets them apart from the traits we associate with fan translation is that their efforts are sanctioned and supported by the title's author. An official relationship between the visual novel creator and the translator is formed, as the creator provides access to the game files and other necessary materials. In that respect, the localisation process is a translation assignment like any other, perhaps with the difference that the informal setting allows for a more intimate relationship between the two parties; the author may make themselves available for detailed feedback (to the chosen strategies, technical issues, etc) and overall establish open communication, should it benefit the translator.

2.4 Ren'Py Visual Novel Engine

Ren'Py Visual Novel Engine is an open source, free for commercial use engine with detailed guides provided on its website. As such, it is the most popular choice for the creation of Western visual novels, indie ones especially. Ren'Py uses Python script and offers potential creators a range of basic assets, as well as the option to modify the engine to suit their needs. The complexity of individual games depends entirely on the skills of their creators. This chapter serves as a basic introduction to translation work in Ren'Py.

Ren'Py is built for internationalisation according to GILT; the program enables the translation of a Ren'Py game, the game's UI, as well as some of the program's own UI – certain developing tools and menus. The term "translation" is used for any language transformation processes carried out in Ren'Py and the games made in it, in line with the term's use in official Ren'Py sources. A

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[26] Both *Butterfly Soup* and *Love is Strange* are stories of romantic love between women, created by lesbian and bisexual authors for a likeminded audience.

comprehensive guide for creation and translation is featured on the Ren'Py website. A basic explanation of the translation process of a Ren'Py game follows.
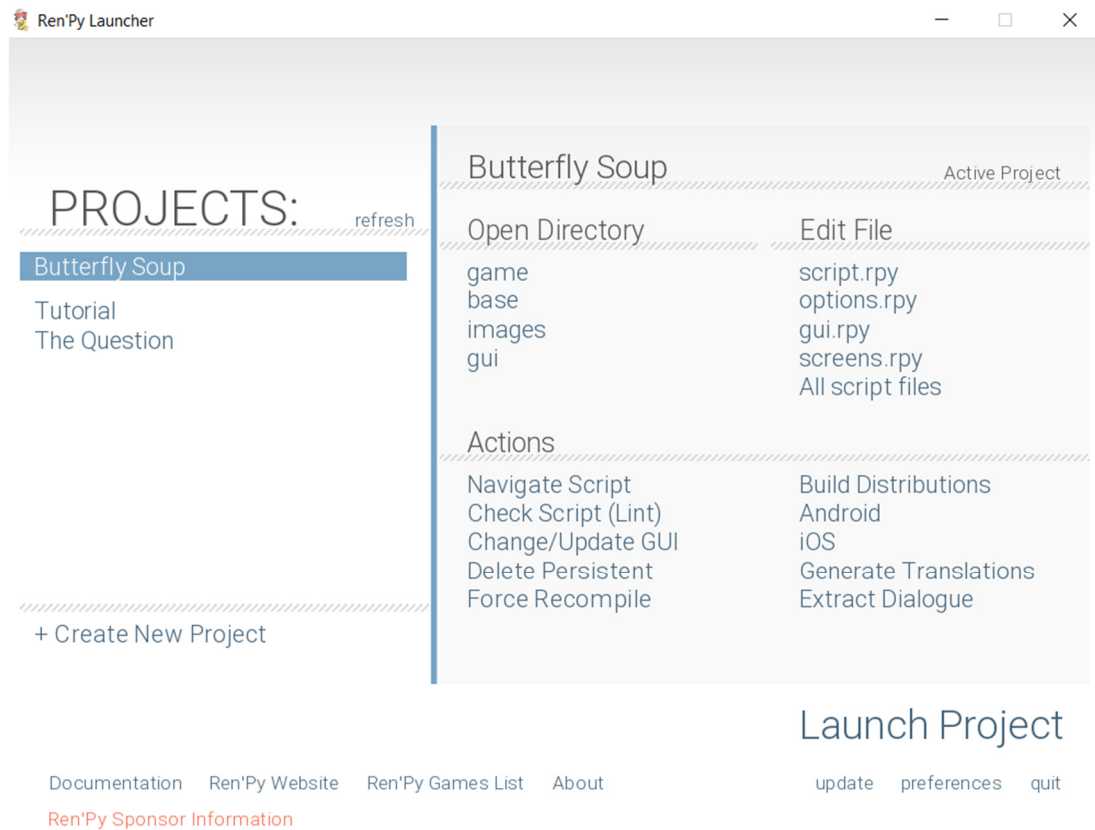
Figure 7: The main menu of the Ren'Py engine.

The Ren'Py engine (Figure 7) is a freeware to be downloaded from the official Ren'Py website.[27] The program generates RPY translation files, which can be opened and edited in a text editor (here Notepad++). These files are copies of the source language (called "None" language) files with the game text and the UI text presented in strings; each line of source text is followed by a second, empty line to insert the translation into. If left empty, the line will be skipped. The "common" file contains strings for the save system of the game and the developer menu; the latter can be ignored by the translator, as none of the options are available to the players and the author does not need them translated. The "screens" file contains strings for the UI, such as the main menu, settings, etc. The "options" file contains the title of the game, displayed next to the game icon in the game window.

The engine allows the addition and usage of different fonts for different languages, and within the languages themselves.

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[27] See References.

The game uses a number of tags to modify its text. Table 1 lists some of them and their functions.

{i}{/i}	Cursive
{big=16}{/big}	enlarged text
{slow}{/slow}	slower text animation speed
{w=0.10}	pause in text animation
{cps=25}{/cps}	animation speed in characters per second
\n	line break
\"\" – \„\"	quotation marks (source – Czech translation)
[variable!t]	variable placeholder

Table 1: Code tags.

A string enclosed in zero characters per second tags followed by "nointeract" marks a choice prompt. The text appears in the dialogue box, with the choice options available on the screen for the player. In the code, the choices do not follow the prompt; instead they are at the bottom of the given story file. The translator needs to view the choice in-game to see which responses correspond to which choice prompt. The bottom of the story file offers other changes as well; specifically, changes to the names of characters. Variables are also found at the bottom.

Images may also be replaced as needed. In order to load correctly, the images need to follow the same path in the folder holding the translation files as the source ones do in the game folder.

Finally, new build is generated from within the Ren'Py main menu, using the latest loaded translation files.

3 Butterfly Soup Translation

This chapter introduces the Western visual novel *Butterfly Soup* and the specifics of its translation. The game was chosen as a representative example of a Western creator using the Japanese medium of the visual novel as a tool to explore themes specific to their own reality and adapting the medium to a new cultural context seamlessly. Another factor of the choice is that *Butterfly Soup* employs trends common for contemporary Western visual novels, video games and other media set during the modern Internet era. These include references to online trends – both in content (memes, viral content) and delivery (chat speak, online speech trends) of its dialogues. The blend of national and transcultural online cultures into one media form presents a challenge awaiting translators of entertainment at an increasing rate.

This chapter connects translation theory with practice, as shown with examples from the translation process of Butterfly Soup into Czech carried out by the thesis' author simultaneously with this thesis. The resulting Czech version of the game is the official and sole existing Czech translation. It was created with the support of the game's author Brianna Lei and a number of testers to assure quality. The Ren'Py files involved28 were translated using the text editor Notepad++; the translation thus had to follow the steps and contend with the technical issues introduced in chapter 2.4, such as the system of tags and image replacement. The first replaced image is a background used to illustrate an explanation that is being given by one of the characters (Figure 8); replacement in this case involved the digital deletion of the English text and its replacement with Czech text within the image itself. The second image is a screenshot of an online slang dictionary sent in a group chat (Figure 9); this replacement required the discovery of a Google website preview with the desired content, which was then screenshotted.

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[28] There are four narrative files named after each main character: "1_diya", "2_noelle", "3_akarsha" and "4_min". Further, there is a "common", "options", and "screens" file, and an additional "scripts" file, which contains chat nicknames the characters use in the story.

Figure 8: The background image localised in the Czech and English version.

The Czech translation is currently the only one to have altered the image; other languages keep the English original.
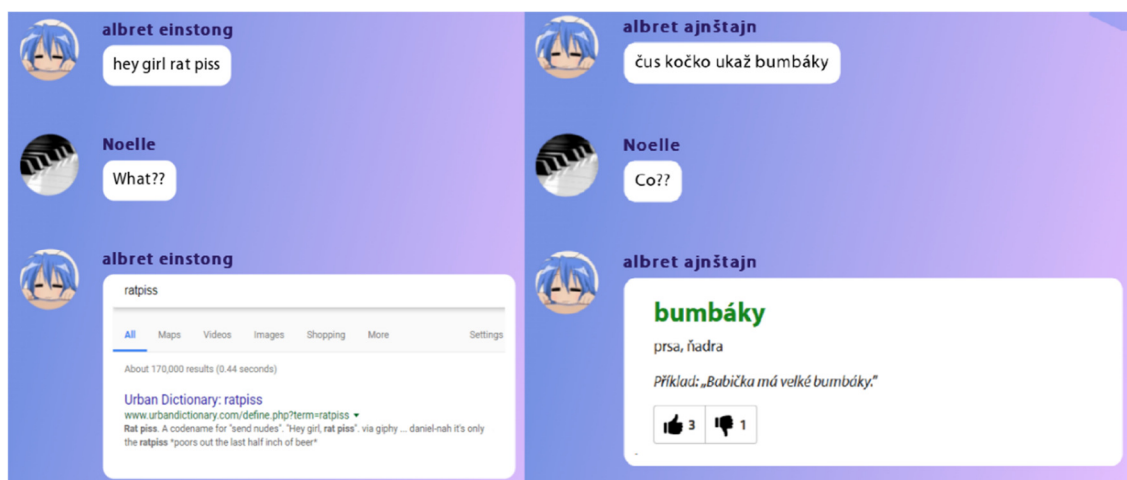

Figure 9: The localisation of the portrayed joke involves the image's replacement.

As previously stated, *Butterfly Soup* contains many CRs – as is typical for the Japanese visual novel (in references specific to Japanese culture) and the Western visual novel (in transcultural references, such as those relating to online culture) – along with other attributes shared by the medium of the (primarily Western) visual novel, and other features worthy of extensive translation commentary, such as humour or spoken vs written language. However, it is CRs that the translation commentary presented in this chapter focuses on, as transfer of culture in translation is an issue that is especially relevant to translators of visual novels and other contemporary media, including not only audiovisual media (whether film or video game), but also literature, etc.

The latest version of the game (as of this thesis' submission) is enclosed on a CD provided with the physical copy of the thesis. It can also be found online at the link provided in the References section.

3.1 Butterfly Soup

Butterfly Soup is an indie romantic comedy published in 2017 by its American author, Brianna Lei. The author herself describes the game as "a visual novel about gay Asian girls playing baseball and falling in love"[29]. *Butterfly Soup* became a hit and was named "Best Visual Novel" of the year by gaming portal PC Gamer.[30] It was covered by the gaming outlets Polygon and Kotaku[31] and was featured at Game Developers Conference and Independent Games Festival. The story is three to four hours long and does not offer any major choices or different endings; the player is offered enough small action, dialogue and other choice options to remain engaged, but the story is otherwise linear, and the characters are not customisable.

The game employs animated text to mimic natural speech and "screenshake" to enhance dramatic moments. The default background is dynamic in that it moves with the cursor. The visuals draw inspiration from anime; similarly, narrative text used to express a character's thoughts uses the anime fan subbing practice of colourful text. As of June 2019, the game has been published with a Japanese,

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[29] See also Lei (2017).
[30] See also PC Gamer (2017).
[31] See also Frank (2017) and Hernandez (2017) respectively.

Traditional Chinese, Brazilian Portuguese, and the here introduced Czech translation available. The following languages are in progress: Dutch, European Brazilian, European Spanish, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish. The large number of languages proves the game's popularity, as well as affirms that translation is one of the ways in which fans interact with content, and in this case and those in kind, with the author themselves. Lei is supportive of translators and states on her social media that she will deliver the necessary game files to those who message her with an offer to translate the game. As the creator, Lei is also intimately familiar with the engine and provides feedback, advice and other assistance throughout the translation process, both for the technical and the linguistic; adding a layer of support and security to the author-translator relationship described in chapter 2.3.

Lei drew inspiration from other visual novels such as *Ace Attorney*, *Zero Escape* and the Western titles *We Know The Devil* and *Save The Date* for her game; the medium of the visual novel fits her creative process more than that of a comic (webcomic, specifically), which remains a popular medium for Western digital artists. Lei (2019) cites her previous game, *Pom Gets Wi-Fi*, as the reason why she was not surprised to be approached with translation offers; however, the scale of *Butterfly Soup*'s popularity and the resulting "a few dozen" of translation offers were unexpected. Most offers have not delivered due to the game's length.

The story, set in 2008, follows the lives of four teenage Asian-American girls in Oakland, California. The game spans four chapters; each is told from a different girl's perspective. The game uses flashbacks to further define the individual relationships with one another, as well as the characters themselves. Each character has a distinct personality, including the supporting cast. The main plot follows the girls' actions leading to and in a baseball club, and the development of the relationship between two of the main characters from friendship to romance. The game's language heavily employs references to American culture popular and relevant in 2008 and beyond, namely events (the Obama election), figures (Smokey the Bear), TV (shows and films), etc. There are prominent international (thus transcultural) references to the fan culture surrounding Japanese media, namely Japanese anime, manga, and visual novels. *Butterfly Soup*'s inclusion of anime fans plays into the time of the setting, as anime, manga and visual novel titles started

gaining notoriety among Western audiences in the 2000s and gave birth to the stereotype associated with their fans. Japanese video games popular worldwide also appear. Additionally, *Butterfly Soup* showcases online culture in employing the stylistics popularised by English-speaking social media in its written speech, predominantly in its use of punctuation and capitalisation.

The setting reflects the author's experience of growing up as a gay Asian-American woman in a majority Asian-American neighbourhood; as such, it is a personal piece that offers themes that are rarely explored in mainstream media. The target audience is modelled after the author herself also. The translation is aimed at young LBT women with an international online presence; the primary target age is early 20s, but can be extended as far as from 15 to 30 years of age.

3.1.1   Characters

Butterfly Soup presents a diverse cast of characters. There are a number of named characters with full avatars, which are detailed in Table 2. The table presents their roles along with their ethnicities, as cultural heritage plays a significant role in the main characters' stories.

Diya	Main character Indian-American
Noelle	Main character Taiwanese (Chinese-American)
Akarsha	Main character Indian-American
Min-seo (Min)	Main character Korean-American Love interest of Diya
Jun-seo (Jun)	Min-seo's twin brother Korean-American
Hayden	Friend of Diya, Min and Jun White American
Liz	Baseball club leader White American
Chryssa	Baseball club leader, classmate of Liz Afro-American
Sumi ("Sakura")	Baseball club member Pakistani-American
Grace ("Yuki")	Baseball club member Filipino-American
Ester	Baseball club member

	Afro-Chinese-American

Table 2: Character sheet.

A bridge between undetailed and detailed characters is presented in Noelle's mother and Min and Jun's parents, where the characters are dubbed "Mom" and "Dad". While the parent characters play a major role in the game's Asian-American setting, they do not get detailed avatars and are instead portrayed as silhouettes. Lastly, there are several very minor characters, such as a couple of classmates, cashiers, etc. These characters typically get no avatars and their speech is accompanied by a general background image.

3.1.2 Characters' Language Use

The main and supporting characters are teenagers growing up in the era of the fast advancement of technology. As such, they are used to the Internet and social media as a natural part of their daily lives, and their speech consists of contemporary online language; many spoken dialogue lines are written the same way one would find them on social media or in a chat room, and the game outright includes a chat interface as a written form of communication between the characters as well.[32] Language is therefore an important part of *Butterfly Soup's* "feel" (as per Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006, 14), as well as character characteristic.

The characters' spoken and written speech reflects their personality, and in some cases, hobbies. Diya is characterised as ridden with social anxiety, which results in her being shy, quiet, even stand-offish. She often speaks in a flat tone and makes her statements shorter by leaving out the pronoun. The habit of using as few words as possible lowers the formality of her register somewhat (Example 1[33]). In written conversation, Diya capitalises the first letter of her messages, but does not use punctuation other than the apostrophe and the question mark.

Diya "I won him from the hammer game at the fair."
Diya "Hit the hammer really hard."

Example 1

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[32] In the code and given examples, these are indicated by the letter "c" in front of a character's name (see Example 3 and further).

[33] Text excerpts presented as examples outside of chapter 3.2 are stripped of most code properties to improve readability.

Noelle is the most eloquent of the characters. She is intelligent and despises incorrect information. While she fits the stereotype of a "teacher's pet" and a "by the book" type of character, she also participates in her own pranks on Akarsha. Her speech is tailored to her intellectual persona and changes the least from the spoken to the written form; she utilises proper capitalisation and punctuation. She uses a rich, eloquent vocabulary; apart from when she is angered. She may use less formal contracted forms in that case, and both her spoken and written speech is conveyed in all capital letters as an indication of shouting (Example 2).

Noelle "I will place him in my bedroom and preserve him in mint condition for as long as possible."
Noelle "YOU CAN'T MAKE THESE EXCUSES EVERY TIME YOU MESS UP."

Example 2

Akarsha partakes in a wide range of jokes, pranks and mischief across the story. She is intelligent, but pretends otherwise for the sake of her jokes. Akarsha speaks exclusively in contracted and informal verb forms. Her writing style is the opposite of Noelle's; proper capitalisation is disregarded, and punctuation is usually either missing, or in the case of question marks, doubled.[34] Contracted verbs are joined by words shortened to their common online forms (Example 3). Akarsha is also one of the few characters seen swearing.

cAkarsha "i cant believe u have an archnemesis?? i didnt even know ppl had those in real life"

Example 3

Min-seo is proud, stubborn and prone to anger and violence. Her vocabulary is poorer in comparison to the other three; she misspells any more complicated words, in addition to a habit of misspelling words in general, presumably on account of writing fast. Her writing style is similar to that of Akarsha (Example 4). She is the one character that swears the most and uses harsher words than Akarsha and anyone else.

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[34] Overall, doubled and multiplied punctuation is one of the recurring stylistic choices based on online speech trends. This phenomenon is further introduced in chapter 3.2.3.

cMin "why are yu o here"
cMin "whatre you gonna do, use a peraberla to calculate how to throw the ball?"

Example 4

Most other characters use contracted forms and subscribe to variations of the writing styles described above. The one speech pattern that stands out among all others is a mix of English with Japanese, as used by Sumi and Grace, and in a lesser extent, Akarsha. There are multiple occasions on which the Japanese language is used, as anime fans have a habit of doing on account of having picked up basic Japanese words and phrases while watching anime or interacting with the fan culture.

Of course, the necessity to characterise individual characters by their language presents an additional challenge for the translator.

3.1.3 Culture-bound References

The underlying context of *Butterfly Soup* as a story about growing up LGBT and Asian-American in a predominantly Asian-American neighbourhood presents the basis for the story setting and the characters' personalities, but not as much for the type of CRs woven into the game generously.

The most dominant CRs belong to the aforementioned three categories: American culture (most prominently), fan culture, and online culture.[35] Many of *Butterfly Soup*'s references, jokes, mentions of phenomena, etc. are contingent on the player's familiarity with these national (where some of the parts of American culture are concerned), and often international (some American; fan and online culture) references, which might not be accessible to all those who play *Butterfly Soup* in its English original by default, and more so to those engaging with the game in different languages. Fan and online culture specifically are in their nature international, though many are predominantly conceived and most prominent in an English-speaking environment, with various elements consequently finding their way into individual national scenes. Both categories take advantage of the

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[35] Further descriptions available in the corresponding chapters.

contemporary age of the Internet, which has brought cultures across the world closer than ever before and which allows for international audiences to connect over the same things, whether said things were conceived as international, or were shared with the rest of the world online. To name an example, anime fan scenes in America are nearly identical to those in Czechia; consequently, Sumi and Grace, the side characters and major anime fans in *Butterfly Soup*, could be seamlessly inserted into a Czech anime fan setting, as *Butterfly Soup* does not explicitly show them dealing with Asian-American experiences and instead focuses on the main characters.

3.2   Translation Strategies

The question prominent in the translation of *Butterfly Soup* and its numerous CRs is that of whether to move the player to the author, or move the author to the player, and to what degree. Venuti (2008) adapts these strategies as "foreignisation" and "domestication" respectively, where the latter plays a significant role in the phenomenon of the "translator's invisibility" within the so-called "fluent translation"; the illusion that the text is "natural", not translated (p. 5). Nida (1964, 159) advocates for translation which adheres to the rules of a fluent translation in his concept of dynamic equivalence, stating that "a translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture". Venuti (2008, 18) is in favour of foreignisation – following the source linguistically and culturally – defining its aim as "[resisting] dominant values in the receiving culture so as to signify linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text". Venuti (2008) sees foreignisation and domestication primarily as ethical attitudes to translation, either conserving foreign values or substituting those of the target country:

> "The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the recognizable, the familiar, even the same; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects where translation serves an appropriation of foreign cultures for agendas in the receiving situation, cultural, economic, political." (Venuti, 2008, 14)

Another categorisation is presented by Popovič (1971; 1975) and Vilikovský (1984): "naturalisation", "creolisation" and "exotisation". "Naturalisation" and "exotisation" as the prevalence of domestic and foreign elements respectively, and "creolisation" as a merging of the two. Levý's (2012) "noetic subjectivism" and "noetic objectivism" describe the practice of preserving the culture of the source, and the practice of generalising, concealing, or substituting it with the target culture (see also Kudějová, 2013).

Pedersen's (2005) model presents several strategies for the translation of Extralinguistic Culture-bound References (ECRs) "arranged on a Venutian scale" (p. 3) from the most foreignising to the most domesticating. Pedersen recognises the terms "foreignisation" and "domestication" to be counterproductive in the case of translating English into a smaller language and instead opts for the more neutral terms of "Source Language (SL) oriented" and "Target Language (TL) oriented". This thesis adopts Pedersen's (2005) model to describe the strategies used in the translation of *Butterfly Soup*; as such, and for the fact that Czech is a small language, the terminology is also consistent with that of Pedersen (2005). The one exception lies in the term "Culture-bound References" without the "Extralinguistic" – the stylisation associated with online culture is of linguistic nature.

The strategies described by Pedersen (2005) include retention, specification, and direct translation on the TL oriented end, and generalisation, substitution, omission, and official equivalent on the SL oriented end (Figure 10).
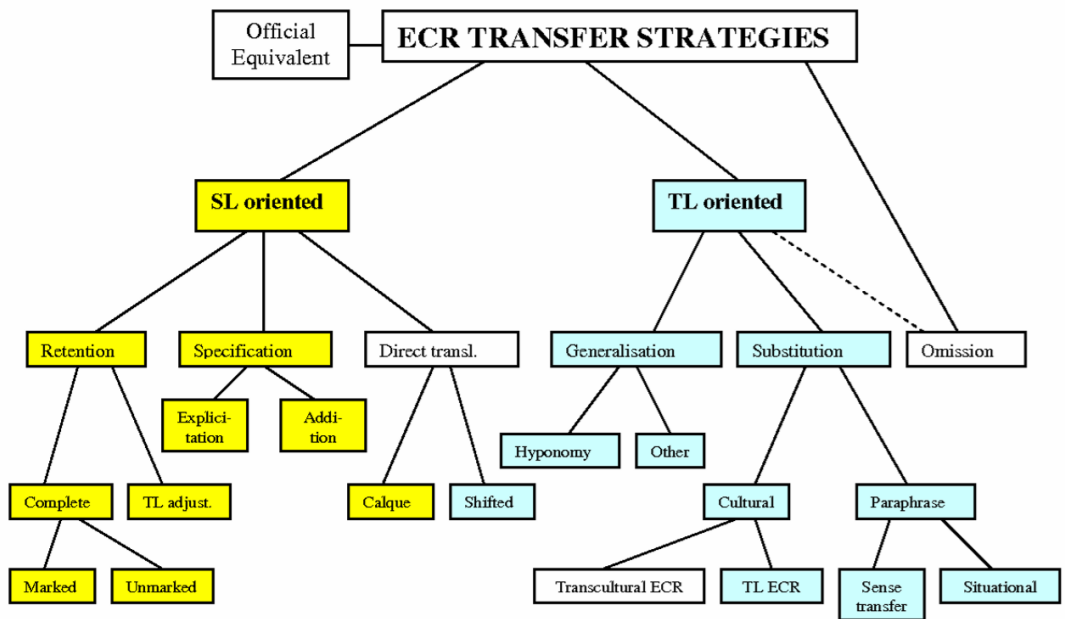
Figure 10: Pedersen's (2005) taxonomy of ECR transfer strategies.

The official equivalent is the first to be described for its difference from the rest of the strategies in that it is a strategy which describes a "bureaucratic rather than linguistic" process, because "some sort of official decision by people in authority over an ECR is needed" (Pedersen, 2005, 3). The existence of an official equivalent eliminates the dilemma of choosing a strategy, as the official equivalent is already established.

Of the SL oriented strategies, retention is the strategy of adopting the original SL for the target text, whether as is, transcribed, or slightly adjusted. Specification is similar to retention; unlike retention, specification adds extra information to the SL, thus making the CR more specific in the target text than in the source text. Direct translation is either word-for-word (calque) or shifted to be less obtrusive in a case where a word-for-word translation proves odd. A shifted direct translation is thus on the border between SL and TL oriented.

Of the TL oriented strategies, generalisation is the strategy of replacing the SL with a more general TL term, such as a hyperonym. Substitution is the replacement of a source CR with a different one, with a paraphrase, etc. This strategy is especially relevant to the translation of *Butterfly Soup* – namely in the form of a cultural substitution, or rather, a transcultural (international) substitution. CRs already transcultural (i.e. equally familiar to an American and a Czech player) in nature are retained, and references to American culture are brought closer to the

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Czech player through the use of transcultural substitution. Lastly, omission is the deliberate removal of an SL oriented CR from the target text.

The decisive factor in choosing individual strategies is based on presuppositions about the player, i.e. the translation, like the original, assumes the player's familiarity with the fan scenes and subcultures featured in the game (mainly anime fan culture), as well as an advanced knowledge of online trends, stylistics, and online culture in general. This set of fairly extensive presuppositions is given by the fact that an English-speaking player who is not familiar with either of the mentioned might not enjoy or understand *Butterfly Soup* in its original form regardless of their perfect command of the English language. Familiarity with the elements employed is thus necessary in the original, and remains just as necessary in the translation, as many of these elements are of international – transcultural nature. The underlying effort of the translation is not domestication – or reorientation to the target culture – but rather the acknowledgement and retention of transcultural elements, as well as the retention of elements which remind the player of the story's Asian-American setting, and other necessary steps to retain the "feel" of the original.

The following chapters mirror chapter 3.1 and reintroduce *Butterfly Soup* and the characters with the spoken and written speech trends assigned to them in the Czech translation. Further, the chapters introduce examples of chosen CRs, and the relevant translation strategies applied to them.

3.2.1   Title and Characters

In the Czech translation, the title screen of the main menu remains in English; the author would need to create a new central image in order to reflect any title translation. The game's title therefore remains the English *Butterfly Soup*, so as to be consistent with the central image (**Figure 11**). The title represents the most notable example of retention.

Figure 11: The title screen in the Czech and English versions of *Butterfly Soup*.[36]

The translation initially aimed to bring the characters' names closer to the Czech audience and to ensure their correct pronunciation by way of transcription. However, doing so would present more problems than solutions. The names of two of the four main characters, Akarsha and Diya, may look more natural in a Czech sentence if spelled phonetically ("Akarša" and "Dija" respectively); even more so in other grammatical cases, such as the genitive ("Akarshi" and "Diyi" vs "Akarši" and "Diji"). Unfortunately, other names become more complicated. The name of one of the baseball team leaders, Chryssa, if transcribed to "Krys" has the potential to alienate the Czech player from the international audience, as they may not recognise the character's name in an encounter outside of the Czech translation.

Finally, the name that is the main factor in the decision to retain the names was that of one of the protagonist's twin brother, Jun-seo. If spelled phonetically, thus "Džun-seo", the name does not look natural and would prove to be more

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[36] The title background is animated. Each screenshot was captured at a different point in the animation.

disturbing than the English spelling. The name "Hayden" would prove similarly difficult. Partial retention (Akarsha to Akarša, but Jun-seo as is) would also be undesirable, as it might lead to mispronunciation. Another point for name retention is that the anglicised names help to uphold *Butterfly Soup*'s American setting.

3.2.2   Characters' Language

The characters of *Butterfly Soup* have distinctive personalities that are partially defined by their language use, which is notably informal (with exceptions such as parts of Noelle's speech). In English, informal language consists of contracted verb forms and vocabulary choices. The Czech language, in addition to formal and informal language, has an additional variant: common Czech, which encompasses both formal and informal variants. Sgall (2002) captures the range of the Czech vocabulary in the following division into seven levels:

1) Strongly literary, official, archaic forms (e.g. infinitives ending in *-ti*);
2) Weaker literary, exclusively formal forms (e.g. *bychom, méně, mohou, zajímavého*);
3) Neutral forms shared by formal and common Czech (e.g. most suffixes, *míň, můžou*);
4) Standard spoken forms accepted in common Czech, but not fully formal (e.g. *bysme*);
5) Common Czech forms complementary with formal forms (e.g. *dělaj, zajímavýho, seš*);
6) Fully informal, lower forms of common Czech (e.g. *zajímavejma*);
7) Vulgar, pejorative forms.

Multiple word classes of the Czech language include words which possess word forms indicative of their vocabulary level, as well as words strictly situated at a certain level(s) by default. It is very common for casual (and even formal) conversation to fluctuate between levels – giving room for creativity and allowing for the translation to assign characters to different levels of vocabulary as needed, based on their personalities and other factors. Written speech featured in the game receives the same treatment in vocabulary choices, in addition to the retention of the stylistic features common for online culture.

The rough, stubborn and violent main character of Min speaks in an equally rough informal manner, firmly staying between levels 3 to 7 on Sgall's (2002) scale. While the volume of vulgarisms is retained, the specific words are softened due to the Czech language being more sensitive in this regard (Example 5). The Czech translation further leans into Min's characterisation as not studious; her habit of misspelling is retained, and additionally, some of the typos are transformed into incorrect grammatical spelling where applicable (Example 6).

| Min "Who the fuck are you?" | Min "Co ty seš sakra zač?" |

Example 5

cMin "whatre you gonna do, use a peraberla to calculate how to throw the ball?"	cMin "co chceš jako dělat, spočítat techniku nadhozu pomocí peraberly?"
cMin "you stupid overacheiving Asian fob loser stereotype"	cMin "ty pitomá prefekcionistická asijská náplavko"
cMin "fuck yuo"	cMin "bjež do prdele"

Example 6

The eternal joker and prankster, Akarsha, like Min, uses vocabulary from the third level and lower. As previously mentioned, online stylistic properties of written speech are retained (Example 7). The shy and quiet Diya and the witty and intellectual Noelle balance the main four with a higher level of formality, often staying at the second level. When angered, Noelle drops lower (Example 8). Diya's use of language is slightly more relaxed in comparison to Noelle, mixing her vocabulary with the lower levels on a regular basis (Example 9). If talking in first person, she will end verbs with *-ju* rather than the formal *-ji* (*uvědomuju si* vs *uvědomuji si*) – using the common, spoken variant of the Czech language over the formal, literary one. The same is true for Noelle.

| cAkarsha "i thought they made nanocars already" | cAkarsha "myslela jsem že už se dělaj nanoauta" |

Example 7

cNoelle "We could use it to change Diya's gene expression, and increase production of proteins to make her stronger."	cNoelle "Mohly bychom změnit Diyinu genovou expresi a navýšit její produkci proteinu, aby byla silnější."
Noelle "ARE YOU STUPID?????? "	Noelle "SEŠ BLBÁ??????"

Example 8

DiyaT "Crap. It's almost my turn and I still can't think of any cool facts."	"Sakra. Jsem skoro na řadě a pořád mě nenapadá nic zajímavého."

Example 9

As for other characters, another one to use common Czech is the white childhood friend, Hayden, to create a contrast between him and the ever-polite, shy Jun-seo. The sharp-tongued Ester also uses common Czech. Chryssa was at one point also considered to adopt a more informal vocabulary; however, black women are stereotypically portrayed as harsher than their white counterparts; the translator needs to take this into account in choosing their strategy in order to lessen the violence of translation, as defined by Venuti (2008).[37] In result, Chryssa uses language similar to that of the white co-leader, Liz. The rest of the cast is mostly situated around level two.

Other decisions about language use involved the use of infinitive rather than imperative statements in the choices of actions the player is offered (Figure 12).

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[37] "(…) translation wields enormous power in the construction of identities for foreign cultures, and hence it potentially figures in ethnic discrimination, geopolitical confrontations, colonialism, terrorism, war." (Venuti, 2008, 14)

Figure 12: A choice prompt at the beginning of *Butterfly Soup*.

Further, the narration uses past tense instead of the present. Lastly, verbs in past tense concerning the baseball take the female plural suffix *-y* rather than the typical suffix a baseball team would call for *-i*, as – unlike a typical baseball team – the relevant team in *Butterfly Soup* is fully composed of women.

3.2.3   Culture-bound References

Several problems tied to culture have already been mentioned in the game's introduction and the previous chapter, such as the characters' names, and the fact that the story itself mirrors the author's life story. The story is rife with references to trends contemporary to the time of the game's setting; newly elected president Barack Obama and teen-beloved film trilogy *High School Musical* play the same role in grounding the story in time and place. Those are considered American cultural references. Other references include terminology and titles related to Japanese media and their Western fans, as the author is a fan herself and so are several characters. Mentions of other subcultures briefly occur, namely furries (see Example 25); all are considered fan culture, which has a dominant online presence as well. Online and modern speech trends reflected in the dialogue are considered online culture.

3.2.3.1 American Culture

Two of the main characters, Min and Noelle, start the game as enemies and progressively grow into a reluctant friendship. Many of their exchanges are thus jabs and insults thrown in the other's direction, most of them focused on the traits of the given character, such as height, personality, and intellect; the two are polar opposites in all of these. Where height is concerned, Noelle towers over Min considerably. Min, therefore, makes an attempt to insult Noelle by calling her the "Empire State Building" (Example 10). The translation substitutes the Empire State Building for the Eiffel Tower. The Eiffel Tower is closer to a Czech player, conveys the same meaning in the given context, and works better in the Czech language, as it has an official Czech equivalent (unlike the Empire State Building). The Eiffel Tower also leans into a running joke in the game, where Akarsha insists on calling Noelle "Frenchman" and teases her about the French origin of her name, as it is unusual for a (Taiwanese) Chinese American.

Min "You...you Empire State Building."	Min "Ty... ty Eiffelovko."

Example 10

Other references include the names of brands, products, corporations, as well as their commercials and slogans. A Gatorade reference takes place in the second half of the story, wherein the all-girl baseball team had just won a match and the main four decide to throw a hygienic pad into the van of their opponents, an all-boy team; for additional effect, they decide to soak the pad in liquid. Diya describes the flavour of her Gatorade drink as "yellow", true to a quirk of hers; she refers to flavours by their colour, regardless of what they really taste like. As Gatorade is not an established soda brand on the Czech market and "lemonade" can represent a large variety of sodas and similar drinks in the Czech speaking area, generalisation is an adequate strategy (Example 11). A different solution leaning towards target culture would be *šťáva* (syrup).

Min "We should soak it with something to make it more unknown."	Min "Měly bysme to do něčeho namočit, ať je to o to cizejší."
Diya "I have Gatorade."	Diya "Mám limonádu."
Akarsha "What flavor?"	Akarsha "Jakou příchuť?"
Diya "Yellow one. Yellow flavor."	Diya "Žlutou. Žlutou příchuť."

Example 11

The first chapter of the game has Akarsha cite the Burger King and Taco Bell marketing slogans that are potentially confusing in a Czech text. Burger King and Taco Bell are internationally known and could be retained, but an official equivalent of the slogans does not exist. Retaining the slogans in the SL would interfere with the Czech text and providing a translation without any other clues might prove confusing. The translation was provided with a citation dash, and the quote and its originator were separated into two lines to aid the player in recognising the slogans as such (Example 12).

| Akarsha "Have it your way. {w=0.26}Burger King." | Akarsha "Ať je po tvém. {w=0.26}— Burger King." |
| Akarsha "Think outside the box. Taco Bell." | Akarsha "Mysli nekonvenčně. — Taco Bell." |

Example 12

Later in the same chapter, Akarsha proceeds to yell out unhelpful phrases while the main four are trying to find a way to put out a fire Noelle had started on accident. One of these phrases is a slogan for the product HeadOn (headache cure), which is unknown in the Czech speaking area and is therefore substituted for a different product and its slogan. Unlike HeadOn, Domestos (WC disinfection) is marketed worldwide and is familiar to a Czech player (Example 13), raising the count of transcultural substitutions.

Life Alert (medical alarm marketed to the elderly) and its slogan is mentioned by Diya, who is pointing out Noelle's lacking physique. Life Alert – and the category of commercial it falls into – is not familiar to a typical Czech player, whether or not they fit into the target group of the game. Noelle dislikes sports and active movement in general; the translation takes this into account and substitutes a fitting commercial slogan, specifically Voltaren Emulgel (physical pain cure) with

its "*Radost z pohybu.*" ("Joy of movement.") prominent in the Czech marketing. The point of the reference becomes Noelle's notable lack of "joy of movement" instead of her feeble condition (Example 14). Like Domestos, Voltaren Emulgel is an international brand; again, bringing forth an example of transcultural substitution as defined in chapter 3.2.

Akarsha "HEAD ON. APPLY DIRECTLY TO THE FOREHEAD."	Akarsha "DOMESTOS. MILIONY BAKTERIÍ ZEMŘOU."

Example 13

Diya "Get into shape." Diya "Even ignoring your Gym class grade, the way you are right now is just bad." Diya "You're like that Life Alert commercial. \nI've fallen and I can't get up."	Diya "Zapracuj na své kondičce." Diya "I když opomenu tvou známku z tělocviku, jsi na tom dost bídně." Diya "Jsi jako přímý opak té reklamy na Voltaren Emulgel. „*Ne*radost z pohybu. ""

Example 14

References to audiovisual media are an equally common occurrence, counting TV shows, films, and games. As for the former, the show *America's Funniest Home Video* is mentioned by Chryssa in reaction to Noelle slipping and falling. While *America's Funniest Home Videos* could be translated using the official Czech equivalent for the program, *Fórky a vtípky*, it might not be as recognisable to Czech players, and is therefore substituted for *Tak neváhej a toč*! to evoke a sense of nostalgia in Czech players around Lei's age and older (Example 15). Both shows work on the same principle, but the approach still points to target oriented substitution.

Chryssa "What're you doing, Noelle?" Chryssa "Trying to win America's Funniest Home Video?"	Chryssa "O co se snažíš, Noelle?" Chryssa "Vyhrát Tak neváhej a toč?"

Example 15

Akarsha's reference to *Barney & Friends*, an American family musical for small children, plays out through Akarsha "singing" the lyrics of the theme song of

the show, "I Love You" ("*Mám tě ráď*"), referred to as "the Barney song" in the text. While a Czech version of the show aired on Czech TV, it is debatable how many players would have recognised the song. The Pixar worldwide hit trilogy *Toy Story*, however, is sure to have enthralled the majority of potential players; the translation supplies its focal song, "You Have A Friend In Me" ("*Máš ve mně přítele*") in another example of transcultural substitution (Example 16).

cAkarsha "lets all sing the barney song"	cAkarsha "můžem si zazpívat máš ve mně přítele"
cAkarsha "i love u...."	cAkarsha "máš ve mně přítele...."
cAkarsha "u love me..."	cAkarsha "máš ve mně přítele..."
cAkarsha "we;re a happy family..."	cAkarsha "když máš trable; já s tebou je mám..."

Example 16

Another film reference to mention is one to the Disney hit trilogy *High School Musical*. Akarsha and Min sing the lyrics of the grand finale of the first film (2006) in the third game chapter. As the songs are not dubbed, the Czech audience is instead familiar with their original portrayals and the English lyrics are retained (Example 17). A portion of the lyrics is replaced with "something something", as neither Akarsha nor Min know more than one line. This allows for a direct translation, because the habit of saying "something" (or "*něco*") in the place of lyrics one does not know or understand is shared across cultures.

Akarsha "WE'RE SOARIN...FLYIN..." Akarsha "Something something...breaking free..."	Akarsha "WE'RE SOARING... FLYING..." Akarsha "Něco něco... breaking free..."

Example 17

3.2.3.2   Fan Culture

References to fan cultures are featured in the text in the form of anime and Japanese visual novel title and character mentions, the inclusion of Japanese mixed with

English, and mentions of other subcultures, phenomena and terms associated with communities of anime fans and others.

Akarsha uses the phrase "hella kawaii", where "kawaii" means "cute" and "hella" is a term that has experienced periods of recurring popularity online. "Hella" was substituted for a word popular in Czech online spaces in the 2000s, "*mocinky*". "Kawaii" is popular with anime fans worldwide and is thus retained (Example 18), as are all other Japanese words, used by the game's most prominent anime fans, Sumi and Grace. Both of them state that they are attending the 10th grade in the American school system by starting the sentence with the Japanese phrase for "I am" – "watashi wa". However, they continue the sentence with "am in 10th grade" in English, therefore functionally using the verb "be" twice in a row. The translation follows the original with a direct translation (Example 19), as the incorrect combination of Japanese with another language is intentional, as is the supportive phrase resulting from a bad Japanese to English translation that Sumi offers during the baseball match in response to Akarsha's mistake (Example 20).

Akarsha "That's hella kawaii."	Akarsha "To je mocinky kawaii."

Example 18

Sumi "Watashi wa am in 10th grade."	Sumi "Watashi wa jsem v druháku."

Example 19

Sumi "Don't mind!"	Sumi "Nic neděje!"
Min "What?"	Min "Cože?"
Sumi "Don't mind. They say that in sport anime when someone screws up."	Sumi "Nic neděje. To říkají ve sportovním anime, když to někdo podělá."

Example 20

In another instance, Grace greets Min in their baseball group chat with "ohayou gozaimorning". "Ohayou gozaimasu" is a polite way of saying "good morning" in Japanese. Instead of finishing the phrase, Grace interrupts the second word in the middle to insert the second half of the equivalent phrase in English – and Czech (Example 21).

cGrace "ohayou gozaimorning"	cGrace "ohayou gozairáno"

Example 21

Prior to a baseball match in the previous chapter of the game, Sumi uses the term "weebs". The English "weeaboo" and the Japanese equivalent ("otaku") are terms that describe a fan of anime, manga and Japanese culture. Both words border on derogatory in their respective countries of origin ("otaku" more so than "weeaboo"), however, Western fans have formally embraced them as self-descriptors. The translation uses the Japanese term, as the English one is mostly contained to English speaking spaces (Example 22), while "otaku" is used internationally. The chosen strategy again points to transcultural substitution.

Sumi "Are we going to be okay? Our team is made up of 4 baseball players, 2 nerds, and 3 weebs."	Sumi "Zvládneme to? Náš tým se skládá ze čtyř hráčů baseballu, dvou šprtů a tří otaku."

Example 22

Other events in the group chat bring up the terms "yaoi" and "seme". "Yaoi" refers to a pornographic (gay male) genre. "Seme" is one of the central archetypes of the genre; the dominant male, who is accompanied by the submissive male, the "uke". "Seme" is revisited in a plural form when the game's baseball team votes for a new team name. While "seme" exists in the Czech vocabulary, the term proves to be difficult in terms of plural creation. For that reason, Czech anime fan culture has long established the slang term "*semák*" and its plural form, "*semáci*" for "seme" and "semes" respectively (Example 23).

"NOELLEFUCKER69 has changed her name to YAOI SEME."	"NOELLEFUCKER69 si změnila přezdívku na YAOI SEME."
Akarsha "\"Semes\"."	Akarsha "„Semáci"."

Example 23

At one point, Akarsha introduces herself as "Rail Tracer" in reference to the character of a serial killer in the anime *Baccano!* (2007 – 2008); Akarsha is trying to position herself as tough and dangerous. The Czech audience's understanding of the reference would depend not only on whether they know the anime, but also on whether they have watched it with English or Czech subtitles, and which versions. The same problem would arise with most other English and Czech terms taken from

anime that are not purely Japanese. The translation substitutes "Rail Tracer" with a Japanese term that a typical anime fan, Czech or English speaking, should be familiar with – "Shinigami" (Example 24), the personification of death – thus deeming the substitution transcultural in character. Characters of that name and role are not uncommon in anime; for example, *Bleach* (started airing in 2004), *Death Note* (2006) or *Soul Eater* (2008 – 2009) to name a few titles that existed at the time of the game's setting and were popular in America and Czechia alike.

| Akarsha "They call me...Rail Tracer." | Akarsha "Říkají mi... Shinigami." |

Example 24

3.2.3.3 Online Culture

As stated in chapter 3.2.3, there is a significant overlap in fan and online culture. One major fan culture CR is therefore introduced in this chapter; specifically, the employment of roleplay as an activity the characters engage in in their online chat. Roleplay ("RP") is an activity that many people partake in both online and in real life, wherein they act out a certain role, character, or action in an unscripted scenario. Online, roleplay actions are typically enclosed in asterisks, round brackets, or preceded by one or two slashes to help differentiate actions from dialogue. Most roleplay is a couple or group activity – such as the ever-popular medieval battlefield LARP (Live Action Roleplay) – but there are individuals who use roleplay as an ever-present part of their online speech, which they use to indicate the actions accompanying their statements, such as winking at the respondent. In fact, emoticons are a form of casual roleplay, in that the emoji of a winking face is a visual representation of *wink* or *winks*.

The roleplay that plays out in *Butterfly Soup* is short and consists of Akarsha roleplaying as a cat. She uses "nya" followed by ":3" – the former is the Japanese onomatopoeic representation of a cat's meow, and the latter a cat emoticon (Example 25). "Cat girls" – girls with cat ears and tails, sometimes paws and/or claws – are a popular phenomenon in anime fan culture. Cat accessories are sold and worn by many fans at conventions, and even in their regular life. Furthermore,

there is a notable overlap in fans of cat girls and furries,[38] who also represent a large online community. Regardless, both groups often engage in roleplay.

cSumi "*pets you*"	cSumi "*hladí tě*"
cAkarsha3 "nya :3"	cAkarsha3 "nya :3"
cAkarsha "*purrs and rolls over*"	cAkarsha "*převalí se a zapřede*"
cMin "WTF"	cMin "WTF"
cAkarsha "join our rp group"	cAkarsha "přidej se k našemu rp"
cMin "BE A FURRY FREAK HO SOMEWHERE ELSE"	cMin "BĚŽ SI BÝT FURRY HOVADO NĚKAM JINAM"
cAkarsha3 "SAD NYA"	cAkarsha3 "SMUTNÝ NYA"

Example 25

In addition to Akarsha's online nickname, "YAOI SEME", she also briefly adopts the nickname "NOELLEFUCKER69" (see Example 23). The same exact joke nickname could very well originate from a Czech teenager's keyboard; therefore, it is retained in the Czech translation.

After the initial fight that ensues upon Min and Akarsha's first meeting, the two adopt a fast respect for each other and decide to become friends. An exchange follows, wherein Akarsha compares their newfound friendship to a bizarre list of pairs, counting "yee" and "haw", "human" and "centipede", and "knuckles" and "enchilada". While the first two items are easily deciphered – "yeehaw" is a phrase associated with the Wild West that is popular online, and *The Human Centipede* (2010) is an infamous horror film – a direct translation of the third into Czech would cause confusion[39] and take away from the player's enjoyment, as it represents a rather obscure online reference. The line is thus substituted for a *The Lord of The Rings* reference ("the precious to my Gollum"), as the fantasy series has been popular with both American and Czech fans ever since its release (Example 26).

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[38] A "furry" is a fan of anthropomorphic animals; furries typically have a "fursona" – a representation of themselves as an anthropomorphic animal – and may own a costume (a "fursuit") to dress up as such.
[39] Confusion as a failure of localisation is discussed in chapter 2.1.

"With her clean hand, Akarsha makes a fist and offers it out to Min."	"Akarsha složila svou čistou ruku do pěsti a nabídla ji Min."
Akarsha "Bros?"	Akarsha "Kámoši?"
Min "Bros."	Min "Kámoši."
"They fist bump."	"Jejich pěsti se setkaly."
Akarsha "Be the yee to my haw..."	Akarsha "Budiž jé k mýmu hý..."
Akarsha "The knuckles to my enchilada...."	Akarsha "Milášek k mýmu Glumovi..."
Akarsha "The human to my centipede..."	Akarsha "Lid k mý stonožce..."

Example 26

A popular brand of online humour shared across non-native English speaking nationalities is a deliberate phonetic spelling of English words using the given native alphabet.[40] The Czech translation employs this practice where applicable and adds to the humour already contained in the game's original English version (Example 27). While the practice disregards the spelling rules established for names (and in addition, the transcription of Japanese; see chapter 3.2.1), it provides an easy humorous effect in accordance with Akarsha's character.

cAkarsha "google it"	cAkarsha "vygůgli si to"
"YAOI SEME changed her name to albret einstong."	"YAOI SEME si změnila přezdívku na albret ajnštajn"

Example 27

The characters have written exchanges that make use of the chat format, and spoken exchanges that use online acronyms. An example of the former is an exchange between Min and Noelle. While the English line only has Min acknowledge the extensive cheat sheet Noelle had just sent with a simple "k" in place of "OK", Czech takes the opportunity to use the simplistic, fast way of writing "thanks" by sending the first letter only – the accent on the letter marking that the one letter message is on purpose, thus writing the letter *ď* (Example 28).

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[40] The English-speaking equivalent is using the spelling of a homonymous (or similar) sound to replace the spelling of a chosen word, e.g. "licherally" instead of "literally", "bee where" instead of "beware", or "creacher" instead of "creature". The same principle enables pun creation; puns are very popular in the English language (see next chapter).

| cMin "k" | cMin "ď" |

Example 28

Online acronyms used in both spoken and written speech include "lol" (laughing out loud), "lmao" (laughing my ass off) and "lmfao" (laughing my fucking ass off). The acronym "wtf" (what the fuck) is used in its written form only, as are, understandably, various emoticons.

A vital part of online culture is the development and usage of specific stylistic properties. The static nature of the written word forces those who interact with others online on a regular basis to adopt these and other properties, which are in a continuous process of development, to allow for disambiguation of communication. E.g. sarcasm is considerably more difficult to recognise in writing, but the establishment of specific punctuation etc. associated with a specific tone has made it easier. Those who frequent English-speaking social media – such as the microblogging website Tumblr or the more popular Twitter, where many of these trends originate – are well versed in the stylistics that allow the portrayal of emotion in online text. Non-native English speakers then bring those trends into their own languages and spread them further. The idea of the tone behind each style is easy to recognise to someone who has been exposed to them before. The game uses these styles to play with dialogue tone as much as visual cues, both in spoken and written dialogue. The choice to follow these conventions established in online communication, despite them being seemingly out of place to an untrained eye (more so in the Czech language), is justified by the game's reliance on these elements to communicate its humour effectively.

The first of the employed elements to be mentioned is a question presented with a full stop instead of a question mark. This represents an utterance delivered in a flat tone of voice (Example 29). A comma taking the place of a full stop creates an open sentence and adds a playful tone.

| Diya "What're you doing." | Diya "O co se snažíš." |

Example 29

| Akarsha "Bonjour," | Akarsha "Bonjour," |

Example 30

The capitalisation of certain words (sometimes repeated) or parts of words serves for emphasis, and depending on context, a humorous effect as well. The capitalisation of all words mimics shouting, whether in anger or excitement (Example 31). Those are not the only effects achieved by capitalisation, however. Capitalisation of a portion of a word, rather than the whole, or a sentence that begins in lower case and breaks into all upper case in its progression, can serve to indicate that the author is laughing. The effect can be amplified by repeating a letter as well. Combined, a person can easily use these elements to express that they are at the verge of laugh induced tears, frustrated, annoyed, etc (Example 32). Mirth is also often expressed by a so-called "keysmash" – created by running one's hands across the keyboard, typically the middle letter line ("asdfghjkl") or simply with abandon (Example 33).

| DiyaT "I am NOT saying that." | DiyaT "ODMÍTÁM to vyslovit." |

Example 31

| cAkarsha3 "sssSHUT UP IM LOSING IT" | cAkarsha3 "sssSKLAPNI BUDU BREČET" |

Example 32

| cDiya "ffFDSKJJKSDFDdSSDS" | cDiya "ffFDSKJJKSDFDdSSDS" |

Example 33

Ellipsis can be used to express different emotion as well. Depending on context, it can show the speaker as annoyed or passive aggressive. It can also represent confusion, as is the case in Example 34. The ellipsis is doubled to achieve a similar effect to that of the filler word "like" in English.

| Chryssa "Yeah! It was, like, just floating at me..." | Chryssa "Jo! Jenom na mě tak nějak... plul..." |

Example 34

The use of cursive for emphasis in Czech text is discouraged; Pošta (2012, 40) notes that cursive may be outright forbidden by clients. While *Butterfly Soup*, given its very online-like way of text presentation, can afford to retain some of its

cursive, some of it has been solved through the use of available alternatives instead, on a case by case basis. The Czech sentence structure with the rheme placed at the end of a sentence can sufficiently support itself to deliver emphasis;[41] cursive may be simply removed, such as in Example 35. In other cases, attention is called to a given portion of the text with a text animation pause tag (Example 36). Additionally, some cursive is replaced by quotation marks (Example 37).

Diya "Asian failed. C'mon, I'm not {i}that{/i} dumb."	Diya "Po asijsku. No tak, až tak blbá nejsem."

Example 35

Akarsha "If school is cancelled...If school is cancelled {i}right now{/i}..."	Akarsha "Kdyby zrušili školu... Kdyby ji zrušili {w=0.26}zrovna teď..."

Example 36

Akarsha "The {i}swinging place?{/i} Really, man?"	Akarsha "Kde se „mává"? Vážně, kámo?"

Example 37

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[41] "As a rule, the Czech language uses lexical emphatic elements [in these cases]." Knittlová et al. (2010)

Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the medium of the visual novel and the issues which present themselves in its translation and localisation. The thesis defines its three main aims as the introduction of the Japanese and Western visual novel, the comparison of the two, and the introduction of the Western visual novel *Butterfly Soup* and its translation with a particular interest in the rich Culture-bound References found throughout the title. The thesis allows the reader to familiarise themselves with the visual novel and the problematics pertaining to the medium as a video game and as an object of translation studies. The thesis thus positions itself in favour of the categorisation of the visual novel as a video game and offers the medium as a fruitful source for the consideration of modern translation studies concerned with culture-bound and transcultural references found in international online spaces. The following paragraphs further detail the fulfilment of the thesis' aims and briefly recount gathered information.

The first aim of the thesis is achieved in chapter 1, where the thesis presents a brief introduction of the visual novel, described to be a roleplaying experience primarily based on (narrative and dialogue) text that is supported by visuals such as backgrounds and character sprites. As proved in chapter 1.3, the complexity of the gameplay mechanics varies from title to title; one can be entirely text based with no more effort involved than the click of a mouse to proceed to the next frame, and another can contain mechanics found in more action-based genres. Chapter 1 also helps illustrate the point that Japanese and Western visual novels share many similarities and differ in perhaps as many aspects. Notable similarities are of visual nature, which the thesis documents with various visual aid – the typical layout with the dialogue box located in the bottom third to half of the picture is common in visual novels of both origins; the anime art style associated with the Japanese visual novel is present in a portion of Western visual novels along with comic-like art styles; a number of Western visual novels even set their stories in Japan. Where differences are concerned, chapter 1.2 finds that the Western visual novel is more likely to be the product of an individual or a small group of indie creators, while the Japanese visual novel is published by a wide variety of entertainment companies

involved in the video game business, including large, internationally known publishers.

The accomplishment of the second aim culminates in chapter 2 with the description of issues pertaining to localisation and translation. Localisation introduces numerous factors of comparison; starting with the willingness of the developer for their product to be introduced to an extended audience in the first place, which is famously lacking in Japanese developers (as per interviews with American publishers of Japanese visual novels). As stated in chapter 2.2, the lack of professional localisation has given way to fan activity, whether in sharing fan subtitles for Japanese titles, or the use of programs such as Visual Novel Reader, which offers machine translation. For Western creators, fan activity often presents a positive gain and shows fan translation to be a popular way of interaction between fans, media, and authors, along with a way of spreading media further. Another factor of comparison is the technical readiness of a visual novel's engine for localisation. Chapter 2 finds that the term localisation applies to the visual novel on account of Esselink's (2000) definition of localisation as language transfer work carried out on or within a software. The work on the title introduced in this thesis, *Butterfly Soup*, falls under the third level of video game localisation – partial localisation – according to Chandler (2005), which consists of game text translation and voiceover subtitling. As only game text translation is relevant to *Butterfly Soup*, which was created in Ren'Py, the term translation is used in reference to the processes of language transfer carried within the game to bring it to a Czech speaking audience.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the third aim of this thesis. The thesis presents the 2017 Western visual novel *Butterfly Soup* by Brianna Lei along with the Czech translation provided by the author of this thesis, which was created simultaneously with the thesis, reaching the final stage and publication two months before the culmination of the thesis. *Butterfly Soup* represents a typical contemporary title in its use of modern online trends in both content and language. Analysis of the source and target texts provides an overview of the language stylisation used in the original and the strategies employed in its transfer into the Czech translation. More importantly, focus is turned to the vast Culture-bound References (CRs) present in *Butterfly Soup*. They are ordered into three overlapping categories: one, American culture CRs, which include the names of various establishments, commercials,

slogans, audiovisual media, sayings, etc. Two, fan culture CRs: English and Japanese terms related to fan subcultures, mentions of fictional characters, shows, fan activities; typically related to anime. Three, online culture CRs: online language stylisation, online activities and subcultures, and more. The second and third category in particular overlap in their coverage, as much of fan culture exists online.

The translation employs Pedersen's (2005) model of strategies for the translation of CRs, where the strategies are ordered on a scale from the most SL oriented to the most TL oriented. Among these, retention and transcultural substitution play a most significant role; however, retention is not used solely as a strategy of orientation to the SL, but rather as a tool of internationalisation, much like transcultural substitution. Pedersen's (2005, 4) assertion that retention "offers no guidance whatever to the TT audience" does not apply in these cases, where an American establishment (e.g. McDonald's) is known internationally and is as familiar to the American player as it is to the Czech one. Further, the stylisation of language used to characterise the individual characters of the game in their written speech is key for the demonstration of international online (fan) culture; the perused stylisation trends especially highlight the necessity of the translator's (as well as the reader's) profound familiarity with the cultural phenomena involved in the source text, as to the eye of the bystander they are easy to misinterpret. A further study of the humour of *Butterfly Soup* as enacted through CRs and language specific qualities is needed.

Resumé

Tato práce se zabývá tématem vizuálního románu a jeho překladu. Za cíle si klade představit vizuální román a jeho znaky, porovnat japonské tituly se západními a uvést západní titul *Butterfly Soup* od Brianny Lei se zaměřením na kulturně specifické prvky, které se v díle vyskytují v hojném počtu, a jejich překlad. *Butterfly Soup* do češtiny přeložila autorka této práce a poskytla jej k oficiálnímu zveřejnění na Leiných stránkách.

První kapitola popisuje vizuální román a jeho počátky, které se datují v 80. letech minulého století v Japonsku, odkud se médium rozšířilo na západ a kde se úspěšně přizpůsobilo novému prostředí. Cavallaro (2010, 8) vizuální román popisuje jako interaktivní, videoherní médium, které se zaměřuje na příběh a které je tvořeno kombinací textu a doplňujících ilustrací. Hlavním nosičem příběhu je text, který je často ve formě dialogů a narace. Vizuální vrstva k textu dotváří pozadí a postavy. Mnoho západních vizuálních románů se inspiruje anime stylem, který je příznakový pro japonské tituly, vypůjčuje si nejrůznější kulturní prvky, a dokonce své příběhy umisťuje do Japonska. Podstatný rozdíl mezi japonským a vizuálním románem spočívá v tom, že japonské tituly lze očekávat i od proslulých společností, kdežto západní vizuální romány jsou především prací jednotlivců a malých skupin. S tím souvisí také technická obtížnost lokalizace daného titulu, která je přiblížena ve druhé kapitole. Japonské tituly často s lokalizací buď nepočítají, nebo ji aktivně odmítají. To znamená, že tituly často nepodporují latinskou abecedu, a musí být kvůli lokalizaci přepracovány. Lze se setkat s problémy, které se vyskytují při lokalizaci videoher, jako potřeba přeložit atmosféru („pocit") a zážitek, spíše než text (Mangiron a O'Hagan, 2006, O'Hagan, 2007, Di Marco, 2007, Mangiron, 2012), stejně jako problémy známé z titulkování, zejména prostorové omezení (Pošta, 2012, Díaz Cintas a Remael, 2014). Pro tvorbu západních vizuálních románů je populární volbou program Ren'Py Visual Novel Engine, který je zdarma a umožňuje lokalizaci na třetí a čtvrté úrovni dle Chandler (2005), tedy částečnou a úplnou lokalizaci, bez potřeby předchozích úprav. Termín „lokalizace" lze na vizuální román aplikovat dle Esselinka (2000, 1), který jím popisuje „překlad a adaptaci softwaru nebo webového produktu, včetně samotné softwarové aplikace a

veškeré dokumentace". Částečná lokalizace videoher dle Chandler (2005) spočívá v překladu textu a titulkování voiceoveru. S ohledem na to, že zhotovení české verze *Butterfly Soup*, stejně jako typické zhotovení cizojazyčných verzí her vytvořených v Ren'Py, spočívá v překladu textových řetězců, tato práce k vyjádření této činnosti používá termín „překlad".

Třetí kapitola se zabývá západním vizuálním románem *Butterfly Soup*, který v roce 2017 zveřejnila asijsko-americká autorka Brianna Lei. Příběh je zasazen do kalifornské, asijsko-americké čtvrti v roce 2008 a vypráví o životě čtyř středoškolaček. Tato romantická komedie má čtyři kapitoly, které jsou věnovány perspektivě každé z dívek: nesmělé a sportovně nadané Indce Diye, perfekcionistické Číňance Noelle, komediantské Indce Akarshe a agresivní Korejce Min. Jádrem příběhu je neobvyklé přátelství těchto čtyř odlišných povah a začínající románek mezi Diyou a Min. *Butterfly Soup* obsahuje početné kulturně specifické prvky, které jsou představeny formou překladatelského komentáře, a dokazuje, že kulturní rozdíly nejsou problémem jen mezi západem a východem. Národ, oblast a jiné osobní a neosobní faktory dodávají danému titulu kulturní specifika a vytváří prostředí, které je hráči s jiným zázemím cizí. Relevance sociokulturního kontextu se tak stává klíčovým faktorem při výběru exotizující či domestikující strategie, a může upřednostňovat hráče, kteří se shodují s velmi specifickým seznamem vědomostí. Překlad *Butterfly Soup* své presupozice přejímá od anglického originálu a předpokládá, že hráč je seznámen s fanouškovskou kulturou (např. anime) a podrobně se vyzná v internetových trendech.

Komentované prvky jsou seřazeny do tří kategorií: americké, které odkazují na reálie původem americké, fanouškovské, které odkazují na termíny, koncepty, tituly atp. známé ve fanouškovských kruzích, a online, které odkazují na prvky známé na různých sociálních sítí a internetu všeobecně, zejména na stylistiku psaného projevu. Příklady těchto prvků jsou v komentáři klasifikovány dle Pedersonova (2005) modelu strategií převodu kulturně specifických prvků. Samotné strategie se pohybují na škále od nejvíce exotizujících po nejvíce domestikující (Venuti, 2008). Nejvíce se uplatňují strategie zachování (*retention*) a transkulturní substituce (*transcultural substitution*). Model představuje zachování jako nejvíce exotizující strategii, avšak překladatelský komentář toto zařazení vyvrací. S ohledem na identické nároky na hráče, kteří hru sice hrají anglicky, ale nejsou amerického původu, a na české hráče, překlad se nesnažil vizuální román

domestikovat, nýbrž přiblížit cizí prvky jejich substitucí za prvky transkulturní, které odpovídají předpokládaným znalostem dle výše zmíněného profilu. Cizí prvky, které jsou hráči známé i bez úpravy, byly zachovány (např. McDonald). Zachování se tak ocitá na stejné úrovni jako transkulturní substituce. Tato práce předpokládá, že podobná strategie internacionalizace bude s dalším vývojem mezinárodních internetových trendů o to častější.

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Annex

List of Figures

Annex Figure 1: An image from *Long Live The Queen.*

The game was released in 2012 by a British developer. The main character is a young girl trying to juggle the sudden responsibilities of being a queen. The visual novel showcases an anime inspired style.


Annex Figure 2: An introduction scene from *Monster Prom.*

Monster Prom is a parody dating sim set at a monster high school. The player has three weeks to gain the affections of their chosen monster to be able to go to prom with them. The game includes a multiplayer where the players race one another into the monsters' good graces.

Annex Figure 3: A scene from *Higurashi: When They Cry*.

The game uses typical anime visuals. As a typical sound novel, the game places its text over the picture rather than into a dialogue box.
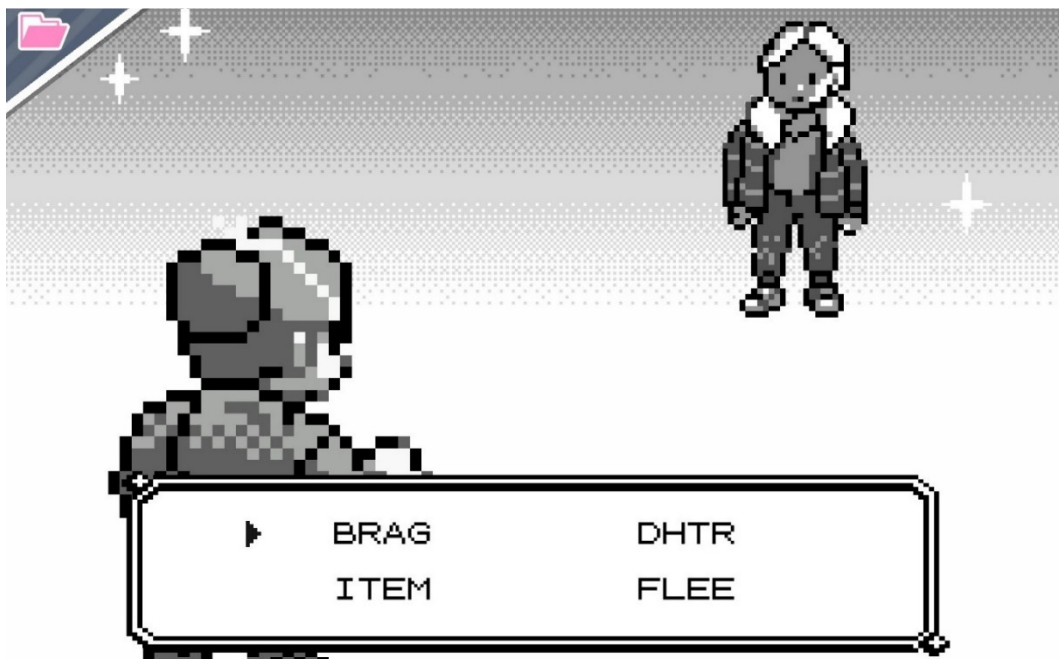
Annex Figure 4: A *Pokémon* battle minigame in *Dream Daddy: A Dad Dating Simulator*.

Annex Figure 5: The action mechanics in *Pyre*.

Pyre is a story about a group of exiles looking to win ancient competitive trials that will allow their return to society. The pictured action sequence is often likened to a game of basketball.

DON'T PANIC, BUT WE'RE MAYBE ALL GONNA DIE SOON.

Annex Figure 6: A scene from *Night in the Woods*.

Like other text-based games, *Night in the Woods* requires player input to proceed to the next frame. Set in a universe of anthropomorphic animals, the player takes the role a college drop-out navigating the return to her hometown.

Annex Figure 7: *Life is Strange* dialogue wheel.

The main character (left) and her best friend (right, off-screen) are talking to a side character.

Annex Figure 8: *Love is Strange* dialogue.

The main character (left) is talking to her best friend and current love interest (right).

Annotation

Author:	Ema Bícová
Department:	Department of English and American Studies, FF UP
Title:	Visual Novel and Its Translation
Supervisor:	Mgr. Josefína Zubáková, Ph.D.
Number of Pages:	82
Number of Characters:	107 091
Number of Titles (References):	63
Number of Attachments:	1
Key words:	visual novel, visual novel translation, video game localisation, cultural transfer, Japanese media, Western media
Language:	English

Abstract: This thesis aims to introduce the medium of the visual novel, its characteristics as a Japanese medium gaining ground in the West, and the challenges that await in its translation and localisation. The main focus of the thesis is the Western visual novel *Butterfly Soup* and the introduction of its Czech translation with a focus on culture-bound references.

Anotace

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Název bakalářské práce:	Vizuální román a jeho překlad
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Josefína Zubáková, Ph.D.
Počet stran:	82
Počet znaků:	107 091
Počet citovaných zdrojů:	63
Počet příloh:	1
Klíčová slova:	Vizuální román, překlad vizuálního románu, lokalizace videoher, kulturně specifické prvky, japonská média, západní média
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina

Abstrakt: Cílem této práce je představit vizuální román, japonské médium, které nabývá na popularitě v západních zemích, jeho znaky a překážky, které jsou relevantní pro jeho překlad a lokalizaci. Hlavní část práce se zabývá západním vizuálním románem *Butterfly Soup* a představuje jeho český překlad se zaměřením na převod kulturně specifických prvků.