

Different Personality Nuances Caused By Translation Differences  
(Semantic Analysis of Fictional Characters Personality Differences Caused By Japanese and  
English Dialogue Translation in Genshin Impact)

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Abstract

*Genshin Impact is a video game developed by miHoYo, a Shanghai based video game developer and animation studio. Launched globally as an online Action Role Playing Game at September 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Genshin Impact, or just Genshin in Japanese, came with voiceover dialogues in its cinematic dubbed in 4 different language, which is Chinese, English, Korean and Japanese. Genshin's user interface and dialogue subtitles also came translated into many other languages including simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese, English, French, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese. Translating the texts and dialogues into multiple languages, albeit still carry the main idea of the story and game concept, occasionally causing different nuances and meanings among different language. For example, the personality and characteristics of the game's fictional characters sometimes are being depicted differently in each language. This article is written in with the aim of presenting some examples and analysis concerning those differences in each language translation.*

**Keywords : Translation, Video Game, Genshin, Japanese, English, Fictional Characters, Semantic**

1. Preface

An individual's characteristic and personality can be judged by the way they act, react and talk. While most of these judgments are mostly based on the most common stereotypes believed in the society they live in, they can often be the simplest and accurate way to measure one's intelligence, moral standard, ethics, profession and even degree of education. Even a fictional character's personality can be judged and measured semantically based on their choice of words, how they convey their feelings verbally, or how they reply to what other people say to them.

There have been numerous articles and linguists which stated, that speaking in different language may change the utterer's personality during the use of said language. While there are some who denies these believe, there are some multilingual people who truly feel and believe that they are a different person when they speak with different language other than their mother tongue.

Bilingual 1: *"When I'm around Anglo-Americans, I find myself awkward and unable to choose my words quickly enough ... When I'm amongst Latinos/Spanish-speakers, I don't feel shy at all. I'm witty, friendly, and ... I become very outgoing."*

Bilingual 2: *"In English, my speech is very polite, with a relaxed tone, always saying "please" and "excuse me." When I speak Greek, I start talking more rapidly, with a tone of anxiety and in a kind of rude way..."*

Bilingual 3: *"I find when I'm speaking Russian I feel like a much more gentle, 'softer' person. In English, I feel more 'harsh,' 'businesslike."*

This phenomenon may have connection to the culture from where the target languages originated, or the social situation where the target language is mostly used. There are some who argue that speaking in different languages didn't change one's personality at all, but they do make the utterer sounds different than when they used their mother tongue to speak, because speaking in other languages change the utterer's perception and how they see the person they are talking with.

But how about when some fictional characters, from a cartoon show, TV series, movies or video games get a voiceover into another language? Would they seem, sound or act like a completely different person, albeit they are still uttering the same idea or topic just because they say it in different language? If they do, is this another example of the phenomenon stated above, where someone may turn into a completely different person when they talk in different language? If they do, is it because of the culture where the target language originated from, or is it caused by the change in the listener's perceptions toward the speaker?

This paper will discuss a small example of how fictional characters may seem like a different person with different personality when their dialogue or lines got translated or voiceover into other language.

## 2. Research Methodology

This paper will be presented using descriptive-analysis method which is focused on semantic analysis of each sample dialogues that would give us information about the personality of the fictional characters who uttered them.

The paper will compare 2 version of the same line uttered by the sample characters, which is the English version and Japanese version. The two different language lines must contain the same message and context, and then being compared with one another in order to perceive how different way of saying things in different language may gave a different perception of personality and characteristics to those who hear them.

The result from data analysis will be written as a conclusion in a descriptive fashion, describing the difference that could happen between English uttering and Japanese uttering same character.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1 Semantic Analysis

As Fillmore and Baker (2010, p317) mention in *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis*, semantic is the study of relation between linguistic forms and their meaning, and thus, semantic analysis proper is a process or activity of showing on how features and meanings are anchored in features of linguistic form.

According to Wilhelm, Seidl and Hack (2013, p6), the task of semantic analysis is to determine properties and check conditions that are relevant for the well-formedness of programs, according to the rule of programming language.

#### 3.2 Translation

While most writings about translations are focused on Indo-European languages, in which the linguistic and cultural backgrounds are almost similar, resulting in minor bias and topological differences, Wakabayashi (1991, p3) stated that comparing the translation between two languages with a completely culture and linguistic roots does big differ in both qualitative and in grades of difficulties compared to the translation of those with closer culture and linguistic roots. The translation between English and Japanese, two different languages with completely different culture, history and roots, is an example of it. Wakabayashi also stated (1991, p4) that the more different the culture of the two language does, the less the probability is in making a perfect translation.

Donovan (2012, p3) mentioned, that Japanese and English languages paradigmatic issues, i.e. they have significant lexical and morpho-syntactic differences which give rises to potentially problematic translation issues. Furthermore, Japanese and English languages also have syntagmatic issues concerning grammatical nonsynchronous between the two languages.

#### 3.3 About Genshin Impact

Genshin (Known in East Asian countries as *Genshin* ([Chinese](#): 原神; [pinyin](#): *Yuánshén*; [Japanese](#): <sup>げんしん</sup>原神; [rōmaji](#): *Genshin*; [Korean](#): 원신; [romaja](#): *Wonsin*)), or *Genshin Impact* as it is known in Europe and America, is an open world, action role-playing-game

developed by *miHoYo*, a Shanghai based game developer company in China. The online game was launched at September 2020 for multiple game platforms such as PC, Android, and Playstation 4.

The in-game story take place in a fictional world called *Teyvat*, in which 7 distinct nations, each lives under the rule of one respective gods or archons. When the game was first launched, only two among the 7 nations are become accessible for the player to explore, *Mondstadt* and *Liyue*. The playable characters consist of two main characters (a male and female twin sibling each player can choose to play with), and plus six other playable characters.

With each updates, the number of new characters players can earned through “*gacha*” system increased, each carry their own names, personalities, background stories and abilities. Once the relationship between the main character (dubbed, the traveler) and each of these side characters grows, a much deeper background stories about each respective characters can be opened, deepen our knowledge about their personalities and relations with other characters.

Since *Genshin* is a game developed and released to be playable in many different countries, *Genshin’s* in-game dialogue, narration and user interface came in voiceover languages include Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean. Text languages include simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese, English, French, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Vietnamese.

#### 4. Data Presentation

##### 4.1 Ganyu’s Dialogue and Voicelines

“The secretary to the Liyue *Qixing*. The blood of both human and illuminated beast flows within her veins. Graceful and quiet by nature, yet the gentle disposition of *qilin* sees not even the slightest conflict with even the most arduous of workloads. After all, Ganyu firmly believes that all the work she does is in honor of her contract with Rex Lapis, seeking the well-being of all living things within Liyue”.

-Ganyu’s description from Genshin Impact’s official website-

Dialogue sample:

Japanese	English
北斗について...	<b>About Beidou...</b>
近頃、玉京台では南十字船隊へのクレ	Recently, everyone in Yujing Terrace has

<p>ームが止まりません。でも私が見た北斗船長の璃月に対する貢献は、でたらめな噂話を流す人々には想像もできないほどずっと多いです...あっ、すみません、失言でした。</p>	<p>been saying nasty things about the Crux Fleet. But in my personal opinion, Beidou's contribution to Liyue Harbor goes far beyond what those miserable rumor-loving <u>heathens</u> could even contemplate! ...Oops! I'm sorry, I.. I'm not quite sure how that one slipped out...</p>
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Analysis:

The line above is Ganyu's line about Beidou. The context of the line is Ganyu's opinion about Beidou. The in-game dialogue from Beidou herself describing Ganyu and her relationship as "like house on fire" which means they both are quite close to each other, supported by Beidou's statement in Japanese "甘雨とは結構仲良くしてる" (going along very well). According to Ganyu in the text above, many merchants in Liyue don't like Beidou and spread bad rumors about her. But Ganyu disagree with that because according to her, Beidou's contribution to Liyue is "ずっと多い" (extremely many). But, in the English lines, Ganyu called all the people who spread bad rumors as "heathen", which either means "Godless people/people who are not member of any religions" or "people regarded as lacking culture or morale principles". This word is not found in the Japanese version. This gave an indication that Ganyu who speaks in English is more outspoken, even though she apologize for her remarks after that, compared to Ganyu who speaks in Japanese.

#### 4.2 Eula's Dialogue and Voicelines

A rebellious descendant of the old aristocracy who is always out on the battlefield. As one born into the old aristocracy, carrying the bloodline of sinners, Eula has needed a unique approach to the world to navigate the towering walls of prejudice peacefully. Of course, this did not prevent her from severing ties with her clan. As the outstanding Spindrift Knight, she hunts down Mondstadt's enemies in the wild to exact her unique "vengeance."

-Eula's description from Genshin Impact's official website-

Dialogue sample:

Japanese	English
<p>おやすみ 骨笛の子守唄が聞きたい？永遠に目が</p>	<p><b>Good Night</b> Would you like to hear a lullaby on the</p>

<p>覚めなくなるけど... こういう復讐の仕方はつまらないわ。</p>	<p>bone whistle? It'll send you into a deep and everlasting sleep... Hmm, no. When it comes to my revenge, far more imaginative means of retribution are in order...</p>
<p><b>剣技</b> 私と西風剣術について学びたい？一人前になった君に復讐するのも、悪くないわね。</p>	<p><b>Bladework</b> You want to learn some Favonius Bladework? Heh, alright then, I'll teach you.... Oh yes, I'll teach you, alright, mark my words...</p>

Analysis:

Coming from a noble family who taught her to act in certain formal manners, Eula is well versed in how a noble men and women should speak and behave. But, in some of her lines, in Japanese, Eula rarely speak in formal *sonkeigo* (Japanese formal language). Instead, she speaks with a normal *joseigo* (an informal language style usually uttered by female speakers). On the contrary, in English, Eula's line is more refined and formal than her lines in Japanese, but her use of the world "revenge" is just as many. She said 恨み (*urami*, means "vengeance") 4 times, the word 復習 (*fukushuu*, means "revenge") 14 times in Japanese, and only said the world "revenge" 4 times in English, implying that Eula is not as outspoken and more formal and reserved in English compared to in Japanese.

#### 4.3 Beidou's Dialogue and Voicelines

Captain of the Crux, with quite the reputation in Liyue. There are those who say she can split mountains and part the sea. Others say she draws lightning through her sword. Some say that even the mightiest of sea beasts are no match for her. For those not from Liyue, it may sound like a hearty joke, but those that have sailed with her will say "No matter what sea beasts there may be, Beidou will be sure to split them all in two".

-Beidou's description from Genshin Impact's official website-

Dialogue sample:

Japanese	English
<p>雷の日 おい、雷野郎。海の上でだって怖くないんだ、陸の上じゃなおさら怖くないぜ。</p>	<p><b>When Thunder Strikes</b> Hey, it's just a little lightning. No need to fear it on the open ocean, so there's even less need to fear it on dry land.</p>

<p>甘雨について</p> <p>甘雨とは結構仲良くしてるよ！でもまあ、彼女は「璃月七星」の秘書だろ？「七星」がアタシのことを嫌ってるのは今に始まったことじゃないからな。アタシは別に構わないけど、あの子に迷惑をかけるのは嫌なんだ。うん、この話は他言無用にしてくれ。</p>	<p><b>About Ganyu</b></p> <p>Privately, Ganyu and I get on like a house on fire! But as you know, she's the secretary to the Liyue Qixing... and I'm not exactly <b>in their good books</b> right now! Doesn't bother me, but I wouldn't want to put Ganyu in a difficult position. So just keep what I said between us, yeah?</p>
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Analysis:

In the first sample of line, the context is what Beidou said when thunder strikes. In Japanese, it is implied that she is talking not to the player, but to the thunder that strikes instead, calling the thunder “野郎” (*yarou*, a very rude swearword toward someone) stating that if thunder is not frightening for her at sea, it’s even less frightening on land. This statement shows Beidou’s bravery even against the nature itself. But in the English line, Beidou talked to the player instead, seemingly tried to calm him/her down and not to afraid of the thunder, which shows a much more caring side of Beidou instead of her brave side.

In the second line, Beidou tells the player about her and Ganyu’s relationship. According to Beidou, in spite of the fact that Ganyu is the secretary for Qixing, the leading organization in Liyue who clearly dislikes her, she and Ganyu are best friends. But, due to Ganyu’s position, she is keeping her distance so that Ganyu won’t get in trouble among her co-workers and superiors, and Beidou ask the player to keep her friendship with Ganyu a secret. This indicates how much Beidou cares about Ganyu. But in Japanese lines, Beidou state it bluntly that the Qixing organization clearly hate her by saying “「七星」がアタシのことを嫌ってる” (The Qixing hates me), while in the English line, Beidou merely said “I’m not exactly **in their good books** right now”, which indicates that she still have some positive view concerning the Qixing.

Beidou lines in Japanese is giving her an image as more outspoken, brash, and adventurous compared to Beidou in English which sounds more caring, protective and a good leader example.

#### 4.4 Xinyan’s Dialogue and Voicelines

Rock 'n' roll is an avant-garde art in Liyue Harbor and Xinyan is the pioneer in this field. She rebels against ossified prejudices, using her music and passionate singing to awaken dazed souls fatigued by worldly matters. If you get the chance, do not miss out on her next performance!

-Xinyan's description from Genshin Impact's official website-

Dialogue sample:

Japanese	English
<p><b>強面</b></p> <p>あんた、アタイが怖くねーのか？ハハッ、みんなはアタイのことを刀みてーな目つきで、着てる服も喋り方もめちゃくちゃだーって言うんだ。ヤツらはアタイと目があつたらすぐ逃げ出す。ああ、なんだかな...スタイルが違うっただけなのに、アタイ、別に化け物じゃねーし...</p>	<p><b>Frightening</b></p> <p>Not afraid of me, are you? Some folks say I've got eyes like knives, that I don't wear my clothes right, that I don't speak right. They give me a pretty wide berth, too. Really, can't a girl sport her own style without being looked at like she's some weird creature outta who-knows-where?</p>
<p><b>辛炎を知る・4</b></p> <p>琴の練習に付き合っただけで疲れたろ！そろそろ昼めしの時間だ。一緒に食べよーぜ、あんたの分まで作ったんだ！具はトマト、ソーセージに卵焼き...あん？こんなことするヤツに見えないって？バツ、バカにすんなよ！料理とか、可愛く盛り付けたりとか、べっ、別にいいじゃんかよ！</p>	<p><b>More About Xinyan: IV</b></p> <p>Thanks for staying to jam with me! It's almost time for lunch. I've brought your share as well! We've got tomatoes, sausages, fried eggs... Say what? I don't seem like the type? <b>H</b>—Hey now, don't you look down on me. <b>M</b>—Making a nice-looking meal was no problem at all!</p>

Analysis:

In her Japanese dialogue, Xinyan always use the “アタイ” (me) first person to refer to herself. While in Japan nowadays this word is very rarely used and do not have any specifically negative meaning, in the past, the word had received a negative stereotype as a word used mostly by vulgar or unruly women who frequent the red light district in downtown Tokyo. In Japanese version, Xinyan is using “アタイ” to refer to herself as a



*yakuwarigo* stereotype of how she is being misunderstood and being shunned by the people for her scary looking eyes, her clothing style, and her love toward rock n roll, which is, at the beginning of her debut, are not quite popular among the Liyue people

The English lines, however, didn't use the “アタイ” or any other first person indicator that made her different or unique in any way. This leads to an image that in English version, Xinyan is just a normal girl with great dream, contrary to the Japanese Xinyan who sounds like “a rebellious girl fighting against prejudice in the society” (description from in-game story).

#### 4.5. Keqing's Dialogue and Voicelines

The Yuheng of the Liyue Qixing. Keqing has much to say about Rex Lapis' unilateral approach to policymaking in Liyue – but in truth, gods admire skeptics such as her quite a lot. She firmly believes that humanity's future should be determined by humans themselves, and that they can even do better than the archons and adepti have done for them. In order to prove this, she works harder than anyone else.

-Keqing's description from Genshin Impact's official website-

Dialogue sample:

Japanese	English
<p>雨の日</p> <p>すごい大雨...困ったわね。そもそも、昨日終わるはずだった仕事を、どうしてあの人たちは今日まで引き伸ばしたのかしら？</p>	<p><b>When It Rains</b></p> <p>Quite a downpour... Nothing will get done until it clears. Let this be a lesson to those who yesterday said, "I'll do it tomorrow."</p>
<p>好きな食べ物</p> <p>食べ物にはあまり執着しない方なんですけど、あのエビのポテト包み揚げだけは...忘れられないわ。たった一つ食べただけで、口の中が幸せで満たされて、溜まりに溜まったストレスが一気にふっ飛ぶの。</p>	<p><b>Favorite Food</b></p> <p>It makes no logical sense to be greedy with food, but for me, all rationality goes out the window when there's Golden Shrimp Balls involved... They're just irresistible. The taste of a single Golden Shrimp Ball brings me so much joy that all the stress of work just melts away.</p>

Analysis:

In the two dialogue lines above, in English, it is implied that Keqing tends to say more or exaggerate things compared to her lines in Japanese. In the first, Keqing commentary about the rain in Japanese is only “困ったわね”, which means “This is not good”, but in English, she seems to exaggerate by saying “Nothing will get done until it clears”. And she even continues by saying “Let this be a lesson to those who yesterday said, "I'll do it tomorrow."”, while in Japanese she merely questions “そもそも、昨日終わるはずだった仕事を、どうしてあの人たちは今日まで引き伸ばしたのかしら?”, which means “This work can be done yesterday on the first place, so why would they delay the work until tomorrow, anyway?”. In the second line, Keqing is commented about her favorite food, the Golden Shrimp Balls. In Japanese, Keqing’s opinion about the food is “忘れられないわ” which means “It’s unforgettable!”. But in the English language, she praises it even more by saying “all rationality goes out the window when there's Golden Shrimp Balls involved... They're just irresistible”. These two lines implying Keqing’s tendency to exaggerate her opinion is higher in English compared to Japanese.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on data analysis described above, the following conclusions can be made:

- a. There are indeed, some differences on how some opinions, emotions and statements are uttered between English and Japanese language. In spite of both tries to convey the same point, the way the words are being uttered, and how they say it definitely implies difference in personality between same character when they speak in English and when they speak in Japanese. English speaking Ganyu sounds stricter, sharp and outspoken compared to Japanese speaking Ganyu who sounds more calm, gentle and reserved. On the other hand, Japanese Beidou sounds more harsh and passionate than English speaking Beidou who seems more like a caring and sympathetic leader.
- b. While some of the dialogue lines sample sounds like they are saying a completely different thing between Japanese lines and English, they are all still remain faithful to the main ideas and context, or the original language where the game is being developed. While the differences between Japanese and English translation exist and had caused some minor or major differences in nuances and personality of the utterer, the main idea and context remain the same.

Due to the limitation of resources and knowledge of the writer, this paper can't measure how accurate or how far the translated version of the game lines remain faithful to the original language. Further analysis and research may be necessary in comparing the translated version and the original ones.

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