

**2153125**

**Imraan Arenz**

**WSOA3003A**

**Game Design III**

**Data Design**

This report seeks to evaluate the data design of the game *Yu-Gi-Oh!* through the lens of the MDA framework established by Hunicke, et al. The report will look at the mechanics of the game and how data is communicated, how that data leads into dynamics and the overall aesthetic the data conveys in game between players.

### **Yu-Gi-Oh summary**

*Yu-Gi-Oh!* is a collectible/trading card game played with two to four players. Players play with a deck of forty to sixty cards and players start off with 8000 life points, or LP. The players use their cards to reduce their opponent's LP to zero to win. The decks have various cards such as monster cards and cards that give bonus effects and cards that can change the field or other aspects of the game.

### **Mechanics**

The core mechanics of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* are that players can play the game through playing cards on a game mat or any surface if they are familiar with the setup of the game mat. The way data is used in the game mechanics is through use of their cards. Player monster cards have numerical values that state how strong the monster is in terms of attack and defense and what level monster it is, also communicating how many monsters are needed to summon that one. Some monsters also carry effects that can change the status of the game field and game state. An example of this is the Monster card Destiny HERO – Dynatag. Dynatag is a level 5 monster (therefore one monster needed to summon it) with 1000 attack points (ATK) and 1000 defense points (DEF). The card can also be discarded to negate attack damage and make both players lose 1000 LP and can be banished (removed from play) to boost another Destiny Hero monster. These data values help affect the mechanics and gameplay as the card cannot be brought onto the field unless conditions are met for it so players cannot use immediately and have to look at another card to play until the card can be played. If the card were summoned, the ATK and DEF values would be used for battling other cards or attacking players directly. The card itself serves as a form of macro-data as the card itself give data representations of what is on your side of the field and limits the player from playing a lot of cards due to the game field set up. Another source of data in the game mechanics is the life points. Players decrease their opponent's life

points by dealing damage to them in battle on the field. These communicate who is winning or losing in the game at that point in time. Data can also be found in the progression of a player's turn. Turns are broken up into phases which communicate different information and actions available to the player at the time of that turn.

## **Dynamics**

The dynamics of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* stem from players combining cards together in their deck to make plays that can be used to win. The way that data manifests dynamically is in the general idea of deck synergy. This is the idea that the cards in the deck work well with each other. This normally manifests itself in the form of archetypes; decks based around a set of monsters. Dynatag is part of the Destiny HERO archetype, a sub archetype of the HERO archetype. Players will use the information and data given by Dynatag and other Destiny HERO cards to build a deck based on Destiny HEROes or a general HERO deck if other HERO archetypes appeal to them. If not based on archetypes, the players can use the data by the cards to build decks that have certain strategies such as the "wall of meat" (low level monsters with high ATK/DEF values) or decks that work on using monster and other effects to chain damage and buffs/debuffs or decks based around a category of monster such as machine, dinosaur or spellcaster. Another way that the data is used is through different dueling formats. An example would be making a deck and having duels using card with data from the banlist; a list of cards that due to their data makes them too broken and unfair to use in tournament play. Dynamics can also be brought through interacting with existing data. Examples of such can be changing the position of a card which changes its information and properties or using cards to affect LP and other data values. There are cards that can change the ATK/DEF values of monsters and cards that can use LP grant certain effects and buffs or boost LP. Use of them changes the data of the game and in turn the dynamics of the duel.

## **Aesthetics**

The data systems in the game can be used to influence and evoke strong emotions in the player. A simple example is through the case of players losing LP as the game progresses. As a player loses LP, they will feel on nervous due to them witnessing their data and data handling have a net negative on their game state. Conversely, the other player will feel elated that they are winning and that they are doing a good job at handling data. Feelings of worry and panic also arise from the fact that the players will not know what the other player has in their hand until they end play and reveal their cards. That worry stems from the player not having access to data and having to play and strategize off what they know and cater for the unknown. Added worry comes from the randomness of the draw of cards. While there is existing data through the player deck, the player feels tension as they only have access to that data for a limited time and only through draws do the players access that data. Players can either be elated or crestfallen due to a draw as they hope for the card they need. This has taken form in the term used in *Yu-Gi-Oh!* as "The Heart of the Cards".

## **Conclusion**

*Yu-Gi-Oh!* is a card game that uses data quite a bit. Through the MDA framework, it is seen that the game uses data on a micro level through the description of the cards and on a macro level through the game field. It breeds dynamics through card synergy by analyzing the data of the cards and use of archetypes and manipulation of other present data such as LP. Aesthetically due to the presence of the unknown the game can bring levels of tension and worry to the game.

## **References**

- Hunicke, R., LeBlanc, M. and Zubek, R., 2004. *MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research*.
- Takahashi, K. 1999. *Yu-Gi-Oh!*[Card Game]. Japan: Konami.