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Multilingualism

Winter Term 2023/24

Term Paper:

**From Kanji and Kana to English:
A Preliminary Linguistic Exploration of Yugioh Card
Localization**

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Linguistics B.A.

4th Semester

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1. Introduction

The adaptation of games for the foreign market is a complex and multi-layered undertaking with the goal of making said games accessible to players across language-related and cultural boundaries. This means that texts in games are not only translated, they need to be intricately adjusted in order to be culturally sensitive. This applies to both video games, as well as more traditional tabletop games. In the world of trading card games, TCGs for short, *Yugioh* (also stylized as *Yu-Gi-Oh!*) is no exception. The *Yugioh* TCG originates from a nineties manga conceived by Kazuki Takahashi, in which the characters conduct duels by facing each other in strategic battles using decks of cards. The card game and its associated media (namely manga and anime) quickly gained traction, first in Japan and then worldwide. Players typically conduct battles by making use of three types of cards (monster cards, traps and spells) and their mechanics. All of these cards bear unique names, attributes, statistics and effects that play a central role and shape the course of every duel. The game's publishing company Konami (2023) states that *Yugioh* is available "in more than 80 countries and 9 languages", which emphasizes its multilingual nature, with cards having distinct names in different languages.

Trading card games are a relatively recent phenomenon and as such have not been the focus of linguistic study for as long as other forms of media. Some notable studies of TCGs include the analysis of metaphors in *Yugioh* (cf. Papišta 2022) or the analysis of English-Portuguese localization processes of the American TCG Magic: The Gathering (cf. Fornazari 2020). In this paper, the focus will be on exploring how the translation and localization of card names between English and Japanese offer insights into cultural nuances and linguistic strategies within the *Yugioh* trading card game. Through a comparative analysis of card names across languages, the aim is to uncover themes in localization strategies and their implications for the players. To this end this paper addresses the following research question:

Which text-based phenomena in the Japanese-English localization of *Yugioh* card names can be observed and to what extent can the *Yugioh* TCG be considered a multicultural product?

Section 2 will feature necessary theoretical aspects in the form of game-related definitions and a brief explanation of Japanese scripts. Subsequently section 3 will elaborate upon the process of data collection and methodological approaches taken for data analysis. The results of said analysis will be presented and discussed in section 4, while section 5 will feature a brief conclusion and summary of the study.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. The term *localization*

In order to observe the phenomena of the localization of *Yugioh* cards a clarification of the term *localization* itself is needed. In the context of the games industry, the term *localization* refers to the process of adapting a game (either analog or digital) for a specific region's market. During this process linguistic, cultural, and regulatory factors (such as age ratings) all have to be taken into account. For trading card games such as *Yugioh* this involves making adjustments to graphical elements and card texts, to ensure they are both culturally appropriate and understandable to the target audience. The goal of localization is to make the game more accessible and enjoyable for players across cultural and language-related boundaries. From a linguistic perspective the process of localization can as such be seen as going beyond *translation*, in that texts do not necessarily need to have the exact same meaning, but rather be culturally acceptable, well-formed and engaging (cf. Chandler and Deming 2011: 7-10).

2.2 The Japanese script

The Japanese writing system differs from the English one in that it is made up of three distinct components in the form of two sets of *kana* syllabaries, namely *hiragana* and *katakana*, consisting of 46 characters each, as well as *kanji*, also known as Chinese characters. The *kana* symbols are essentially simplified and altered forms derived from the more intricate *kanji* (or their radicals) and do not carry meaning by themselves like the *kanji* do, but are a phonetic script (cf. Miller 2015: 12). The *katakana* syllabary is commonly used for transcribing borrowings from modern languages (for instance English, Portuguese or German) into Japanese, while *hiragana* are generally used for writing native Japanese words. *Kanji* on the other hand are typically employed to represent Japanese words and concepts, but often also include highly lexicalized non-recent Chinese borrowings. As *kanji* characters do not inherently convey pronunciation to readers, *kana* are often employed in order to provide reading guidance. This is commonly done for uncommon *kanji* by printing *kana* characters above these *kanji* when Japanese is written

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vertically, or to the side of *kanji* when written horizontally. *Kana* characters used in such a way are also referred to as *furigana* (cf. Kacmarcik 2004: 1).

2.3 Names and archetypes as a game mechanic in *Yugioh*

In the *Yugioh* trading card game the names of cards are located above the picture and serve as its unique identifiers, distinguishing them from other cards in the game. These names represent one of the central components of the game's mechanics, often dictating the ways in which cards interact with one another. Each card possesses a distinct name, allowing players to easily identify and reference specific cards during play. Additionally, card names often contain certain words that are indicative of broader thematic groupings known as *archetypes* (such as the phrase “Elemental HERO” in Figure 1). These *archetypes* consist of cards that share common themes, strategies or characteristics, with similar names serving to denote their membership within these groups.



Figure 1: *Wroughtweiler* and cards it can interact with (Source: yugioh.fandom.com)

For example the card *Wroughtweiler* pictured in Figure 1 reads as follows: “If this card is destroyed by battle and sent to the GY: Target 1 ‘Elemental HERO’ card and 1 ‘Polymerization’ in your GY; add them to your hand.” This shows how it can interact with the *archetype* “Elemental HERO” (for example *Elemental Hero Avian* pictured above), while also targeting one specific card, in this case *Polymerization*.

3. Methodology

The research data for this paper stem from the first set of *Yugioh* TCG packs released in the United States, namely *Legend of Blue-Eyes White Dragon*, which was released in 2002. In total the names of 252 cards (126 Japanese cards and their English counterparts) were manually collected and compiled into a corpus for further analysis, a table providing an overview of all card names can be found in the appendix. As the aim of this study is to identify localization phenomena an inductive approach was the method of choice.

As a next step all Japanese card names were directly translated into English by the researcher, in order to compare differences between the direct English translation and the English localization of cards as conducted by Konami.

Where possible the encountered localization phenomena were classified by drawing on previous classifications such as *transliteration* by Knight and Graehl (1998), as well as *literal translation* as defined by Newmark (1988). In cases where no fitting previous literature was found appropriate labels for the processes based on concepts mentioned by Newmark were chosen (see the Results & Discussion section for details.)

It should be mentioned that the present study has multiple limitations. Since *Legend of Blue Eyes White Dragon* was the first set of the *Yugioh* TCG, the findings of the study might not apply to other sets or expansions. Since the set was released in 2002 the localization practices observed may not fully reflect current localization standards or trends. The size of the dataset (126 cards) may also be too small and thus insufficient to observe the depth of the localization strategies employed in their entirety. Additionally, it may be essential to consider to what extent language dynamics, cultural norms and the industry may have evolved since the release of the set in 2002, which in turn may have an influence on localization choices. External factors influencing the localization of card names, for instance time constraints and budget limitations, which could have shaped localization practices can also not be addressed due to lack of public reports on the matter.

4. Results & Discussion

A comparison of card names in Japanese with their English localizations brought to light five distinct patterns, which will further be addressed with the labels *transliteration*, *literal translation*, *semantically adjacent translation*, *cultural reframing* and *misrendering* featuring examples for illustrative purposes.

4.1 Transliteration

Transliteration is, as Knight and Graehl (1998) specify, the process of converting text from one language A into another language B, typically attempting to preserve the phonetics of the word from language A. Unlike *translation*, *transliteration* aims to represent the sounds of words or characters using the alphabet or script of another language, which can be particularly difficult when two languages employ different writing systems. This process can often be encountered as a form of adapting proper nouns, technical terms or items for which *translation* may not be practical.



Figure 2: Flame Ghost as an example of *transliteration* (Source: yugioh.fandom.com)

As already specified in section 2.2 the Japanese *katakana* syllabary is generally used for denoting borrowings in Japanese, an instance of which can be seen in Figure 2. Here the originally English “Flame Ghost” was simply chosen as the card’s Japanese name in the form of フレイム・ゴースト (*fureimu gōsuto*), while the English localization chose the originally English

name *Flame Ghost* for it as well. This means that in instances like these, cards simply received English names in Japanese from the start, that were then not altered further in significant ways by Konami's localization team, making the process of *transliteration* a relatively simple and straightforward undertaking. It has to be said however that there are also instances, in which the original Japanese names of cards are written in Katakana that do not originate from English. One such example is the Japanese ハネハネ (*Hane-Hane*), a pun possibly being a reduplication that could be translated as *feather propeller*, since both words are homophones. The name of the card *Larvas* (ラーバス) on the other hand is etymologically intransparent, which might be an indication of it being a proper name chosen by the team that named the card originally.

4.2 Literal Translation

Cards featuring *literal translation* possess a name in English that was translated word for word from Japanese. According to Newmark (1988: 69) the priority is conveying the intended meaning of the source text (in this case the card names) accurately, while being mindful of the natural language flow and structure of the target language (TL). This means that this translation process does not strictly follow a word-for-word approach, but rather allows for adjustments in word order to ensure the translation reads fluently and idiomatically in the target language. As such the method of *literal translation* attempts to find a balance between preserving original meanings and adapting them to fit the linguistic conventions of the target language without producing unnatural constructions

There are multiple forms literal translations take in the examined dataset. Firstly some translations do in fact maintain the original Japanese word order and represent a direct translation, as is the case with the card named 猛獸の歯 (*mōjū no ha*), which was translated as *Beast Fangs*. Notably, the dataset indicates there seems to be a preference for changing the word order of cards containing proper nouns during localization. This can be observed to be the case with cards such as *Gaia the Dragon Champion* among others, where the proper noun *Gaia* is moved to the front of the card

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name, while Japanese equivalents, in this specific case ガイア, occur as the last word in the monster card's name.



Figure 3: *Masaki the Legendary Swordsman* as a unique instance of *literal translation* (Source: yugioh.fandom.com)

A particularly interesting instance of a card name containing a proper noun that has been moved to the front can be seen in Figure 3. The Japanese version of *Masaki the Legendary Swordsman* represents the only card whose name contains Roman letters in the entire *Legend of Blue-Eyes White Dragon* set. Here the name MASAKI is accompanied by furigana (the katakana マサキ - *Masaki*) in order to aid Japanese players in reading the Roman script. This stylistic choice is striking, since *Masaki* is a Japanese name and as such could be rendered in *kanji*. This is interesting, since it makes the meaning of the name *Masaki* intransparent. This could be a reference to the historical lord *Date Masamune*, who wore a similar helmet featuring a crescent moon-like ornament on it and was known as one of the lords who had diplomatic relations to the West (cf. Santa Cruz 2017). It should be noted that *kanji* feature many homophones, for instance the name “*Masaki*” could have been written as 正樹, 真幸, 雅紀 or 理己 just to name a few possibilities, all of which are pronounced the same but carry vastly different meanings. This lack of a proper name can be seen as giving the character *Masaki* an air of mysteriousness and anonymity from a Japanese point-of-view. This anonymity is further increased by the choice to obscure a

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large part of the monster's face in the card artwork. Stylistically this choice could have been made to invoke the often mythical portrayal of samurai (cf. Standish 2011). This is compounded by the card text itself stating the monster to be "[...] a veteran of over 100 battles.", which might even suggest *Masaki* to be what Gutkind and Fletcher (2008: 39) call a *composite character*, essentially denoting a figure that has been created by means of merging multiple different characters in storytelling. This would explain *Masaki*'s achievements of allegedly fighting in more than 100 battles (as listed in the card text) and also why the monster seems to be missing defining facial features, as well as a "proper" (meaning spelled in *kanji*) Japanese name, truly cementing the monster to be a creature of legend - as opposed to an actual person. These are aspects players can not get access to when looking at the English version of the card, since the name *Masaki*, which seems somewhat out of place being spelled in Roman letters on the Japanese card, appears like an ordinary proper noun in English, since it is not rendered differently from the other writing in the card's name. This unique circumstance shows how, due to differences in script, finer cultural nuances can get lost during the localization process.

4.3 Semantically Adjacent Translation

Another pattern of card name localization that was observed in the dataset is that of *semantically adjacent translation*. Newmark (1988: 46) uses the two terms *faithful translation* and *semantic translation* discussing types of meaning-oriented translation. The author specifies that the process of *faithful translation* aims to maintain the precise meaning of texts, while being mindful of context and grammatical structures of the target language. The emphasis lies on retaining cultural nuances (e.g. terms with no equivalents in the TL) and adhering to the structures of the original, even if they deviate from the conventions of the target language. The aim is to remain entirely faithful to the intentions and textual realization of the source language writer, with as little alteration as possible.

In a sense *semantic translation* shares similarities with *faithful translation*, but assigns more value to aesthetic considerations, such as the

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flow and style of the source language text. It may prioritize aesthetic choices over faithfulness, ensuring that the translated text flows smoothly and is constructed naturally. Additionally, during the process of *semantic translation* cultural terms that are not easily accessible by speakers of the TL may be replaced with culturally neutral terms or concepts in order to enhance comprehension. Unlike *faithful translation*, the process of *semantic translation* allows for a more flexible approach in that localizations of a medium can be conducted in a more creative way. The above terms however do not accurately describe the meaning-oriented approach taken during the localization of the *Yugioh* cards in the dataset.

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization
ブラック・マジシャン	Black Magician	Dark Magician
地獄の裁判	Trial of Hell	Trial of Nightmare
カードを狩る死神	Card-Hunting Death God	Reaper of the Cards
魔人 テラ	The Demon Terra	Terra the Terrible
キラーパンダ	Killer Panda	Frenzied Panda
地雷獣	Landmine Beast	Tripwire Beast
ホーリー・エルフ	Holy Elf	Mystical Elf

Table 1: Semantically adjacent translations employed in order to circumvent taboo terms

This is the case since the English localizations that can be seen in Table 1 are neither faithful nor are they aesthetic choices based on grammatical structure and natural language flow. Here translators adapt parts of the card names to the culture of the target language, which according to Dominguez (2018) is one of the key features of translating taboo terms. Ito (2005) elaborates that *Yugioh* and its monsters draw inspiration from medieval and occult themes, which may have motivated the replacement of certain terms when it was adapted for the western market. The monsters and characters of *Yugioh* are inspired by the occult practices of ancient Egypt, with a large part of the manga's story revolving around death, spirits and black magic. Place (2009: 23) states how “[i]n Egypt magic and religion were inseparable [...]”, a notion that may present conflicts with Western religions such as Christianity

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and Islam. In particular practices such as *black magic* can be seen as a sensitive topic in various Western cultures, where they were (or even still are) forbidden and persecuted, such as during the *Salem witch trials* which occurred in the late 17th century and cost multiple people their lives (Demos 1983). To circumvent associations with these taboo topics the English localization team seems to have chosen to try and remove overt religious references in the *Yugioh TCG*, by replacing them with other terms. Also note that other unmistakably occult references such as the term *succubus* (a denoting a female demon) are not altered, presumably since this term usually does not occur in regular discourse in English, making it a more covert occult reference. The challenge with cases such as these is that localizations should ideally convey similar themes to the readers as the original (or in this case players) and not represent complete reinterpretations, since the integrity of the original author's work could be seen as threatened otherwise. As such terms associated with religious themes like *hell* and *holy* (see Table 1) were replaced with semantically similar ones without religious connotations, in this case *nightmare* and *mystical*. In addition to religious themes, other overt allusions, such as those to death and war, which Newmark (1988: 110) also deems to be taboos, are subject to alteration. This can be observed, for example, in the changes from *Killer Panda* to *Frenzied Panda* and *Landmine Beast* to *Tripwire Beast* respectively. These instances illustrate the challenge of preserving a work's original identity and themes, while adjusting it to be more suitable in the target culture's language at the same time.

4.4 Cultural reframing

Newmark (1988: 76) states that the process of *contextual re-creation* involves translating subtext and emotion rather than focusing solely on the literal wording. The process the author outlines essentially entails capturing the essence of the idea behind the text, instead of following the formal constraints of the original. This approach thus can be seen as a creative adaptation of texts rather than a translation of words.

That being said there is a phenomenon present in the localization of the *Yugioh TCG* Newmark does not seem to be accounting for. There were instances in the dataset, in which card names were neither subject to

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translation nor transliteration from Japanese to English, for these instances the label *cultural reframing* (inspired by the above process of *contextual re-creation*) was chosen. There seem to exist two subtypes of this process, both marking *Yugioh* cards as distinctively Japanese in the English release.

4.4.1 Cultural reframing in without change in meaning

There are instances as those in Table 2, in which the cards named *Forest*, *Wasteland* and *Mountain* are *literal translations* of the Japanese names, however there are also instances in which instead of translation a transliteration of the Japanese term was chosen, such is the case for the cards named *Sogen*, *Umi* and *Yami* in English. This choice is notable, since the meaning of these words might not be transparent to English speakers.

Name in Japanese release (reading in parentheses)	Meaning of Japanese name	Name in English release
森 (mori)	Forest	Forest
荒野 (kōya)	Wasteland	Wasteland
山 (yama)	Mountain	Mountain
草原 (sōgen)	Grassland	Sogen
海 (umi)	Ocean	Umi
闇 (yami)	Darkness	Yami

Table 2: Example of environment-related cards and *transliteration* from Japanese to English

A similarly intransparent process can be observed in Table 3. Here cards have English names in the Japanese release and Japanese names in the English release. For example the card named *Raigeki* in the English release of the *Yugioh* TCG is named サンダー・ボルト (a transliteration of the English *thunderbolt*) in the Japanese release of the card game.

Name in Japanese release (reading in parentheses)	Meaning of Japanese name	Name in English release (Japanese in parentheses)
サンダー・ボルト (sandā boruto)	Thunderbolt	Raigeki (雷撃)
ファイヤー・ボール (faiyā bōru)	Fire Ball	Hinotama (火の玉)

Table 3: Example of reverse translation of English terms to Japanese for the English release

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This process can be described as reverse translation in a sense, since the original Japanese card names are not just rendered in their original English form, but rather translated to Japanese, in stark contrast to the example of straightforward transliteration of the card named Flame Ghost as discussed in section 4.1 (see Figure 2).

These phenomena have in common that both of them do not alter the meaning of the original Japanese card name in significant ways, thus staying true to the source material on a semantic level.

4.4.2. Cultural reframing with change in meaning

Another localization pattern that can be found in the dataset can be observed in Table 4. Here the original Japanese card names are not translated, but rather changed to the point where the meaning of the name in English is almost completely different in many cases.

Name in Japanese release (reading in parentheses)	Meaning of Japanese name	Name in English release (Japanese in parentheses where applicable)
ナイル (nairu)	Nile	Misairuzame (ミサイル・サメ)
鋼鉄の巨神像 (kōtetsu no kyoshinzō)	Giant Idol of Steel	Steel Ogre Grotto #1
生き血をすするもの (iki chi wo susuru mono)	That Which Drinks Fresh Blood	Drooling Lizard
ワイルド・ラプター (wairudo raputā)	Wild Raptor	Uraby
レイーズ (ruīzu)	Louise	Beaver Warrior
ドレイク (doreiku)	Drake	Kurama (鞍馬)

Table 4: Example of complete alteration of English card names for the English release

The card with the name ナイル (*nairu* - a transliteration of *Nile*) for example is renamed to *Misairuzame*, which is a combination of the words for *missile* and *shark* in Japanese, which reflects the card's artwork directly. In some instances this might be the case due to taboos as already mentioned above (for example the words *Idol*, *Blood*, etc.), but it might also be a stylistic choice in order to make some of the names sound more mysterious and less

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mundane for English-speaking players. A name such as *Drake* (ドレイク in the Japanese release) for instance might be perceived as generic and not very evocative, since it originates from Western culture and thus English-speaking players familiar with the fantasy genre may already be acquainted with it, making it not very memorable as a result. The card's name in the English release (*Kurama*) however might appear as more unique to players. The name *Kurama* is also of Japanese origin, likely being a reference to the real life location Mt. Kurama in Japan. According to folktales the mountain is home to a particularly powerful *daitengu*, a legendary creature possessing avian features (cf. De Visser 1908: 71). This shows how the localization team draws on the card game's Japanese origin in order to create recognizable and unique card names in English, distinguishing the fantasy card game from Western ones such as *Magic: The Gathering*.



Figure 4: Examples of cards featuring completely different names in the English release (Source: yugioh.fandom.com)

Another striking example of a localization change can be observed via the card *Beaver Warrior*. Originally the card featured a proper noun in the form of ルイーズ, a transliteration of the Germanic female name *Louise*. Hanks, Hardcastle and Hodges (2006) elaborate that the name is a combination of the words *lōd* (*fame*) and *wīg* (*war*), meaning it can be translated as *famous warrior*, which seems appropriate since the card depicts a creature wearing Western-style armor and seemingly ready for battle. The choice to change the card's name from *Louise* to *Beaver Warrior* was likely made to make the name universally understandable and evocative within the English-speaking

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context of the game. The new name also directly describes the appearance of the creature depicted on the card, despite the fact that the creature seems to be lacking a beaver tail featuring a rat-like appendage instead. In any case, it can be said that the localization team has effectively altered the original card names and chose to create English names in order to directly relate them to the cards' artwork, thus creating stronger cohesion between texts and graphical elements.

4.5 Misrendering

The last observed phenomenon is that of *misrendering*. One might also describe it as *mistranslation*, however that term seems overly prescriptive. The localization team seems to have been given a certain degree of freedom adapting the *Yugioh* TCG for the English-speaking market, otherwise cards such as those in Figure 4 could also be dismissed as *mistranslations*, given their lack of relation to the original Japanese card names. The term *misrendering* was chosen to reflect names that have been localized in such a way that they cause issues within the context of the game itself, namely with respect to the *archetype* game mechanic.



Figure 5: Older version of Violet Crystal (left) and newer version with erratum (right) (Source: yugioh.fandom.com)

One such issue can be observed via the card named *Violet Crystal*. Here the localization team has translated the *kanji* occurring in the word 紫水晶 (*murasakisuishō*) with *murasaki* (紫) denoting *violet* and *suishō* (水晶) (crystal).

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denoting *crystal*, which is appropriate. However the word *murasakisuishō* is also a single lexical unit in Japanese, simply meaning *amethyst*. The card has the effect of enhancing a player's *zombie* monsters, which might be due to the fact that its color is often associated with both light and dark (or life and death) as Horiguchi (2001: 28) explains. In essence an amethyst can be described as a *violet crystal*, however the *archetype* game mechanic in the *Yugioh* TCG depends on precise wording. Figure 5 shows an older print version of the card (left) and a more recent one (right). The more recently printed version features additional text in the box beneath the artwork stating "(This card is not treated as a 'Crystal' card.)", which highlights that it is in fact not part of the *Crystal archetype*, which was released later. This issue is not present in the Japanese version of the *Yugioh* card game, since the *Crystal archetype* uses a different word (宝玉 - *hōgyoku*) in Japanese card names. A similar issue arises with the card named *Kagemusha of the Blue Flame* (in Japanese 紫炎の影武者 - *shien no kagemusha*), which translates *紫炎* (*shien*) as *Blue Flame*, however here *Shien* is supposed to be a name. *Shien* also became an *archetype* later on, showcasing that issues like these are not single occurrences. As such clarifications in the form of errata are necessary, since *misrenderings* have the potential to directly impact gameplay. If there were to go unaddressed issues during online play and international competitions could arise. The *archetype* mechanic can be seen as one of the biggest challenges in localizing *Yugioh* cards, since new *archetypes* are released frequently, often making amendments of older cards necessary so matches can follow the game rules as intended.

5. Conclusion

The present study has explored text-based phenomena in the Japanese-English localization of the *Yugioh* trading card game. For this purpose 126 Japanese and English cards that were released in the set Legend of Blue Eyes White Dragon were examined.

During the analysis the patterns of *transliteration*, *literal translation*, *semantically adjacent translation*, *cultural reframing* and *misrendering* could be identified. It was found that some of the cards had English names rendered in *katakana* in Japanese. When it comes to literal translation, adjustments were made to ensure natural and well-formed constructions in the target language. Different forms of literal translation, including maintaining original word order and adjustments of word order for card names containing proper nouns were found. Furthermore, cultural nuances and meanings that may be inaccessible to players in the English localization process due to script differences could be identified. In terms of *semantically adjacent translations* it was observed that the translators altered card names to fit the cultural contexts of the target language, especially with regards to avoiding possible taboo topics such as religion by substituting certain words. The process of *cultural reframing* was identified and divided into two subtypes. One in which the original Japanese names are transliterated into English without altering their meaning significantly and another where the English names diverge considerably from their Japanese counterparts, changing meanings entirely. In both instances the Japanese identity of the *Yugioh* TCG is emphasized in the English release. Lastly instances of *misrendering* were identified, where names are altered in a way that has the potential to cause issues with game mechanics if not addressed properly.

The *Yugioh* trading card game can be seen as a multicultural product since it has been localized into multiple languages and these localized versions are adjusted to players from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The themes and artwork featured on the cards are drawn from various cultures, both Eastern and Western. The localization efforts and thematic diversity jointly expose players to a wide array of familiar and unfamiliar symbols and narratives that reflect a mix of cultural aspects from

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all over the world.

This study has shed light on the complex nature of text-based phenomena in the localization of the *Yugioh* trading card names. The study of trading cards from a linguistic point-of-view represents a promising new area of research. Given that trading card games are a relatively recent phenomenon, they have not received as much attention as other forms of entertainment media. The methodology employed in this study could be expanded in scope to and applied to additional sets and texts beneath card artworks in the *Yugioh TCG*. Moreover, future research could compare the localization strategies across different trading card games (e.g. *Magic: The Gathering*, *Duel Masters* or *Pokémon*) or examine localization processes in various other languages, such as Italian, French or German. This study serves as a foundational exploration of the localization of *Yugioh* trading card names, offering a potential way for future research to examine the interactions of linguistics and culture in the context of card games, making the complexities inherent in cross-cultural adaptation processes of such kind more transparent as a result.

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Appendix

Table 5: Card Name Overview

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
トライホーン・ドラゴン	Tri-Horn Dragon	Tri-Horned Dragon	Transliteration
青眼の白龍	Blue-Eyes White Dragon	Blue-Eyes White Dragon	Transliteration (furigana); Literal translation (kanji)
サイクロプス	Cyclops	Hitotsu-Me Giant	Cultural reframing without change in meaning
炎の剣士	Flame Swordsman	Flame Swordsman	Literal translation
ワイト	Wight	Skull Servant	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
ブラック・マジシャン	Black Magician	Dark Magician	Semantically adjacent translation
暗黒騎士ガイア	Dark Knight Gaia	Gaia the Fierce Knight	Semantically adjacent translation, proper noun moved to front of card name in English
エルフの剣士	Elf Swordsman	Celtic Guardian	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
昆虫人間	Insect Man	Basic Insect	Semantically adjacent translation
マンモスの墓場	Mammoth Graveyard	Mammoth Graveyard	Literal translation

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
シルバー・フォング	Silver Fang	Silver Fang	Transliteration
ダーク・グレイ	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Transliteration
地獄の裁判	Trial of Hell	Trial of Nightmare	Semantically adjacent translation
眠り子	Sleeping Child	Nemuriko	Cultural reframing in without change in meaning
13人目の埋葬者	The 13th buried person	The 13th Grave	Semantically adjacent translation
炎の騎士 キラー	Flame Knight Killer	Charubin the Fire Knight	Semantically adjacent translation
炎を操る者	Flame Manipulator	Flame Manipulator	Literal translation
モンスター・エッグ	Monster Egg	Monster Egg	Transliteration
火焰草	Firegrass	Firegrass	Literal translation
暗黒火炎龍	Dark Flame Dragon	Darkfire Dragon	Literal translation
深淵の冥王	Dark King of the Abyss	Dark King of the Abyss	Literal translation
ミラージュ	Mirage	Fiend Reflection #2	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
フュージョニスト	Fusionist	Fusionist	Transliteration
タートル・タイガー	Turtle Tiger	Turtle Tiger	Transliteration
プチリュウ	Petit Dragon	Petit Dragon	Transliteration
スティング	Sting	Hinotama Soul	
アクア・マドール	Aqua Madoor	Aqua Madoor	Transliteration

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
紫炎の影武者	Shien's Body Double	Kagemusha of the Blue Flame	Misrendering
フレイム・ゴースト	Flame Ghost	Flame Ghost	Transliteration
二つの口を持つ闇の支配者	Dark Ruler Who Possesses Two Mouths	Two-Mouth Darkruler	Literal translation
マグマン	Magman	Dissolverock	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
ルート・ウォーター	Root Water	Root Water	Transliteration
怒りの海王	The Furious Sea King	The Furious Sea King	Literal translation
緑樹の靈王	Spirit King of Green-leaved Trees	Green Phantom King	Semantically adjacent translation
北風と太陽	The North Wind and the Sun	Ray & Temperature	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
キング・スモーク	King Smoke	King Fog	Semantically adjacent translation
スリーピィ	Sleepy	Mystical Sheep #2	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
伝説の剣豪 MASAKI	Legendary Swordsman Masaki	Masaki the Legendary Swordsman	Literal translation, proper noun moved to front of card name in English
ドレイク	Drake	Kurama	Cultural reframing with change in

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
			meaning
伝説の剣	Sword of Legend	Legendary Sword	Literal translation
猛獣の歯	Beast Fangs	Beast Fangs	Literal translation
紫水晶	Amethyst	Violet Crystal	Misrendering
秘術の書	Book of Secret Arts	Book of Secret Arts	Literal translation
ポセイドンの力	Power of Poseidon	Power of Kaishin	Semantically adjacent translation
ドラゴン族・封印の壺	Dragon Tribe Sealing Jar	Dragon Capture Jar	Semantically adjacent translation
森	Forest	Forest	Literal translation
荒野	Wasteland	Wasteland	Literal translation
山	Mountain	Mountain	Literal translation
草原	Grassland	Sogen	Cultural reframing in without change in meaning
海	Ocean	Umi	Cultural reframing in without change in meaning
闇	Darkness	Yami	Cultural reframing in without change in meaning
ブラック・ホール	Black Hole	Dark Hole	Semantically adjacent translation
サンダー・ボルト	Thunderbolt	Raigeki	Cultural reframing in without change in meaning
レッド・	Red Potion	Red Medicine	Semantically

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
ポーション			adjacent translation
火の粉	Sparks	Sparks	Literal translation
ファイヤー・ボール	Fire Ball	Hinotama	Cultural reframing in without change in meaning
地割れ	Fissure	Fissure	Literal translation
落とし穴	Pitfall	Trap Hole	Semantically adjacent translation
融合	Fusion	Polymerization	Semantically adjacent translation
罠はずし	Remove Trap	Remove Trap	Literal translation
はさみ撃ち	Pincer Attack	Two-Pronged Attack	Semantically adjacent translation
ホーリー・エルフ	Holy Elf	Mystical Elf	Semantically adjacent translation
タイホーン	Cann-on (likely from “大砲” and “dragon”)	Tyhone	Transliteration
レイーズ	Louise	Beaver Warrior	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
墓掘りグール	Gravedigger Ghoul	Gravedigger Ghoul	Literal translation
カース・オブ・ドラゴン	Curse of Dragon	Curse of Dragon	Transliteration
カルボナーラ戦士	Karbonala Warrior	Karbonala Warrior	Literal translation
岩石の巨兵	Giant Soldier of Stone	Giant Soldier of Stone	Literal translation

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
ワイルド・ラプター	Wild Raptor	Uraby	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
真紅眼の黒竜	Red-Eyes Black Dragon	Red-Eyes Black Dragon	Transliteration (furigana); Literal translation (kanji)
カードを狩る死神	Card-Hunting Death God	Reaper of the Cards	Semantically adjacent translation
魔人デスサタン	The Demon Death-Satan	Witty Phantom	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
ラーバス	Larvas	Larvas	Transliteration
ハードアーマー	Hard Armor	Hard Armor	Transliteration
マンイーター	Man Eater	Man Eater	Transliteration
マグネット1号	Magnets Number 1	M-Warrior #1	Semantically adjacent translation
マグネット2号	Magnets Number 2	M-Warrior #2	Semantically adjacent translation
ハープの精	Spirit of the Harp	Spirit of the Harp	Transliteration/Literal translation
アーメイル	Armaill	Armaill	Transliteration
魔人 テラ	The Demon Terra	Terra the Terrible	Semantically adjacent translation, proper noun moved to front of card name in English
キラーパンダ	Killer Panda	Frenzied Panda	Semantically adjacent translation

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
蜘蛛男	Spider-Man	Kumootoko	Transliteration
D・ナポレオン	Dark Napoleon	Meda Bat	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
恍惚の人魚	Enchanting Mermaid	Enchanting Mermaid	Literal translation
炎の魔神	Devil of Flames	Fireyarou	Semantically adjacent translation
魔装騎士ドラゴネス	Magic-Wielding Knight Dragoness	Dragoness the Wicked Knight	Semantically adjacent translation
一眼の盾竜	One-Eyed Shield Dragon	One-Eyed Shield Dragon	Transliteration (furigana), Literal translation (kanji)
闇・エネルギー	Dark Energy	Dark Energy	Literal translation
レーザー砲機甲鎧	Laser Cannon Armor	Laser Cannon Armor	Literal translation
魔菌	Devil Germs	Vile Germs	Semantically adjacent translation
銀の弓矢	Silver Bow and Arrow	Silver Bow and Arrow	Literal translation
ドラゴンの秘宝	Dragon's Hidden Treasure	Dragon Treasure	Semantically adjacent translation
電撃鞭	Electro-Whip	Electro-Whip	Literal translation
魔性の月	Magical Moon	Mystical Moon	Semantically adjacent translation
『守備』封じ	“Defense” Seal	Stop Defense	Semantically adjacent translation
機械改造工場	Machine Modification	Machine	Literal translation

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
	Factory	Modification Factory	
体温の上昇	Raise Body Heat	Raise Body Heat	Literal translation
フォロー・ウインド	Follow Wind	Follow Wind	Transliteration
ゴブリンの秘薬	Goblin's Secret Medicine	Goblin's Secret Remedy	Semantically adjacent translation
火あぶりの刑	Punishment of Burning at the Stake	Final Flame	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
光の護封剣	Protective Sealing Swords of Light	Swords of Revealing Light	Semantically adjacent translation
メタル・ドラゴン	Metal Dragon	Metal Dragon	Transliteration
スパイク シードラ	Spike Seadra	Spike Seadra	Transliteration
地雷獣	Landmine Beast	Tripwire Beast	Semantically adjacent translation
スカイ・ハンター	Sky Hunter	Skull Red Bird	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
青い忍者	Blue Ninja	Armed Ninja	Semantically adjacent translation
フラワー・ウルフ	Flower Wolf	Flower Wolf	Transliteration
人喰い虫	Man-Eating Insect	Man-Eater Bug	Semantically adjacent translation
サンド・ストーン	Sand Stone	Sand Stone	Transliteration

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
ハネハネ	Hane-Hane (possibly “feather propeller”)	Hane-Hane	Transliteration
ナイル	Nile	Misairuzame	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
鋼鉄の巨神像	Giant Idol of Steel	Steel Ogre Grotto #1	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
レッサー・ドラゴン	Lesser Dragon	Lesser Dragon	Transliteration
魔界のイバラ	Thorns of the Demon World	Darkworld Thorns	Semantically adjacent translation
生き血をすするもの	That Which Drinks Fresh Blood	Drooling Lizard	Cultural reframing with change in meaning
アーマード・スター・フィッシュ	Armored Starfish	Armored Starfish	Transliteration
サキュバス・ナイト	Succubus Knight	Succubus Knight	Transliteration
死者蘇生	Revival of the Dead	Monster Reborn	Semantically adjacent translation
強欲な壺	Greedy Pot	Pot of Greed	Literal Translation
封されし者の右足	Right Foot of the Sealed One	Right Leg of the Forbidden One	Semantically adjacent translation
封されし者の左足	Left Leg of the Sealed One	Left Leg of the Forbidden One	Semantically adjacent translation
封されし者の右	Right Arm of the	Right Arm of the	Semantically

Appendix

Name in Japanese	Direct translation of Japanese name	Name in English localization	Localization pattern
腕	Sealed One	Forbidden One	adjacent translation
封されし者の左腕	Left Arm of the Sealed One	Left Arm of the Forbidden One	Semantically adjacent translation
封印されしエクゾディア	The Sealed Exodia	Exodia the Forbidden One	Semantically adjacent translation, proper noun moved to front of card name in English
竜騎士ガイア	The Dragon Knight Gaia	Gaia the Dragon Champion	Semantically adjacent translation, proper noun moved to front of card name in English

Plagiatserklärung



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A Preliminary Linguistic Exploration of Yugioh Card Localization**

im Rahmen der Lehrveranstaltung **Multilingualism**

im Wintersemester 2023/24 bei

Emilia Nottbeck

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