



“Moms talking like demons, tough guys talking like little girls”

I have recently been on a bit of a [Japan kick](#), and someone on social sent me [this 2018 article from Clyde Mandelin about translating Japanese videogames](#):

There’s a common assumption that when you translate something from English into another language, there shouldn’t be *any* English left when you’re done. Otherwise it would be an incomplete translation, right? And you’d feel like you got cheated out of the money you spent on translation, right?

If you’re translating into Japanese, then **that assumption is wrong**. English makes up a significant portion of the Japanese language today, and on top of that, [English has been a major part of Japanese video games since the very beginning](#).

I have been thinking a lot about translation ever since in the 1990s, both Windows and Mac OS have been translated to Polish, and while Windows felt okay, people at Apple used more “proper,” but often strangely archaic words for the Mac OS translation that were absolutely readable, but made the Mac felt a bit... I don’t know... medieval? (I saved both of the translations and put them up online long ago. [They](#) are [still](#) online.)

It is so hard to explain unless someone knows both languages in question, but so important to understand all these little nuances to get it right.

In the world of typing, for example, right-to-left writing systems are not just “going the other way,” but also have to accomodate LTR snippets. Similarly, is perfectly fine in Japanese to see Western words – not just next to Japanese writing, but sometimes *inside* it. For those working on these, it must be annoying that you already have to do more work with more complex writing, encodings, and stuff (most languages to me feel more complicated than English) – but now you also have to include entry points for other writing systems.

The issues of translation are [fascinating to me](#). Please send more if you see them.

[Newer](#)

[Older](#)

26th December 2025
Sins of our Finders, pt. 1

25th December 2025
“Type is not rubber”

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