



Localization Shenanigans in the Chinese Speaking Worlds

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@igdshare



About Me

Programmer

IGDShare (indie dev meetup in TW, 2011~)

IGDA Taiwan chapter leader (2012~)

Taipei Game Developers Forum co-organizer
(2012~)





About Me

Indie Game: The Movie Traditional Chinese translation team

Localization works: Nova-111, Tengami

Traditional Chinese translator volunteer for Global Game Jam & IndieCade





So let's start with this...



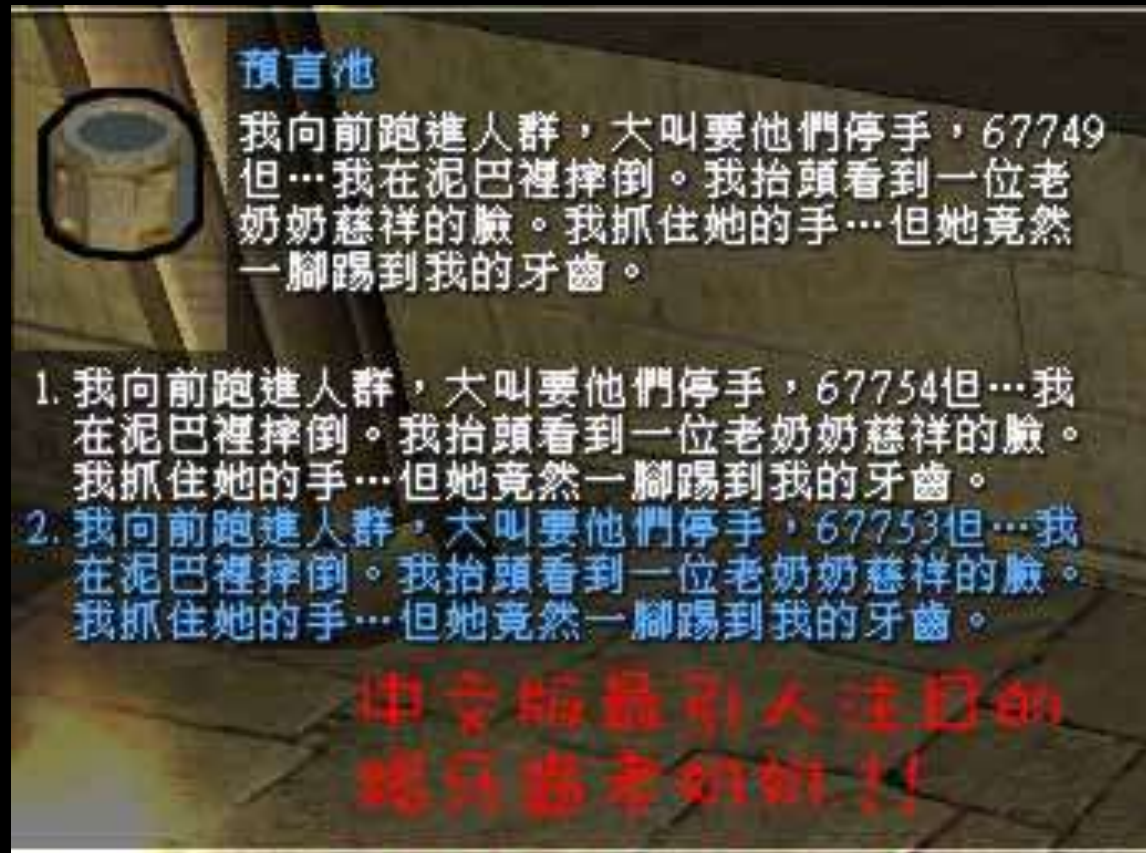


CATS : ALL YOUR BASE ARE BELONG
TO US.



Questionable Localization

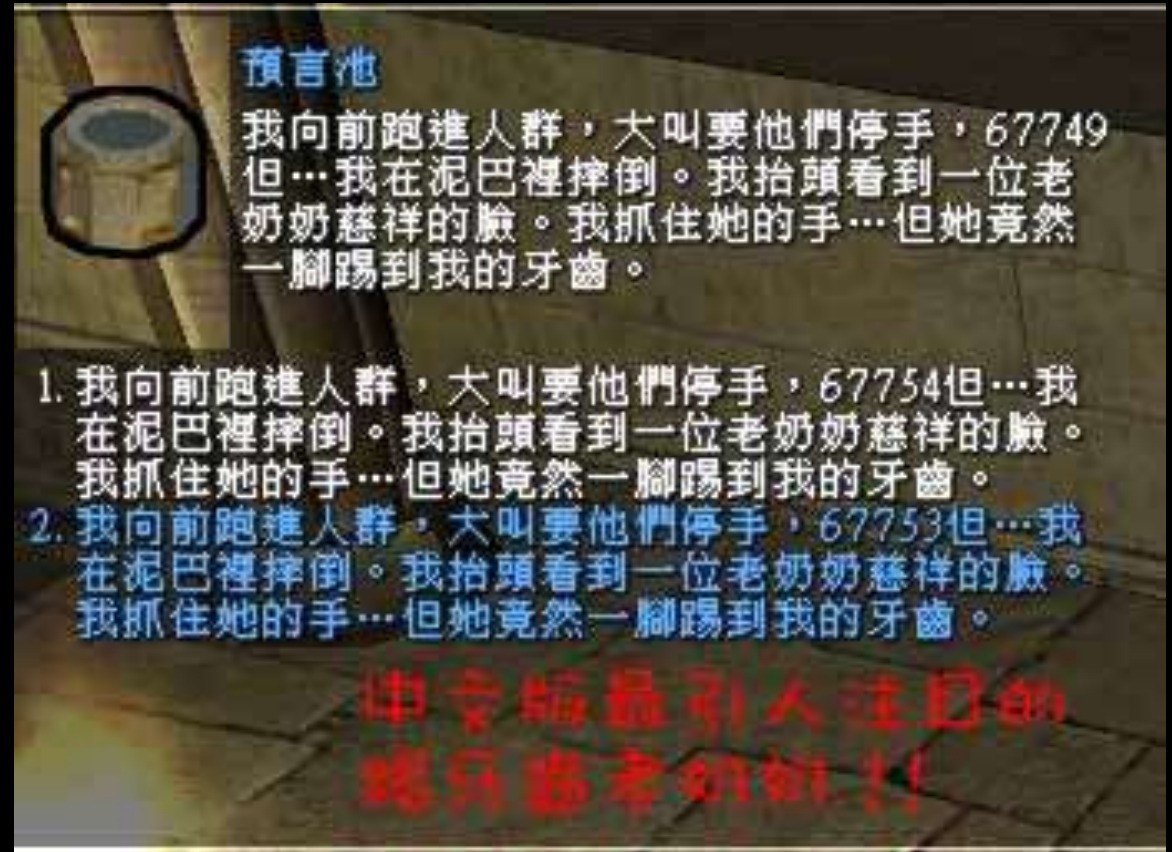
Example 1:
Neverwinter Nights





Questionable Localization

Example 1: Teeth-Kicking Old Woman





You definitely don't want
your localization end up like that





Outline

background info

examples

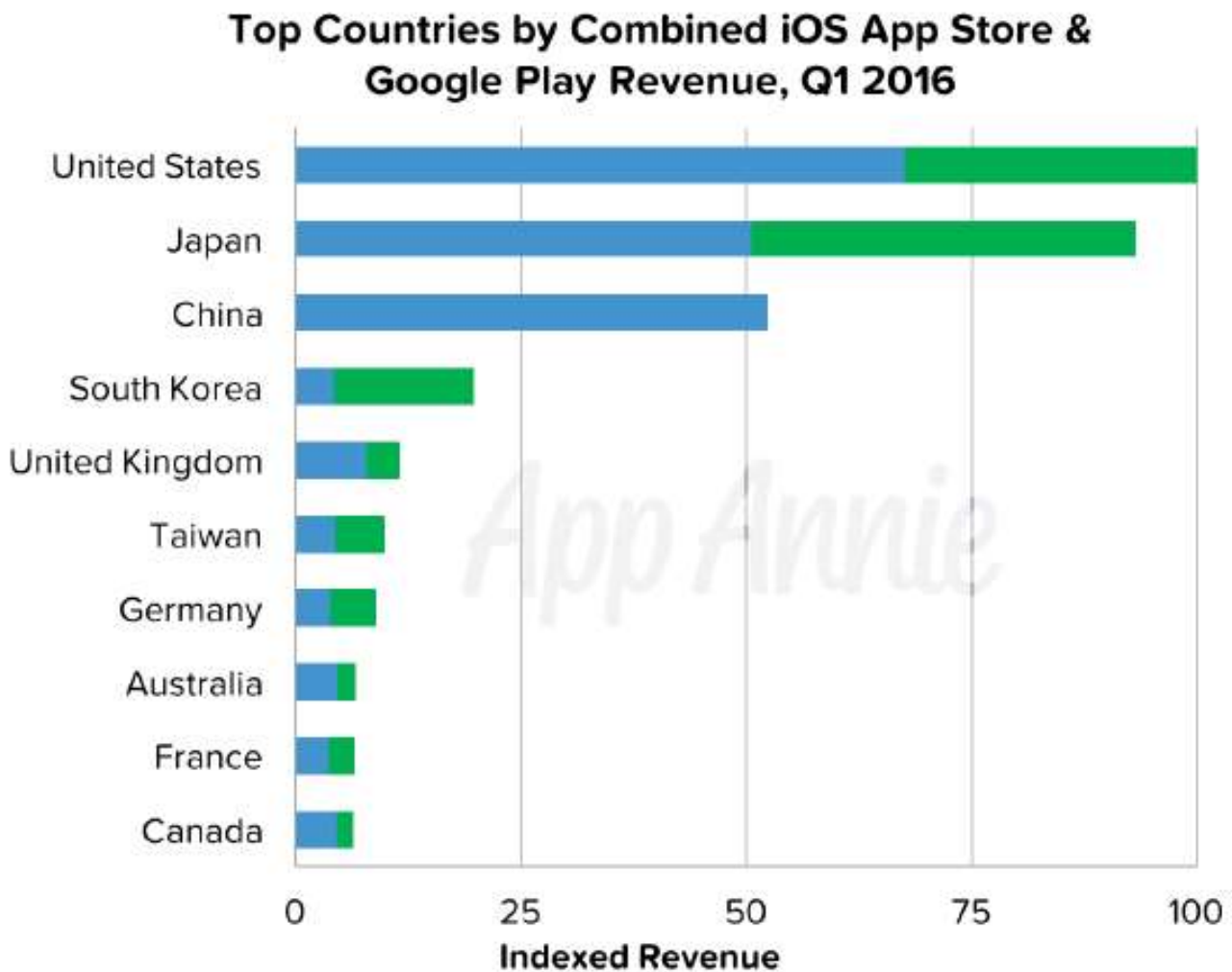
- general, simplified vs traditional, naming, encoding, UI & fonts, political

- tips & conclusions





Relevance?





Relevance?

Top 10 Countries by Worldwide
YoY Market Share Growth



iOS

Top 10 Countries by Worldwide
YoY Market Share Growth



Google Play





Relevance

China didn't show as #1 on both charts only because the difficulty in getting actual Google Play numbers

Taiwan is small in landmass but:

- 1) Its market share is not
- 2) Soft-launching opportunities





But Chinese 10n is Hard





But Chinese 10n is Hard



Simplified vs Traditional





zh
zh-Hans
zh-CN
zh-SG
zh-Hant
zh-HK
zh-MO
zh-TW

NLS_Info_Win7

ANSI codepage	OEM codepage	Language	Country or Region name abbreviation *	Language name abbreviation **	LCID	Culture Name	Locale	Local language name
936	936	Chinese (Simplified)	CHN	CHS	0x7804	zh	Chinese	中文
936	936	Chinese (Simplified)	CHN	CHS	0x0004	zh-Hans	Chinese (Simplified)	中文 (简体)
936	936	Chinese (Simplified)	CHN	CHS	0x0804	zh-CN	Chinese (Simplified, PRC)	中文 (中华人民共和国)
936	936	Chinese (Simplified)	SGP	ZHI	0x1004	zh-SG	Chinese (Simplified, Singapore)	中文 (新加坡)
950	950	Chinese (Traditional)	HKG	ZHH	0x7C04	zh-Hant	Chinese (Traditional)	中文 (繁體)
950	950	Chinese (Traditional)	HKG	ZHH	0x0C04	zh-HK	Chinese (Traditional, Hong Kong S.A.R.)	中文 (香港特別行政區)
950	950	Chinese (Traditional)	MCO	ZHM	0x1404	zh-MO	Chinese (Traditional, Macao S.A.R.)	中文 (澳門特別行政區)
950	950	Chinese (Traditional)	TWN	CHT	0x0404	zh-TW	Chinese (Traditional, Taiwan)	中文 (台灣)





So Why Bother

(...If you choose to ignore the market potential)





So Why Bother

(....If you choose to ignore the market potential)

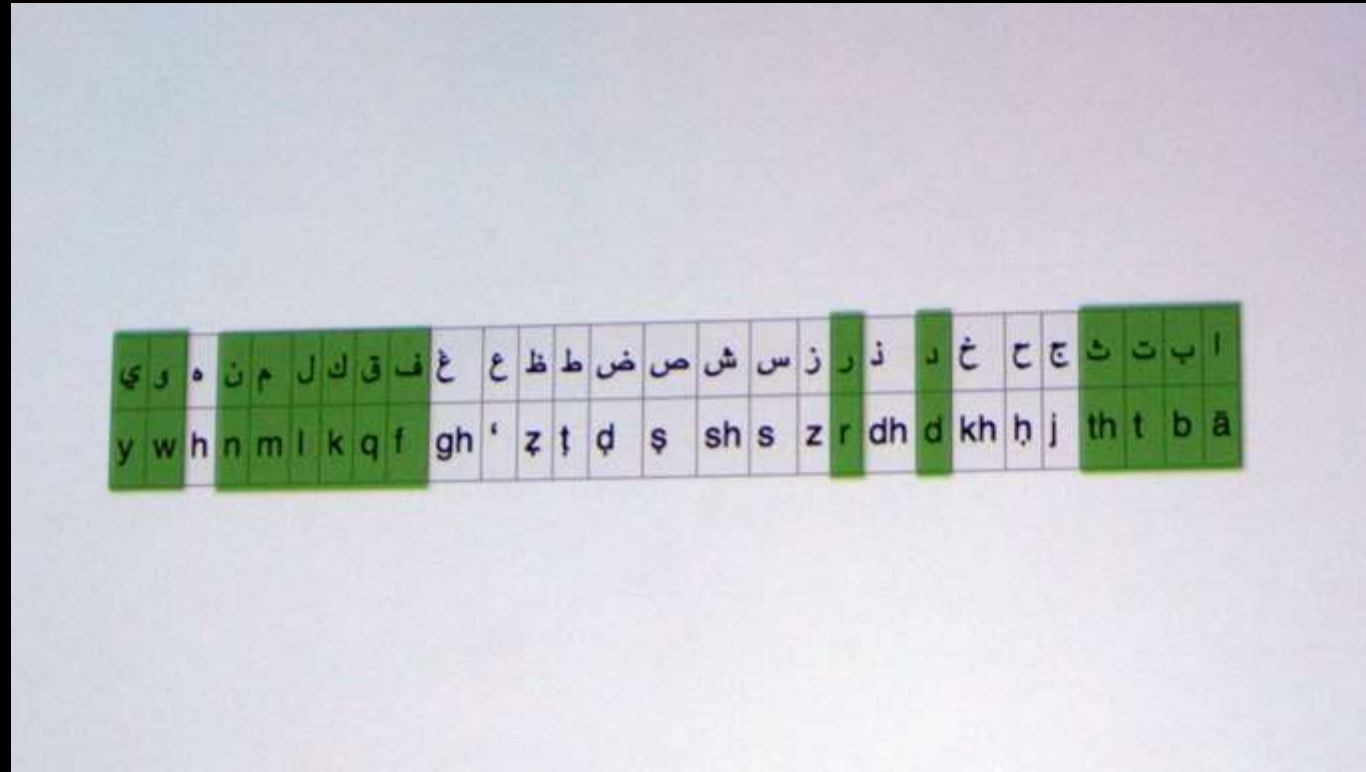
Perfectly understandable not to do it sometimes

But it's hard to see some of my favorite games
(esp. indie games) struggle in this regard





Also inspired by Rami's Arabic crash course @GDC



GDC15 - We Suck at Inclusivity: How Language Creates the Largest Invisible Minority for Games





Let's look at examples



THE WITNESS

下載遊戲

設定

控制項

開始新遊戲

結束



The Witness

Example 1

LOAD A GAME



下載遊戲





The Witness

Example 1

LOAD A GAME



下載遊戲



[下載] [遊戲]



[Download] (a) [Game]





The Witness

Example 1

LOAD A GAME



下載遊戲



[下載] [遊戲]



[Download] (a) [Game]





The Witness

Example 2: The Diamond Sutra Ending





The Witness

Example 2: The Diamond Sutra Ending





The Witness

Example 2: The Diamond Sutra Ending

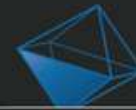




The Witness

Example 2: The Diamond Sutra Ending





The Witness

Example 2: The Diamond Sutra Ending





The Witness

Example 2: The Diamond Sutra Ending



與夢想。





The Witness

Example 2: The Diamond Sutra Ending

(So you should view this fleeting world –)

A star at dawn,

a bubble in a stream,

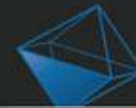
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,

A flickering lamp,

a phantom,

and a dream.





The Witness

Example 2: The Diamond Sutra Ending

(So you should view this fleeting world –)

黎明中的一顆星

溪流中的泡沫

夏日雲層裡的一道閃電

閃爍的燈火

幻想

與夢想。

A star at dawn,

a bubble in a stream,

A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,

A flickering lamp,

a phantom,

and a dream.





The Witness

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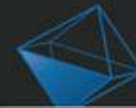
A flickering lamp (← this does not correspond to any words in Chinese ver.)

a phantom,

and a dream.

一切有為法
如夢幻泡影
如露亦如電
應作如是觀





The Witness

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a phantom,

and a dream.

如晨星，

如泡影；

如電，

亦殘燈；

如幻，

亦如夢。



The Witness

Above we showed:

Very trivial mistakes





The Witness

Above we showed:

Very trivial mistakes

Too-literal & secondhand translations





The Witness

Above we showed:

Very trivial mistake

Too-literal & secondhand translations

Important content of the game based on a translated material





Simplified vs Traditional Chinese





Simplified vs Traditional Chinese

(Why not just use a converter?)





Simp. vs Trad.

Example 1

English

Trad. Chinese

Simp. Chinese

Game

遊戲

游戏

戲 <-> 戏 (drama) is one-to-one mapping





Simp. vs Trad.

Example 1

English	Trad. Chinese	Simp. Chinese
Game	遊戲	游戏

戲 <-> 戏 (drama) is one-to-one mapping

- But -

In Trad., both 「遊」 (play) and 「游」 (swim) has different meanings and both used





Simp. vs Trad. Example 2

干

乾

幹





Simp. vs Trad. Example 2

English
Interfere

Trad. Chinese
干涉

Simp. Chinese
干涉





Simp. vs Trad. Example 2

English
Interfere

Trad. Chinese
干

Simp. Chinese
干

Dry / Dried

乾

干





Simp. vs Trad. Example 2

English
Interfere

Trad. Chinese
干

Simp. Chinese
干

Dry / Dried
Dried-Fish

乾
魚-乾

干
鱼-干





Simp. vs Trad. Example 2

English
Interfere

Trad. Chinese
干

Simp. Chinese
干

Dry / Dried
Dried-Fish
Step-Sister

乾
魚-乾
乾-妹妹

干
鱼-干
干-妹妹





Simp. vs Trad. Example 2

English
Interfere

Trad. Chinese
干

Simp. Chinese
干

Dry / Dried
Dried-Fish
Step-Sister

乾
魚-乾
乾-妹妹

干
鱼-干
干-妹妹

Do
Fuck
Stem

幹
幹
幹

干
干
干





TONIGHT
WEEK TONIGHT
TONIGHT LA
LAST WEEK TONIGHT
TONIGHT





Simp. vs Trad.

The writing of some words are easier (hence "Simplified")

meaning changed or clamped/funneled

It's not a one-to-one, not even a many-to-one mapping function, rather many-to-many

Daily usage, idiom, phrase, slang differences





Naming Issues





Naming

Example 1

The game **Braid** doesn't have any officially translated name

In Taiwan we just call it as is "Braid"

In China they called it 时空幻境, but it's unofficial





Naming

Example 1

The game **Braid** doesn't have any officially translated name

In Taiwan we just call it as is "Braid"

In China they called it 时空幻境, but it's unofficial

However that's
In Taiwan.



Naming

Example 2

The Pokémon Company unified the title/name "Pokémon" in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong in 2016.





Naming

Example 2: Pokémon translation unified

Pokémon
Pikachu

Taiwan
神奇寶貝
皮卡丘

Hong Kong
寵物小精靈
比卡超





Naming

Example 2: Pokémon translation unified

	Taiwan	Hong Kong
Pokémon	神奇寶貝	寵物小精靈
Pikachu	皮卡丘	比卡超

Now it's 「精靈寶可夢」 for the title ;
and 「寶可夢」 means "Pokémon"





Naming

Example 2: Pokémon translation unified

China sort of followed both, but in the end leaning towards Taiwan's naming.





Naming

Example 2: Pokémon translation unified

China sort of followed both, but in the end leaning towards Taiwan's naming.

Hong Kong mainly used Cantonese pronunciation when naming Pokémon.





Naming

Example 2: Pokémon translation unified

(Both HK / TW use Trad. Chinese as writing system!)

The Pokémon Company's decision was not well received by some HK people.





Naming

Example 2: Pokémon translation unified

(Both HK / TW use Trad. Chinese as writing system!)

The Pokémon Company's decision was not well received by some HK people.

~100 Pokémon names got changed (out of ~150) for HK.





Naming

Example 2: Pokémon translation unified

Protests against
Pokémon in Hong Kong





Naming

Example 2a: Mobile Suit GUNDAM

As an opposite example:

Japanese

ガンダム

English

GUNDAM

Hong Kong

高達

China

敢达

Taiwan

鋼彈

And Bandai has no problem with it.





Naming

Example 3: Indie Game The Movie on Netflix

If we don't find an official name, we don't translate it.





Naming

Example 3: Indie Game The Movie on Netflix

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But Netflix people substitute almost all names using Chinese Wikipedia as the source





Naming

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Discoverability on the store front





Naming

Example 3: Indie Game The Movie on Netflix

Super Meat Boy
is translated to
超級食肉男孩
in this version





Naming

Example 3: Indie Game The Movie on Netflix

超級食肉男孩





Naming

Example 3: Indie Game The Movie on Netflix

超級食肉男孩

超級 = Super

男孩 = Boy





Naming

Example 3: Indie Game The Movie on Netflix

超級食肉男孩

超級 = Super

男孩 = Boy

食肉 = "Eat Meat" = "Carnivorous" ?!?!



Naming

Example 3: Indie Game The Movie on Netflix

肉肉哥

= Meat Meat Boy
(Guy/Dude/Brother)



Super Meat Boy 是高難度的平台動作遊戲，您將在遊戲中扮演活生生的肉肉哥，設法從不但住在瓶子裡，還身穿燕尾服的邪惡胎兒博士手中，救出自己的女朋友繃帶妹。我們的肉肉哥英雄將會飛簷走壁、避開滋滋作響的電鋸、通過即將崩場的洞穴、穿越驚險萬分的針潭，竭盡全力解救被抓走的女朋友。Super Meat Boy 融入了大家熱愛的經典舊版遊戲難度，精準呈現冒險遊戲必備的動作元素，徹底考驗您的反射神經。隨著難度不斷攀升，Super Meat Boy 將帶領肉肉哥通過鬧鬼的醫院、製鹽廠，甚至還有地獄！如果您覺得 300 個以上的單人遊戲關卡還不夠過癮的話，Super Meat Boy 還提供您刺激的頭目大戰、無數可解除鎖定的秘密、異次元區，還有隱藏角色喔！



影像 (20)

概觀 (1 / 2)





Naming

Example 4:





Naming

Example 4: Thumper

Marc@Drool asked about Thumper's possible Chinese name





Naming

Example 4: Thumper

Marc@Drool asked about Thumper's possible Chinese name

Very hard to get right –
translate by pronunciation or meaning?





Naming

Example 4a:





Naming

Example 4a: Manifold Garden

William Chyr asked me about this during
2016 Taipei Game Developers Forum

His friend suggested:

無限庭園 == Infinite Garden





Naming

Sometimes its best left untranslated.





Naming

Sometimes its best left untranslated.

But since late-2016, China is enforcing a stricter "no-foreign-language" policy in their approval process.





China's Approval Process

A mobile game content regulation citing 3 mutually related language usage regulations (and a lot more)





China's Approval Process

A mobile game content regulation citing 3 mutually related language usage regulations (and a lot more)

移动游戏内容规范 (mobile game content regulation) ->

- 中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法 (language standard law)
- 出版物汉字使用管理规定 (how to use Chinese in publication)
- 关于进一步规范出版物文字使用的通知 (further addendum)

(... and more)





China's Approval Process

Example 1: Thumper

Due to this, Marc had to choose a name from limited choices for Thumper.





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Because the approval process can take from at least 1 month to 6 month. Basically no time to resubmit.





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暴走甲虫 == Rampaging Beetle





China's Approval Process

Example 2: Deemo





China's Approval Process

Example 2: Deemo





China's Approval Process

Example 2: Deemo





China's Approval Process

Example 2: Deemo





China's Approval Process

Example 2: Demo

「Hard LV8」 == 「难 等级8」

L8





China's Approval Process

Example 2: Deemo





China's Approval Process

Example 2: Deemo

Basically negotiation & back-and-forth is unavoidable.

Approval feedback can be reasonable in the end, but need time & effort, and is quite case-by-case





China's Approval Process

You can not:

Encourage crime, drug use, violence, horror, cruelty...

Jeopardize public morality, cultural traditions, social order and stability...

Encourage pornography, gambling, cult, superstition...

Encourage ethnic hatred, discrimination, sabotaging ethnic unity...

Compromise national secrets, security, honor and interests...

Jeopardize national unity, sovereignty, completeness of territory...

Oppose the communist party, socialism, Marxism, Maoism...

....

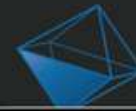
(and there are so much more "detailed but up-to-interpretation, not exhaustive" stuff)





China's Approval Process





China's Approval Process

In short, find a publisher in China.





Encoding Problems





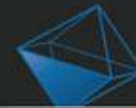
Encoding

Stick to UTF-8 at all times.

Watch out for Byte Order Mark (BOM) thingy

When helping IGTM, their process somehow used UCS-2 / UTF-16 and not UTF-8 in some steps.





Encoding

Carriage Return: 0D (CR)

Line Feed: 0A (LF)

(correct ones) -> (wrong ones)

不 -> 上 (UTF16 / UCS2: 4E0D -> 4E0A)
對 -> 尊 (UTF16 / UCS2: 5C0D -> 5C0A)
名 -> 吊 (UTF16 / UCS2: 540D -> 540A)
服 -> 肱 (UTF16 / UCS2: 670D -> 670A)
」 -> 《 (UTF16 / UCS2: 300D -> 300A)





Encoding

Always check related options in every possible editor you may touch in the dev process.

And stick to UTF-8





UI & Fonts issues





User Interface & Fonts

Example 1





User Interface & Fonts

Example 1





User Interface & Fonts

Example 1





User Interface & Fonts

Example 2: Fez

GAME SETTINGS



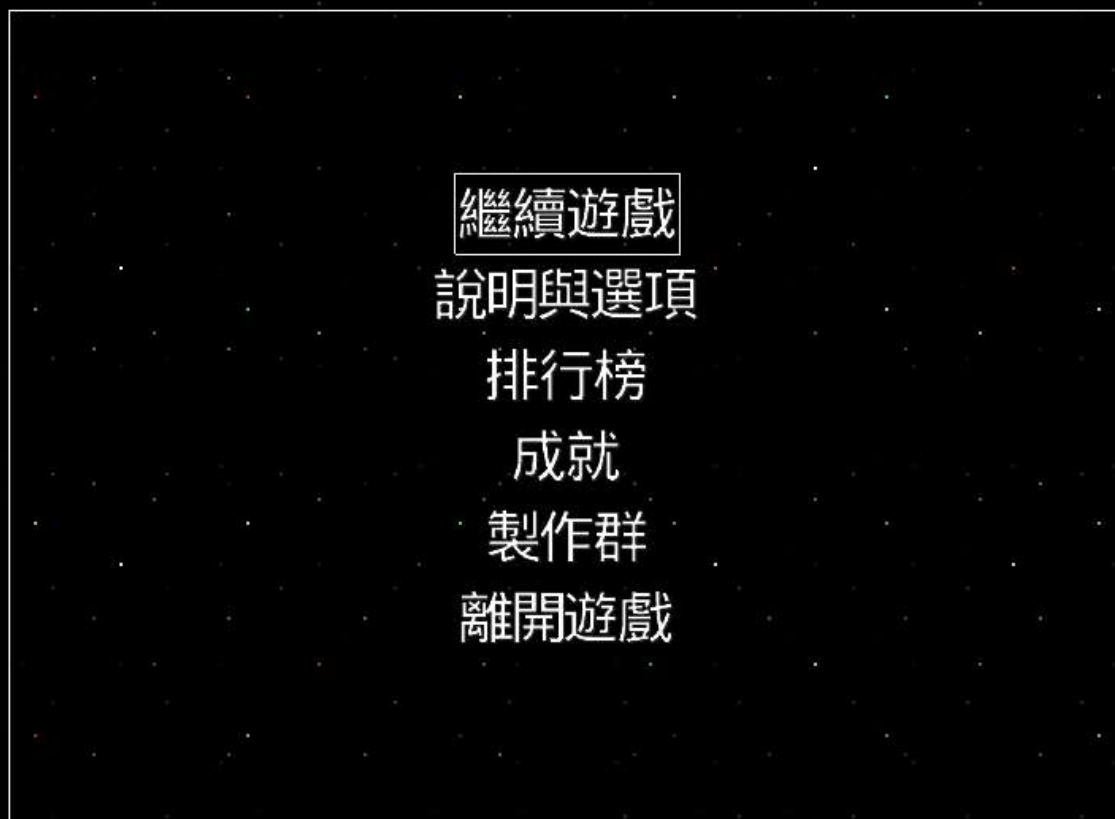
ENTER APPLY ESCAPE SAVE





User Interface & Fonts

Example 2: Fez (PC ver.)



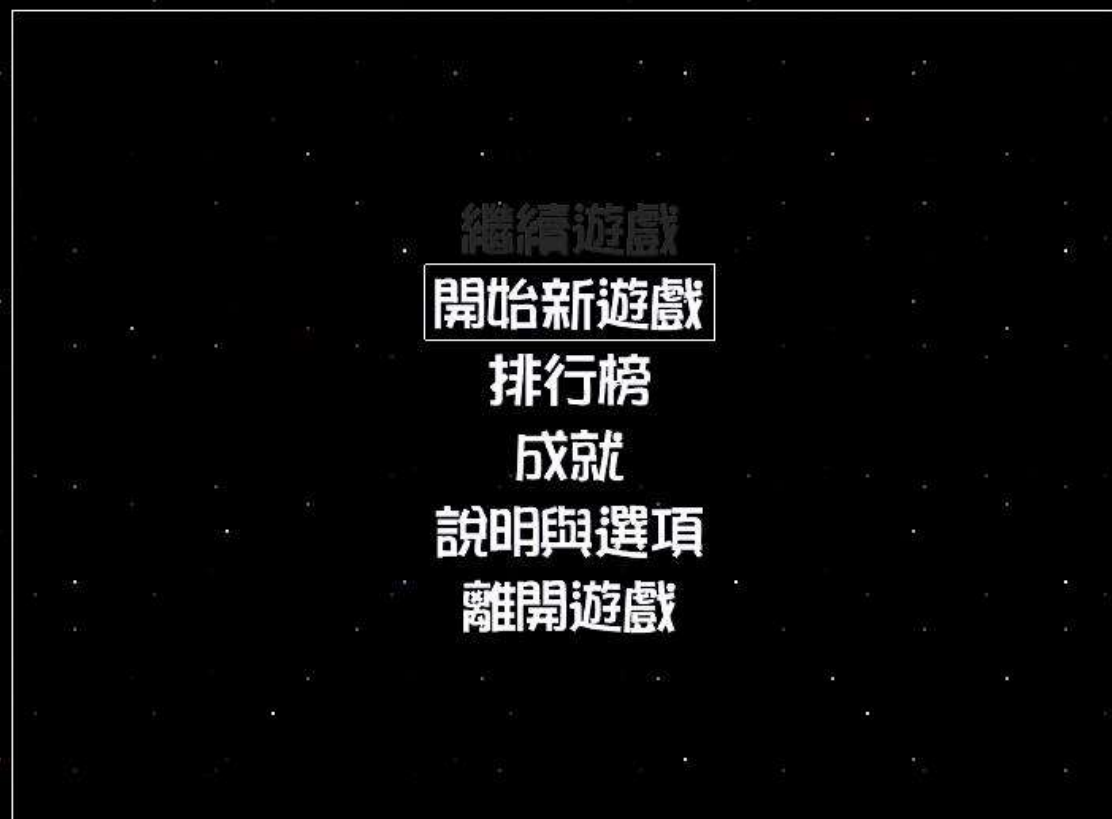
ESCAPE 返回





User Interface & Fonts

Example 2: Fez (360 ver.)



變更設定檔





User Interface & Fonts

Example 2: Fez (360 ver.)





User Interface & Fonts

General Chinese fonts concerns:

Licensing & Pricing – packaging and embedding the whole font file can be utterly expensive

Lack of choice





User Interface & Fonts

General Chinese fonts concerns:

Licensing & Pricing – packaging and embedding the whole font file can be utterly expensive

Lack of choice

Chinese fonts are just fucking hard to make





User Interface & Fonts

Cheapest way usually is relying on system fonts,
but can be hard to unify the look





User Interface & Fonts

Cheapest way usually is relying on system fonts, but can be hard to unify the look

Notable free, embeddable fonts for Chinese:

Serif – Hanazono Mincho (花園明朝)

Sans – Google Noto Sans CJK & WenQuanYi

(文泉驛 / 文泉驿)





User Interface & Fonts

遊 遊

(play)

骨 骨

(bone)





User Interface & Fonts

Taiwan Designed
遊 遊
(play)

China Designed

Taiwan Designed
骨 骨
(bone)

China Designed

Glyph designs in different Chinese-speaking regions

Further reading: **CJKV Information Processing (O'Reilly)**





Political Issues





Political

Example 1

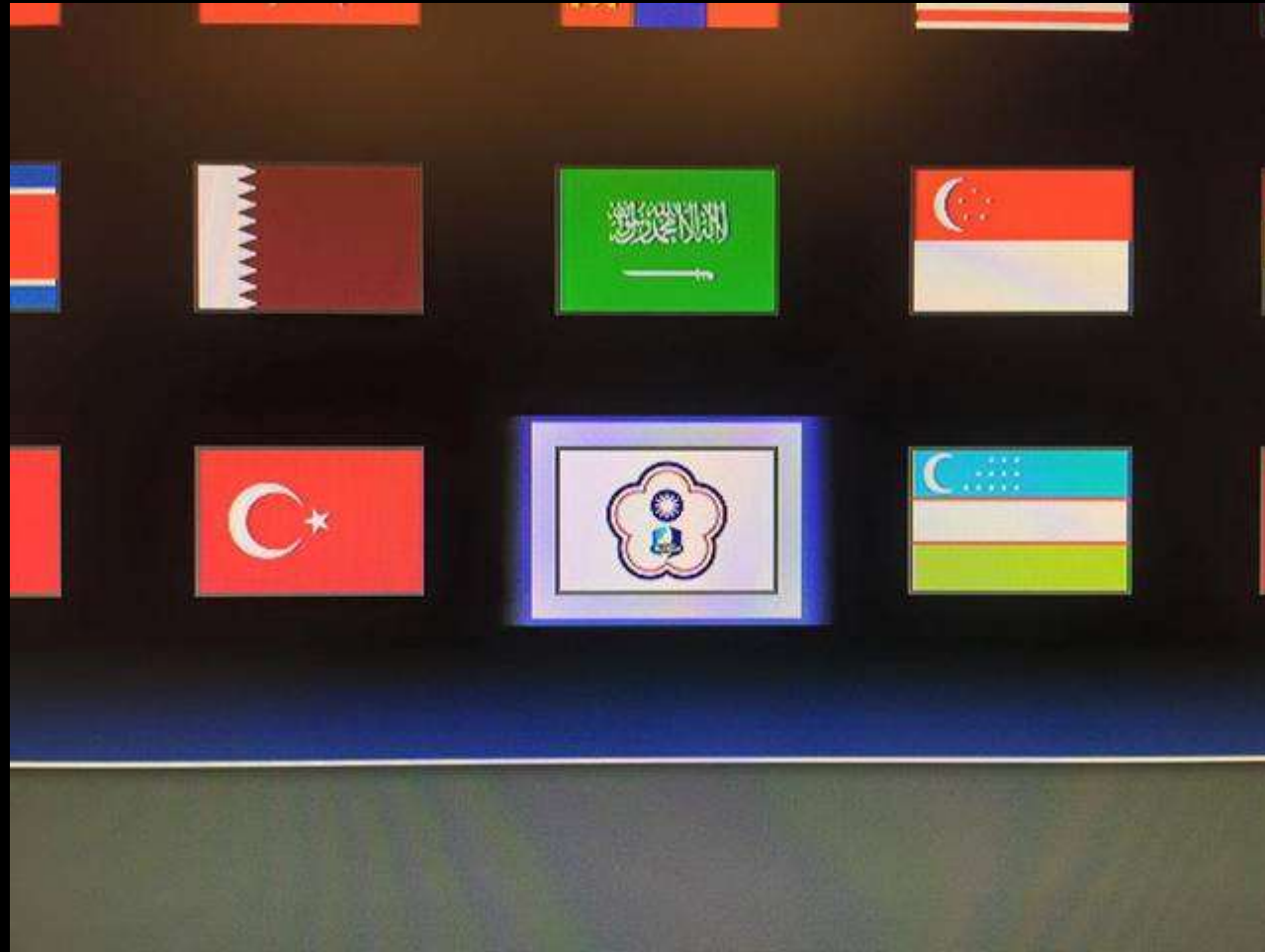




Political

Example 1

WTF ?



Political

Example 1



+



=

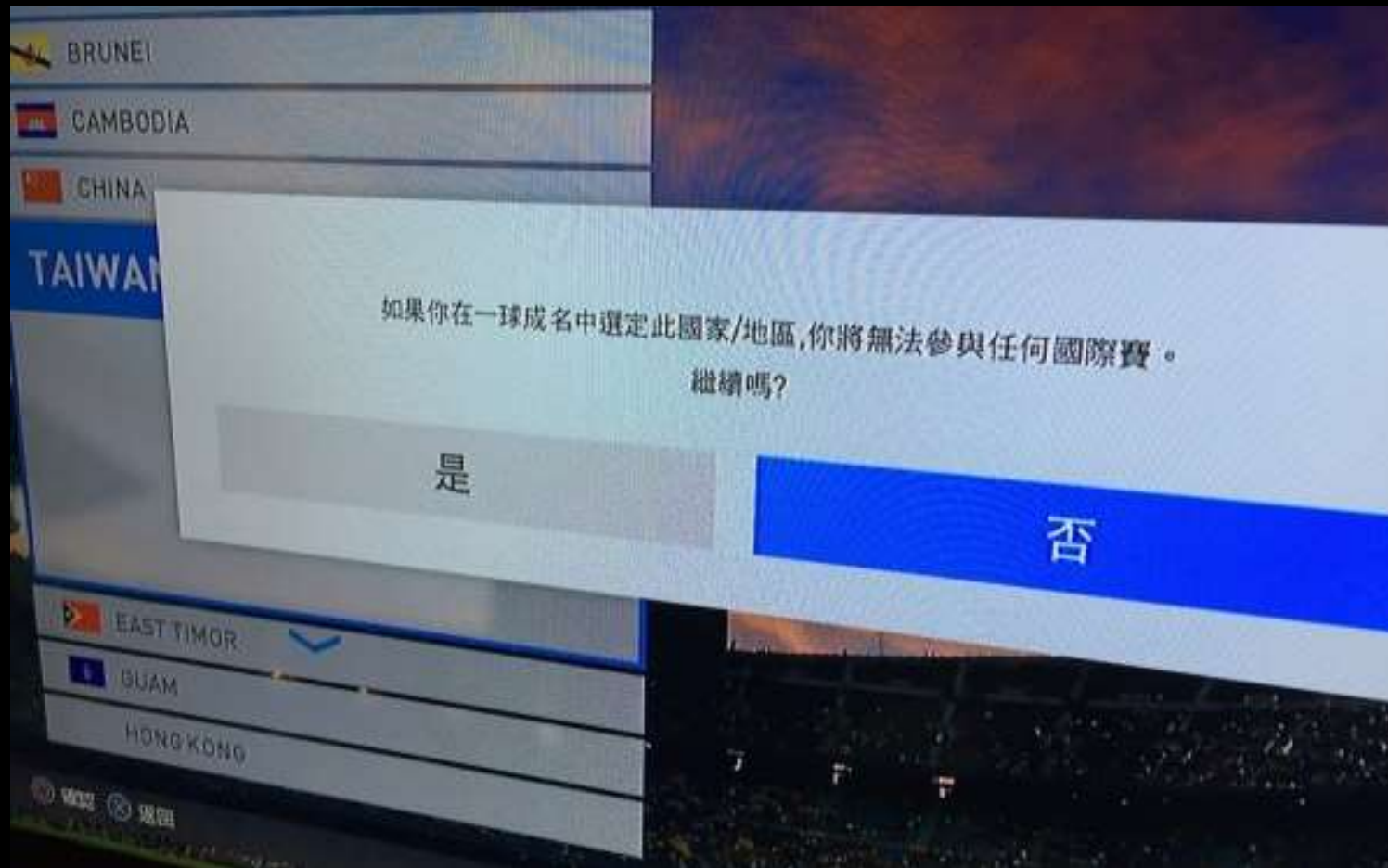


????????????



Political

Example 2: PES / Winning Eleven 17





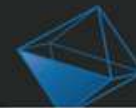
Political

Example 2: PES / Winning Eleven 17



"If you choose this country/region, you will not be able to join any international games. Continue?"





Political

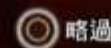
Example 3: Yakuza 6



桐生先生對台灣這個國家有什麼樣的印象呢？

=>

Kiryu-san,
what's your impression of
the country of Taiwan?





Political

Example 3: Yakuza 6



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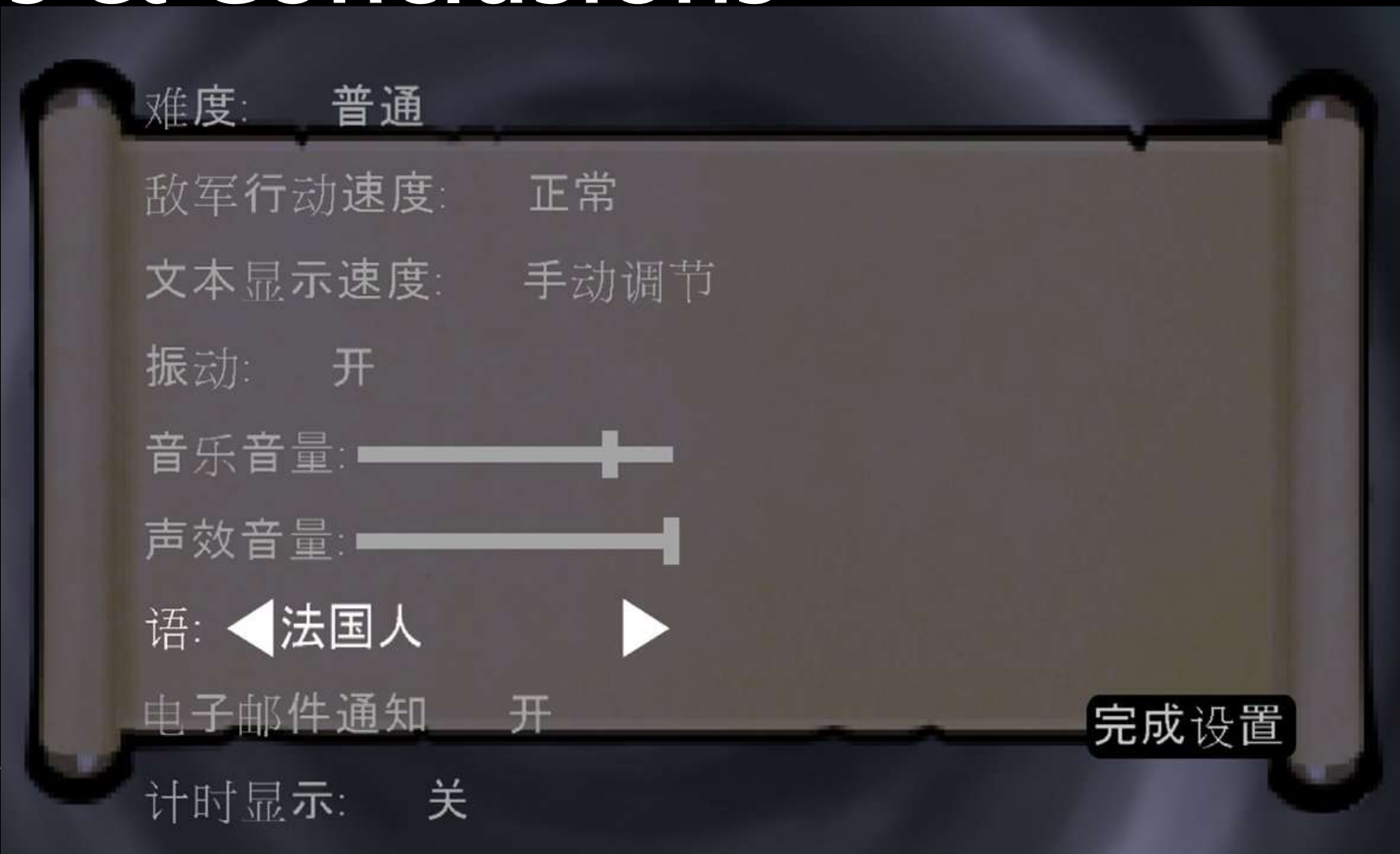


Tips & Conclusions



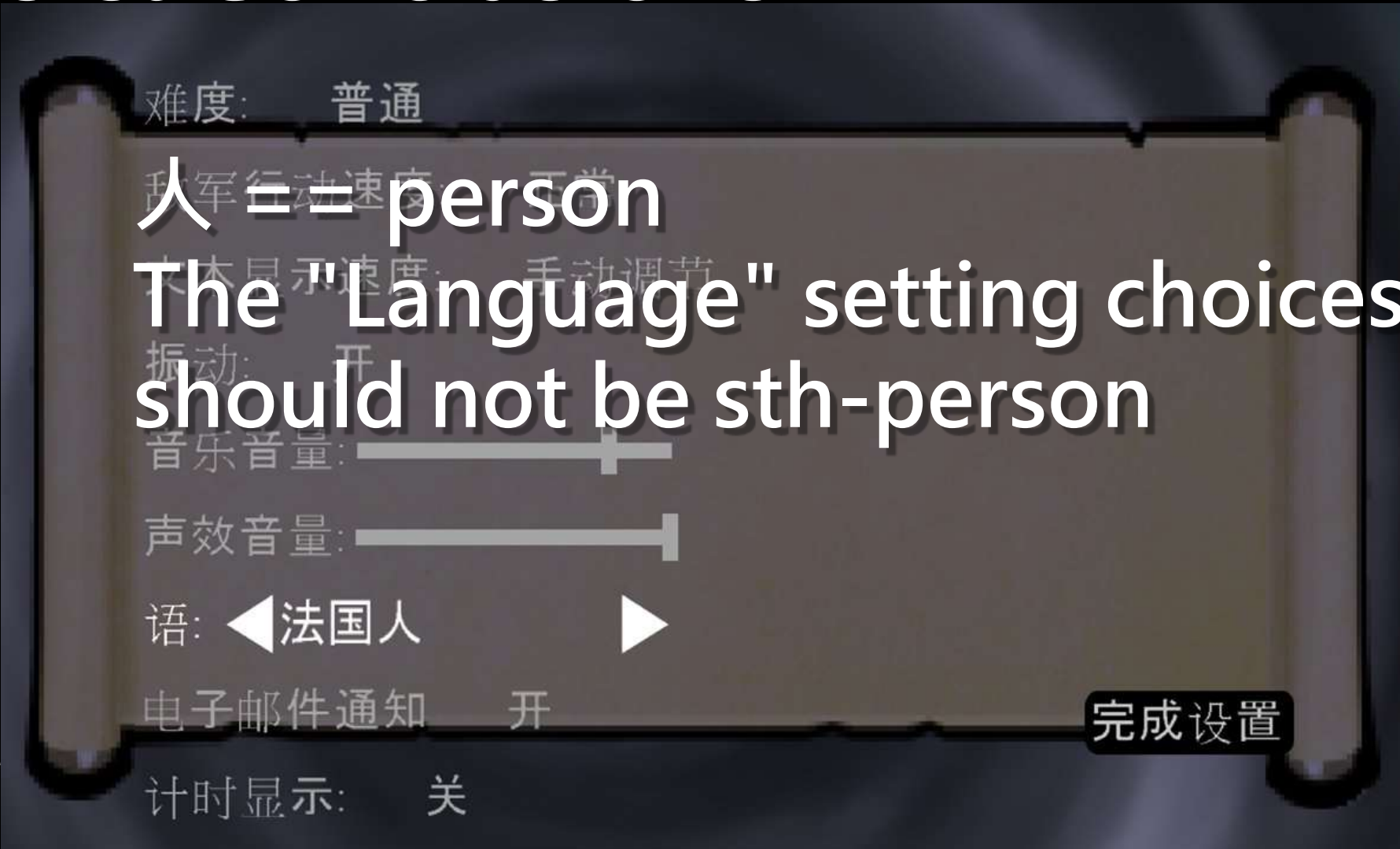


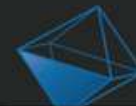
Tips & Conclusions





Tips & Conclusions

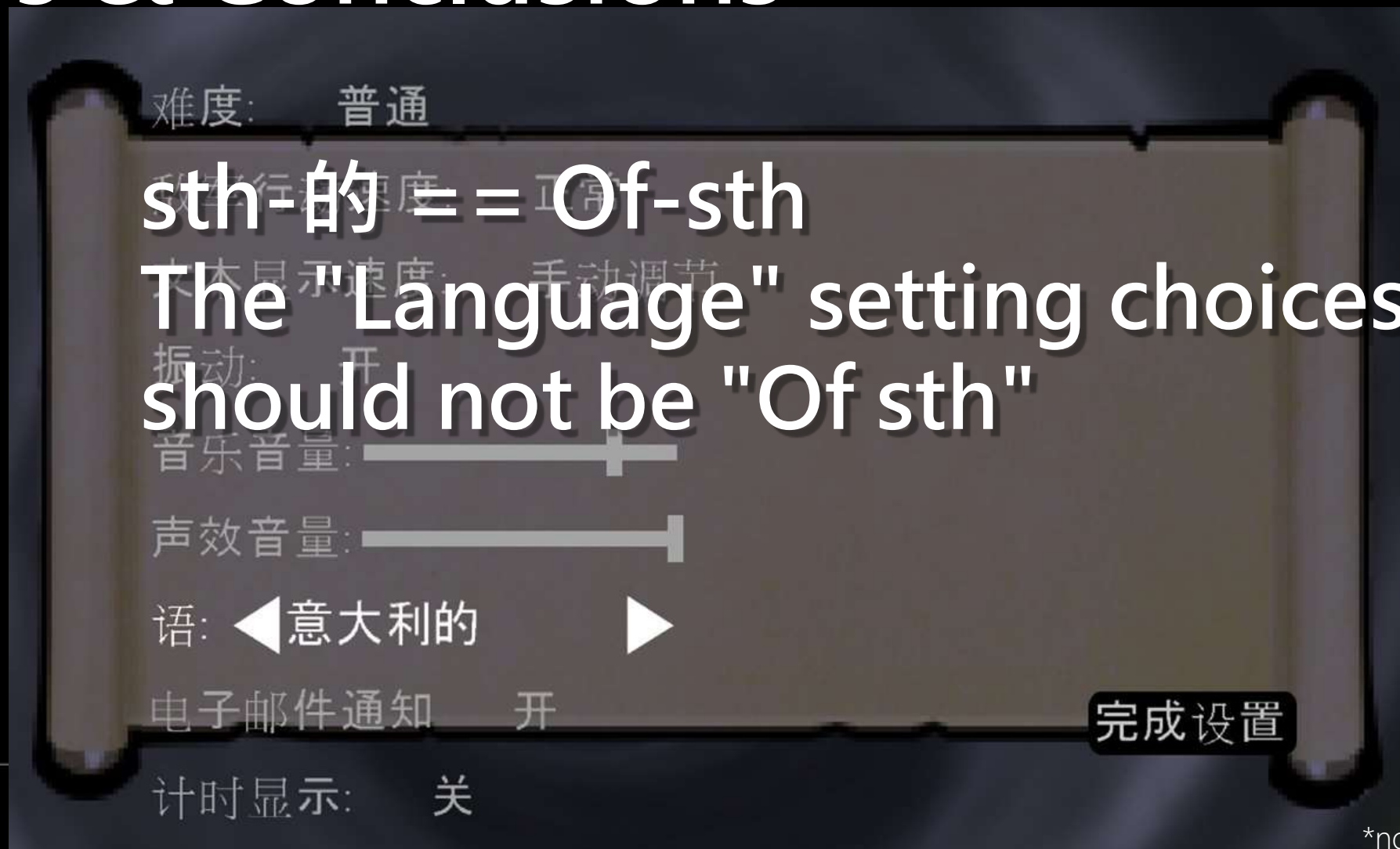




Tips & Conclusions

sth-的 == Of-sth

The "Language" setting choices should not be "Of sth"



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

If your Chinese localized UI has language choices like those, it's almost certain it's machine-translated



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

If your Chinese localized UI has language choices like those, it's almost certain it's machine-translated

For your reference:

简体中文 = Simplified Chinese



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

If your Chinese localized UI has language choices like those, it's almost certain it's machine-translated

For your reference:

简体中文 = Simplified Chinese

繁體中文 = Traditional Chinese



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

Utilize Traditional / Simplified Chinese converter
(sometimes called Big5 / GB converter)

At least you can fact check if something looks
auto-converted.



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

This is by far the easiest way to find out if your Traditional Chinese version is converted from Simplified:



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

This is by far the easiest way to find out if your Traditional Chinese version is converted from Simplified:

"菜單" <-> Menu

That "Menu" is dish/food/restaurant menu

(Of course unless you are making a restaurant game!)



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

Make sure if your localization partner is doing
Simplified and/or Traditional Chinese

Best to have different people on each language



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

Make sure if your localization partner is doing Simplified and/or Traditional Chinese

Best to have different people on each language

Please don't just say "We have it in Chinese!" – Simplified or Traditional?



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

Work with your translator closely





Tips & Conclusions

Work with your translator closely

A spreadsheet full of in-game texts usually is not enough





Tips & Conclusions

If you have an established community for the game, fan translations could be an option.



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

If you have an established community for the game,
fan translations could be an option.

e.g. Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes
Unepic, etc



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

Localization & translation is inevitably political at times.



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

Localization & translation is inevitably political at times.

Put forth the issues at hand.

Communication and understanding.



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

Again, we all know this is hard.



*not final





Tips & Conclusions

Again, we all know this is hard.

"If only all people speak the same language"



*not final





Finally

Different languages / Different cultures



Diversity & Uniqueness



*not final





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*not final





Thank You & Questions?



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