

Evans, J. (2013). Translating board games: multimodality and play. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 20, 15-32. <https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2013.399>

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## Translating Board Games: Multimodality and Play

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the translation of modern board games as multimodal texts. It argues that games are produced in the interaction between players, pieces and rules, making them a participatory form of text. The article analyses the elements of the rules and in-game text in order to show how the multimodal elements of the text are essential to the experience of the game and how they affect the translation process. Many games are designed to be translated for many markets and avoid unnecessary text on in-game elements, preferring images. This can be seen in a short case study which discusses the translation of the 2007 game *Caylus Magna Carta*. It highlights the importance of the use of multimodal elements in the rule book and cards to enhance comprehensibility for players and in order to make sure that game play is the same across languages.

### KEYWORDS

Board games, multimodal texts, participatory texts, interaction, play.

### 1. Introduction

In an increasingly digital age, board games may seem quaint and old fashioned. Video games have received more attention from the academic community; there is a growing body of theory and criticism (e.g. Aarseth 2001, Wolf and Perron (eds) 2003, Bogost 2006, Mäyrä 2008), including peer-reviewed journals such as *Games and Culture*, *Games Studies*, *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds* and *Simulation and Gaming*, to name but a few. Studies have been written about the language of games (Ensslin 2011) and the translation of video games (special issues of journals include, e.g. Mangiron i Hevia 2007, Bernal Merino 2011; books on the topic include Mangiron and O'Hagan forthcoming 2013). There is less academic research into board games and especially not modern board games. There was a journal named *Board Game Studies*, which ran for seven issues from 1998 to 2004 (ISSN 0925-3084), but many of the articles in the journal focus on ancient games (e.g. Schädler 1998) or the development of board games (e.g. Goodfellow 1998, Whitehill 1999).

Academic research into games often takes this diachronic approach, with key texts being H.J.R. Murray's *A History of Board Games Other Than Chess* (1952) and David Parlett's *The Oxford History of Board Games* (1999). Elliot M. Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith's edited collection *The Study of Games* (1971) offers a similar historical perspective, combined

with an investigation into how games have been used in different places. R.C. Bell's *Board and Table Games from Many Civilisations* (1979) offers an encyclopaedic description of the various forms of board game, focusing again on more traditional games such as Nine Men's Morris (Bell 1979: 93–94).

As the dates of these publications show, there is little academic discussion of the sort of modern games that I will focus on in this article, games such as *Carcassonne*, *Puerto Rico*, *Caylus Magna Carta* and others<sup>1</sup>. These games date from the start of the twenty first century and differ from traditional games such as chess or Go by the variety of their components and often by the complexity of their systems.

Modern board games present a multimodal textual system, consisting of text, images and pieces; therefore written, visual and plastic modes. Carey Jewitt notes about all multimodal communication that "the interaction between modes is significant for meaning making" (2009: 15): this is especially relevant for board games where the interaction between rules (text), pieces and players creates the game. When translated, board games should continue to function as games; that is, the translations should be playable. I will argue here that many modern board games are designed with translation in mind, using straightforward language and multimodal strategies that reduce readers' reliance on verbal text. Where there is text to translate, it tends to be on cheaply printable materials, allowing publishers to create versions for different language markets at a lower price. Section 2 of this article aims for a provisional definition of board games as a medium, focusing on modern games. Section 3 discusses the translation of the multimodal spaces of board games in its various aspects, especially the interplay between rules and in-game text. A brief case study of the translations of William Attia's 2007 board game *Caylus Magna Carta* forms Section 4. In the conclusion I offer an overview of the importance of multimodal translation in board games and offer suggestions for new directions in research.

## **2. Board Games as Text**

Games are notoriously difficult to define, covering a range of activities from sports to spontaneous play. As my focus in this article is board games, in this section I shall argue that more formal games, including board games, are a form of rule bound social interaction. The rules offer a framework for play but the game as played exceeds a reading of the text of the rules.

Rules are essential to game play. As Marshall McLuhan observes, "[games] are collective and popular art forms with strict conventions" (2001: 257). The rules of a game are known and accepted by the players (McLuhan, 2001: 261). It is of course possible to find games where the rules are not supposed to be known by all the players, such as the

*Paranoia* role playing game where only the game master has access to all the rules. In this case, one of the rules that the players accept in playing the game is that they only have restricted access to the rules: there is still agreement about how the rules work. The conventions of board games normally include the conditions for winning, or as Parlett argues, games have ends and means: a goal and ways of achieving it (1999: 3). How this goal is achieved depends on the possibilities available to players as prescribed in the rules. The rules and the players are not the only elements in many games, however: there is other equipment such as boards and pieces, as Wolfgang Kramer (2000) points out when he remarks that games are formed from rules and components. It is this combination of rules, components and players which shape the form of the game as experienced by players.

The written form of the game – the rulebook – does not change, but the experienced or played form varies each time the game is played. The game as played is the product of the players combining rules and components in order to reach the goal: this means that the game can be played differently each time, as the decisions of the player will create a different result each time the game is played. Kramer (2000) calls this the element of chance. Each instance of the game will resemble other instances as the rules limit what can happen and the behaviour of the players, but each instance will be unique. This is why people will play the same game time and time again, as each time it is played it offers new, though similar, experiences. In McLuhan's terms, games are a "cool medium" as they require a high level of participation (McLuhan 2001: 25). This makes games like recipes, where the text of the rules offers instructions for procedures, but the final product is always the result of the reader, i.e. the player or the chef. Markku Eskelinen calls games a "configurative practice" (2001) because of this combination of elements, which he notes distinguishes games from purely narrative forms, such as the novel or cinema, although games do clearly have narrative elements (see Aarseth 1997, Murray 1997 on narrative in games).

The components of board games are likely to lead to the game being played on a table top, often requiring some sort of board, as Parlett (1999: 5) notes. This combination of board and table top games also appears in Bell (1979). Yet not all board games do require a board: Klaus-Jürgen Wrede's *Carcassonne* consists of building a map with tiles and using pieces to claim territory and features on this map. It does not have a fixed board, but it generates a board during play. It is possible to separate board games from role playing games, such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, which are table top games and require a physical meeting of players, but do not use a board. Indeed, Christopher Lehrich (2005) suggests that role playing games can be considered as rituals, as they offer a model of play in which no one wins, but where all players work together to construct a narrative within constraints. Board games require the possibility of a winner as well as a shared playing space.

Board and table top games, then, both represent a form of social activity which has a system of rules which is accepted by the players. The text of the rules interacts with the other pieces to create a multimodal playing experience. The text of the game, then, includes these pieces (boards, counters, etc.) as well as the rules. Games as texts are highly participative and open, in Umberto Eco's (1989: 1–23) sense of open as requiring the reader to contribute to the shape of the text by selecting and combining elements. Concretely, board games should be able to be played on a table top, but do not necessarily have a board, although there will be some form of playing area and shared resources (draw/discard piles, roles, etc.).

So, to recap, games are not reducible to their written rules: they consist of the interaction between the players and the multiple elements of the board game, e.g. text, images, board, pieces. The game in translation should offer a similar playing experience (inclusive of the variations possible within the rules) in whatever language it is played in, if it is to remain the same game. We may assume that the textual elements of the game will be the elements most visibly changed in translation.

### **3. Translating the Texts of Board Games**

In the following sections I will analyse the texts involved in the translation of board games. My focus is situations where the text is multimodal through uses of images or layout, as examples from games show. I begin with the rules before moving onto the components and the in-game text, such as cards where new rules or abilities – the iconic “Get Out of Jail Free” – are introduced.

It is possible to argue that there should not be a distinction between rules and in-game text. As the games blogger Melissa notes in a post about translating board games (2007), the text of the rules can be considered to be expanded by the in-game text. This is the case in Üwe Rosenberg's *Agricola*, the game she is discussing, where the cards used in-game alter the way the game plays and so supplement the rule book. I would argue that the distinction between the text of the rules and in-game text is worth maintaining, as in-game text is an essential part of the game situation — you cannot play the game without accessing it — whereas the text of the rules is supplemental to playing the game: players must know the rules before play, but they might not be consulted during the game, especially once players are familiar with how the game works. For example, in a traditional game like chess, where there is no in-game text, experienced players will not consult the rulebook to check if a move is valid, as they have internalised the rules. As such, the text of the rules does not form part of the game situation, but the rules do operate throughout the play of the game. In a modern game such as *Discworld: Ankh Morpork*, in-game text provided on cards alters the possibilities for

the players. This text must fit within the physical space of the cards; a fuller explanation is available in the rulebook. In-game text and the text of the rules are bound together as constitutive of the game, but they remain distinct in their presentation and their use in the game situation.

### 3.1. The Rules

The rules of any board game must be included in the package of the game. As noted above, the basic rules of play may be altered once the game has begun by cards (such as a “Get Out of Jail Free” card in *Monopoly*), but these are distinct from the presentation of the rules as such.

The rules of a board game must include certain information that allows the players to play the game: how to set up the game, what the function of the pieces is, how a round takes place, and what the victory conditions are. This information may be more or less complex, depending on the game, and may be supplemented by further information for special cases. For example, in Go, it is impossible to make a “suicidal” move, where one player is guaranteed to lose the piece (stone) they have just placed. The rules are therefore an operative text, in Katharina Reiss’s (2004) typology, as they produce the conditions for the game to take place. It goes without saying that the translation of the rules will maintain this text type if the target text is to continue functioning as the rules of a game.

In addition, the rules often start with a presentation of the basic premise of the game, explaining what players are hoping to achieve (world domination, the first to reach a number of victory points, etc.) and how the game generally proceeds without going into detail. This part of the rules is often called the “Overview” or “Goal”. Such signalling is typical of the rules of games, increasing the coherence of the text and highlighting the victory conditions of the game. In some games with a strong theme, this overview may also include a rationale and back story to the game: for example, in Martin Wallace’s *Discworld: Ankh Morpork*, there is an explanation that the city’s leader has vanished and so someone needs to take control of the city. The text then explains that in each turn a player will play a card and that each player has different victory conditions. In a cooperative game like Matt Leacock’s *Forbidden Island*, the overview section makes clear that the players have to work together. The rules, then, also have an informative element to their text-type.

The rules of the games considered here are written texts, but they also use multimodal elements to make the text clearer. This can aid translation of games, as the illustrations clarify the relationship between rules and play. In addition, as the rules tend to appear as a booklet they can be printed independently of the pieces: in some cases all that is necessary to create a foreign language version of a game is a translation of the rule book.

### 3.1.1. Setting up the Game

The text which explains how to set up comprises two parts: an explanation of what the pieces are and instructions for how to arrange them. The text often includes images of the pieces and their names; it may not explain what their functions are within the game at this point, but it will name them so that when reading the rules the players can recognise what piece is being referred to. In addition, it is common to include an image of a play area, allowing players to see how to arrange the materials, what they hold in their hands, etc. The section of the rule book which details how to set up the game is thus necessarily multimodal. The list of components may not be illustrated, as in the case of *Puerto Rico*, *Forbidden Island* and others, but it needs to make clear what elements of the game are referred to, so even in games where there are no illustrations, there are key reminders of what the pieces look like. In *Forbidden Island*, for instance, it is made clear that the Treasure Cards have a red back, while the Flood cards have a blue back. In other cases, such as *Carcassonne* and *Discworld: Ankh Morpork*, this list of contents is illustrated, showing pictures of the pieces as well as explaining what they are.

The set-up section does not need to be illustrated, so long as it is clear what each element mentioned refers to and how it needs to be set up for the beginning of the game. When the set-up does not include a board, as in *San Juan* and *Carcassonne*, there are few illustrations. When there are boards and/or complex play areas to set up, on the other hand, these tend to be illustrated. For *Puerto Rico*, the central, shared play area is pictured with annotations to explain what the pieces refer to.

Even if it does not contain images showing the set up or components, the text refers to parts of the game beyond the rules text, often physical pieces as well as the board or playing area. These elements of the text are foundational for establishing which terms are used throughout. In both the source and target texts connections must be made between the physical elements of the game and their role in the rules.

### 3.1.2. Playing the Game

The section of the rule book explaining how the game is played contains the instructions necessary for each player to make their move. These instructions will explain just what a move consists of – sometimes a single action, sometimes multiple actions. This element of the text also tends to be multimodal, as examples are given through illustrations of possible moves as well as illegal moves. There is often a use of bullet points or section headings to make clear how the game works. While less visually focused than the sorts of multimodal layouts discussed by Rick Iedema (2003: 33–38), this presentation of the text on the page is still

multimodal in its use of visual means to enhance textual meaning. Some games, such as Andreas Seyfarth's *Puerto Rico* and *San Juan*, use a dual column system for the text, to help make clearer how to play the game. On the left are clearly explained rules, with illustrated examples, summaries and other aids for players on the right.

The game's rules are carefully laid out and designed to facilitate play: clarity is therefore an important element of the text. As such, different fonts may be used, as well as bold type or italics (see Van Leeuwen 2006: 144 for discussion of typography and multimodality<sup>2</sup>). The use of diagrams in examples is equally designed to make clear what is possible and not possible in the game. The game rules, then, are multimodal in their use of a combination of words, pictures and typography. For a translator, this clarity is equally important, and as the *skopos* — to use Hans Vermeer's (2004) term for the goal — of the translation is to produce a game that can be played, rules tend to be translated in such a way that it is clear to the players just what is and what is not possible. Board game rules here differ from the translation of text in video games, which aims to "convey the maximum entertainment value of the game for the target players" (O'Hagan, 2009): the rules for board games need to be translated in such a way to produce the most easily usable text.

### **3.2. In-Game Text**

#### **3.2.1. The Board and the Pieces**

The board and pieces offer a place where text that needs to be referred to in-game can be printed. Many games try to avoid using a large amount of text on the board. Boards tend to be made of heavy cardboard and so cost more to produce than other paper elements of a game, which may explain why publishers often avoid producing boards which will need localising to each new audience<sup>3</sup>. Less expensive pieces, such as cards, offer an opportunity for localisation and often contain more text, as I shall discuss in section 3.2.2.

Very few games use words on pieces, preferring to use abstract symbols (such as a blue pawn, one of the pieces in *Forbidden Island*). *Carcassonne*, for example, avoids the use of text on its board tiles. In effect such games are designed to be translated and played in language environments different to where they were created. Some games can therefore be considered already globalised texts.

Not all games avoid using words. In *Trans Europa*, the board is a stylised map of Europe stretching from the west of France to Russia. The players connect cities using stylised train lines; most of the cities are named using the local version of their names, e.g. Roma rather than Rome, Moskva rather than Moscow. The board only uses the Roman alphabet, so cities with names in other alphabets use their Romanised versions. For an



audience that is used to Roman characters, the board does not need translation. However, it does offer an element of unfamiliarity in the place names, which may cause in-game translation by players who may switch between their local versions of the place name and the printed version. Even these games, then, can be played outside of their source language environment without needing the translation of the board or pieces and can be considered globalised, but to a lesser degree than a game like *Carcassonne*.

Interestingly, one traditional game breaks with this tendency of avoiding using text on game pieces: Chinese Chess (also known as *Xiàngqí*). Here the pieces are counters with the Chinese character for their role on top of them. The characters are printed in red and black. These characters are seldom translated into abstract symbols in versions of the game made for use outside of Chinese speaking areas, so players must learn the Chinese characters to be able to play the game. This gives readers of Chinese a distinct advantage over players who do not read Chinese, who may confuse the characters.

Chinese Chess shows a possibility of resistance to translation in games: the Chinese characters can be viewed as just abstract symbols required to be learned to play the game. This aspect reinforces the idea that games have a playable form which is not language bound; even when they contain verbal elements, these can be viewed as a series of abstract symbols that are specific to the game: it is their significance within the game that matters to players. The cultural specific elements of games, then, can be integrated into the experience of playing the game, limiting the need for transcultural adaptation.

### 3.2.2. Cards

Most in-game text appears on cards that alter the actions that can be taken. *Monopoly*, for example, has in-game text on cards which affect the actions that players can take. Some games are entirely card driven, e.g. *Discworld: Ankh Morpork*. Here all the actions that players can take are determined by the cards in their hands. Each card is named after a character or place from Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series of novels, with an illustration of that character or place. Most cards also have some text that explains what happens when they are used as an action, for example, forcing other players to give you money or moving their pieces around the board.

As the in-game text affects the playing of the game, it is operative in function and tends to be explicitly expressed. It is, as I mentioned at the start of section 3, effectively an extension of the rules and acts like rules text in this sense. In-game text is, however, limited in the length that it can take: it must fit onto the physical space of the cards. This constraint is avoided in some games by the liberal use of images on cards so that no

words are required to show their functioning (as in the case of *Caylus Magna Carta*, discussed in section 4 below). Alternatively, images may be used as supplements to the verbal text on the card, as in the case with the Bohnenfeld card in *Agricola* (discussed in Melissa 2007). In this case, the materials necessary to activate the card are shown on the card (in words). The cost of playing it and the single victory point that it will score are indicated by means of images. The function of the card, producing vegetables, is shown as an image of vegetable tokens piled up on a card on the bottom right of the card. A player with no knowledge of German but with some knowledge of the game system could use the card effectively.

The rules and the in-game text, then, can be translated between languages. Clarity and usability are key elements in their translation, as they are in the translation of websites (Pierini 2007), another multimodal form of text. In addition many games are designed as globalised texts, so that they do not require translation of much material (except the rulebook), or, in the case of card driven games, are designed in such a way that the verbal language is printed on elements (cards, rulebooks) that can be replaced without replacing all the elements of the game. The multimodal aspects of games increase the clarity of the rules by showing examples — in effect there is a translation from text to image which aids interlingual translation as the multimodal aspects make clearer what the written text is referring to.

#### **4. Translating *Caylus Magna Carta***

Board games, then, are multimodal texts which comprise different components. The main areas for translation are the rules, which can involve illustrations and diagrams as well as text, and in-game text, most often printed on cards and the board. This section analyses how the translations of *Caylus Magna Carta* address this multimodality and face the task of producing a text that is usable as a guide to playing the game.

##### **4.1. The Game**

The game *Caylus Magna Carta*, first released in 2007, is a card-based version of the larger board game *Caylus*, which was also designed by William Attia. In *Caylus Magna Carta* the players represent builders on a medieval castle. The play area represents the road and town that build up around the castle. Points are gained for building the castle, for building prestige buildings along the road and for earning gold, resources and money. In the course of each turn, the players can place workers, build buildings or pass. Each player has cards that represent buildings in their hand and more may be drawn from a shuffled pile, making *Caylus Magna Carta* a game with incomplete information (see Binmore 2007: 88) as players do not know what the other players hold in their hands or what the next card they can draw will be. Placing workers and building buildings

allow players to gain resources and wealth. At the end of each turn, players can build some of the castle. The game therefore combines resource management with city building and worker placement. The winner is the player with the most points.

The game comprises multiple components. Resource markers are made out of painted wood cubes. Workers are represented by coloured wooden cylinders<sup>4</sup>. There are illustrated cardboard tokens representing the castle (and its victory points) and wealth (deniers). The play area is made of illustrated cards, with pictures of buildings whose function and rules are explained in the rule book. There are also pictographic reminders of how the buildings function on their cards; for example, the Market card shows a picture of a white cube with an arrow to four deniers, letting players know that they may exchange any resource cube for four deniers.

This pictographic representation means that the game has no in-game text, suggesting it has been designed for a multilingual market. There are also very few culturally specific items that would affect the game play, reducing the need for cultural adaptation. For instance, the title refers to a city in southern France, but this knowledge is not essential or relevant for playing the game. Only the rulebook and box cover need translating; this reduces the need for expensive reprinting of all the materials. The rules come in a short booklet and comprise five pages in both the Beginner and Standard versions. In addition, there is a two-page spread in the centre of the booklet explaining how the buildings function. The challenge for the translator, then, lies in the need to produce a set of rules that allow players to play the game, rather than in adapting the text for a different cultural audience.

## 4.2. The Translations

*Caylus Magna Carta* has been officially released in French, English, German, Finnish, Swedish and Dutch ("Caylus Magna Carta" n.d.). It was first released in 2007 in French by Ystari Games; their website ("Ystari Games" n.d.) offers pdf files of both Beginner and Standard sets of rules in French, English and German. Only the German rules accredit their translator, Birgit Irgang. Either the French or English text is therefore a "covert translation" following Juliane House's (1997: 69) terminology, as it does not present itself as a translation. As Ystari is a French company, based in Argenteuil, it would be reasonable to surmise that French was the language of composition of the rules. The paratextual material that supports this assumption is a note in the Thanks part of the Standard rules in English, which says "*And many thanks to Rick from Cyril !*" (original emphasis) – this comment is missing from the German and French versions, suggesting that Rick, whoever he may be, supported the English translation of the text in some way. An amateur translation of the standard rules into Spanish, which is accredited to "X-51", states that it is translated from the "texto original en inglés" [the original English text] (X-

51 2007: 5), but this only means that the translator used the English text as a source text: the thank you to Rick is translated within the Spanish text.

In addition to the official translations, there are amateur translations, including the already mentioned translation into Spanish, a Hungarian translation and a Russian translation, all available on BoardGameGeek ("Caylus Magna Carta" n.d.). These amateur translations and the official translations are interlingual translations, to use Roman Jakobson's (1959: 233) terminology. There are also many intralingual translations in the form of summaries, player aids and guides, again available on BoardGameGeek ("Caylus Magna Carta" n.d.). I will only focus here on the interlingual translations of the rules, rather than the more diffuse area of the intralingual translations.

### 4.3. Rules

The rules are a multimodal text, laid out in columns (echoing the *Puerto Rico* layout discussed in 3.1.2). Many illustrations are used to give examples of what actions a player may take and their consequences, to show how the play area is set up, and to explain how certain rules function. The illustrations and layout are therefore an integral part of the rules and help players to be able to learn to play the game better.

These features are retained across all translations of the rules accessible online. Even the amateur translations attempt to replicate the layout, with varying degrees of success. The official translations (in English, French and German) look identical. All translations replicate the use of illustrations. For the official translations, this is because the publishers Ystari hold the copyright to the images and the templates for the text layout, so it is easy for them to recreate the look of the rules across different languages. The amateur translations, on the other hand, are created by people without access to those same resources: the images are scanned in and edited from printed copies of the rules or from the pdfs. The level of presentation in some of the amateur translations approaches the standards of the professional translations, especially in the Russian rules. The Spanish rules by X-51 look less impressive, but the information allows players to follow the rules and play the game. The attempts to replicate the layout and presentation of the rule book in both professional and amateur translations suggest that the multimodal aspects of the text are considered an important part of the experience of the game by players.

This is not to say that there are not some differences in translation between the languages. For example, the second page of the rules is "Éléments du jeu" [Parts of the Game] in French, but in English it is "Game Principles" and in German "Spielprinzip" [Principles of the Game]. X-51's translation in Spanish translates this as "Inicio del juego" [Start of

the Game], although the setup of the game has been described before. The illustration on this page shows the road/play area of the game, which then gives players an understanding of the use of the different material components of the game (pieces, cards, etc.). The French text therefore corresponds best to the image, but the title of the text in translation is less relevant to players than the function of this section of text combined with the image.

The main body of the text is written in such a way that it is clear, using short sentences and indicative verbs for each player as well as using bold type to make the actions clearer. However, as the example shows, there are minor differences between the versions:

Le joueur paie **1 denier** au stock et place **un ouvrier de sa réserve sur une carte de la route**. [French version]

[The player pays **1 denier** to the bank and places **a worker from their reserve on a card along the road**]

The player pays **1 denier** to the stock and places **1 worker on a card along the road**. [English version]

Der Spieler zahlt **1 Denar** an die Bank und stellt **1 Arbeiter auf Eine Karte der Strasse**. [German version]

[The player pays **1 Denier** to the Bank and places **1 worker on a card along the road**]

The French here uses more gender-specific language than the other two texts. In addition to having male players (*le joueur* rather than a possible *le/la joueur*), it leaves the worker [*ouvrier*] as masculine, whereas the German and English both refer to this using the number 1, avoiding the suggestion that all workers are male as well as making clear the number of workers that may be placed. The German text also translates the currency (*denier/Denar*) into the standard German spelling, though it does not localise it. The differences there are seldom leave the reader in doubt as to what the statement could mean in relation to the game.

An example of how clarity of instruction is prioritised in translation can be found in the German text on page two ("Spielvorbereitung") where the translator has added the sentence "Die übrigen Münzen und Rohstoffwürfel bilden die Bank" [The remaining coins and resource cubes form the bank]. There is no equivalent for this sentence in either the French or the English text, but it clarifies that the remaining materials continue to be part of the game, rather than being removed from play. This information is implicit in the other versions.

Some concepts are explained differently across the languages. For example, on page five, the rules state:

En cas d'égalité, il n'y pas de départage entre les ex-aequo. [French version]

[If everyone has the same [score], there is no tie-breaker between the ex-aequo]

There is no tie-breaker. [English version]

Im Falle eine Gleichstands gibt es mehrere Sieger. [German version]  
[In the case of a tie, there are multiple winners]

In the game situation, these statements have the same effect, i.e. if players have the same amount of points then no one wins outright, but the English states this implicitly, as the concept of a tie-break includes the idea that one player will come out as overall winner. The German modulates the form of the sentence to a positive rather than negative statement. The French text uses a formal Latin term, *ex-aequo* 'on equal footing', which does not appear in the British National Corpus and only once in the English corpus on Leeds Collection of Internet Corpora, though it does appear 47 times in the French corpus there. It therefore appears that the expression is much more common in French. The tenor of the text elsewhere tends to be similar across languages, but here a different degree of formality offers the same contextual information.

The experience of the game as a game therefore remains similar using the different language versions of the rules, as the rules provide a clear guide for how to play. The translations reproduce the multimodal elements of the text as the illustrations and layout are relevant for understanding the possibilities for actions in the game. The lack of in-game text and the use of illustrations suggest that this game is one of those referred to above, designed as a globalised text ready for translation into multiple languages. This multimodal design explains why, despite small differences, the target texts tend to function as an equivalent set of rules that allow the game to be played in the same way in different languages.

## 5. Conclusion

Board games offer a multimodal, participatory text which combines rules, playing pieces (including the board) and in-game text. The game exists in the combination of these items. The rulebooks themselves may also be multimodal, using words and images in order to show how the game is played. Translators need to maintain the function of the rulebook as a guide to playing the game and so allow the same game to be played in the same way in different languages. Indeed, some games avoid using a lot of text in-game so that the need for translation is reduced. Yet even when games use language specific items, such as the use of Chinese characters in Chinese Chess, these elements can be integrated by players as part of the system of the game that must be learned to play the game.

The translations of *Caylus Magna Carta* show the goal of achieving equivalence of effect as they offer the same game experience to the players, replicating the function of text as well as its layout. The translation, then, aims to avoid changes in the meaning of the rules as printed, so that the game remains the same, but there is still some leeway

to adapt the text to the target audience in order to achieve that meaning. This is aided by the way the game has been designed, using many illustrations and reducing in-game text. The use of multimodality in the form of images reduces the need for translation, just as it reduces the need for players to read text during the game.

This article has opened the field, showing what elements make up the text of the rules and parts of the game and how translation of games has to account for their multimodal and open nature. Due to restrictions of space, it has not entered into a more complex discussion of ideology, for example, how representations of race and gender in games are translated (or subverted) and how this alters the experience of the game for different target audiences who may have different cultural connotations for those elements. There is a rich vein of research potential here, in a genre of text that is often overlooked but which still offers an insight into forms of interaction and the movement of texts across cultures.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I do not propose to discuss translation as a form of game or apply economic game theory to translation in this article; rather, my focus is on how board games as texts have been translated. For applications of game theory to translation, see Gorlée (1994: 67–85) and Cronin (1995, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to the editors of this special issue for pointing out this reference to me.

<sup>3</sup> The best-known exception here is *Monopoly*, which uses a large amount of text on the board, but at the same time is localised for different countries and even for individual cities.

<sup>4</sup> User generated images of the game showing these elements are available on BoardGameGeek ("Caylus Magna Carta", n.d.).