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A REFLECTION ON THE NECESSITY FOR SONG TRANSLATION

Presentado por:
D./Dª. María Gómez Regalado

Responsable de tutorización:
Prof. Dr./Dra. o D./Dª. José María Pérez Fernández

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Abstract

In a world where we are used to having everything translated into our own language, this study aims to reflect on the necessity of song translation. Through these pages, we use the term *song translation* meaning a *singable* translation. Considered as an equivalent of poetry translation, we analyse the translatability of the song according to the controversial debate that has confronted translators and authors for centuries. In addition, in case we assume song translation is necessary or, at least, possible, we identify some of the challenges it entails and the procedures used in already translated songs. The primary goal of this study is to objectively take a look at song translation from different perspectives, considering the relevance and difficulty of the task as well as its result.

Resumen

En un momento en el que prácticamente todo se traduce, este estudio se propone llevar a cabo una reflexión acerca de la necesidad de abordar esta tarea de traducción en el ámbito de las canciones. Entiéndase que por "traducción de canciones" nos referimos a una traducción cantable que se ajuste al contenido musical extralingüístico. Considerando la traducción de canciones como una variante de la traducción poética, analizamos su traducibilidad según el debate abierto entre autores y traductores desde hace siglos. Asimismo, en caso de concluir que la traducción de canciones es necesaria o, al menos, posible, analizamos los distintos retos que esta supone junto con las técnicas de traducción empleadas en canciones ya traducidas. El objetivo principal de este estudio es abordar la traducción de canciones desde la objetividad, así como desde distintos puntos de vista, teniendo en cuenta, no solo la relevancia y dificultad de esta práctica, sino también el propio resultado.

Table of contents

Introduction

Considered one of the oldest professions in the world, translation is combined with an endless list of disciplines to ensure as wide an access as possible to information. In addition, translation allows information exchanges between people who not only speak different languages but also have different backgrounds. Thus, the nature of the texts susceptible to translation is diverse: scientific, legal, literary, economic, cinematographic, and a big etcetera. In this BA thesis we attempt to analyse song translation as one of the most controversial specialties within the field of translation.

In order to conduct a proper analysis, we agree to treat song translation as a variation of poetry translation. Its artistic and creative nature and a series of elements shared between the song and the poem grant us the right to establish such equivalence.

"Music is the universal language. So why, then, do so many songs get translated?" (Torgovnick & Aparta, 2014). We are about to start a critical reflection on the necessity of having a song translated based both on the elements and the function of the song. While it is true that similarities enable us to associate song and poetry translation, there is also a simple but crucial difference between them: the presence in the song of a musical content that needs no translation.

We can currently provide a long list of songs that have been versioned into different languages. We may think those translations are more or less necessary, but one thing is undeniable: the complexity of translating song lyrics. We attempt to present a series of difficulties the translator must face when translating a song. Due to its pluri-codified nature, song translation entails challenges at different levels. First, its similarity to poetry makes song translation also embrace the traditional debate on its potential untranslatability. Secondly, the necessity of merging the target text in the original musical space makes of external linguistic differences a matter of concern.

Many songs have been translated and many others have not. These translations may respond to different circumstances: the popularity of the song in a foreign country, its adoption by a foreign band, a version made by the original band as a kind gesture towards their international fans, the presence of the song as part of a major work such as films or musicals, etc. Not all translations have been equally successful and not all translations have reflected the original song the same way. To better illustrate the previous theoretical aspects and help us develop a critical, still subjective, opinion on song translation, we will analyse some extracts of songs that have been translated into a foreign language, always within the language combination of German (DE), English (EN), Spanish (ES) and French (FR).

This thesis aims to assess the linguistic challenges and translation choices of song translation and to offer a series of samples of already translated songs with strategies that may be more or less adequate, all of this in order to conclude whether song translation is indeed necessary or, on the contrary, leads to a simple degraded version of the original song.

Theoretical framework

This BA thesis has a double aim: the reflection on the necessity of song translation and the analysis of the challenges it entails. The first issue is mainly tackled from a theoretical point of view, while the analysis corresponds to a practical approach. We also favour a holistic approach, considering the song as a single, indivisible entity.

In order to answer the question about the necessity of song translation, we establish a brief comparison between the functions of the song at different times in history. For that purpose, we take a look at different periods described in the history of music. This comparison is combined with current statistics on musical tastes.

This study covers a four-language combination. Therefore, the linguistic challenges of song translation are analysed through a look at contrastive linguistics, taking into account those aspects differing from one language to another.

The questions about the translation challenges of song translation, as well as the debate on the translatability of songs, are to be analysed on the basis of translation theory. Throughout this study, song translation is considered from a poetry translation point of view. This equivalence is based on a series of similarities that enable the treatment of the song as a poem provided with a melody.

In order to keep our analysis as objective as possible, we use as guidelines three different tools taken from translation theory:

1. Type of translation based on Franzon's translation choices: 1) leaving the song untranslated; 2) translating the lyrics not taking the music into account; 3) writing new lyrics to the original music with no relation to the original lyrics; 4) translating the lyrics and adapting the music; 5) adapting the translation to the original music.
2. Translation procedures: Vinay and Darbelnet first proposed seven procedures in 1973. The following are considered oblique or indirect procedures: "oblique translation is another term for free translation where the translator exercises his/her freedom to attain equivalence" (Siregar, 2016, p.52). These methods will help us analyse the way translation challenges are solved:
   a. Transposition: Replacement of one word class with another class without changing the message.
   b. Modulation: Variation of the language, obtained by a change in the point of view.
   c. Adaptation: Creation by the translator of a new situation that can be considered equivalent.
   d. Equivalence: Use of an entirely different structure with different meaning from that of the ST so long as it is considered appropriate in the communicative situational equivalent to that of the ST. [1]

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[1] Siregar, R. (2016). Translation procedures analysis: English - Indonesian motivational book. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science,* Volume 21 (5), pp. 51-57

3. Selection of Berman's twelve deforming tendencies: these tendencies will help us analyse the treatment of the source text:
    a. Clarification: Explicitation, which aims to render clear what does not wish to be clear in the original.
    b. Ennoblement: Tendency on the part of certain translators to improve on the original by rewriting it in a more elegant style. Equally destructive is the opposite (a TT that is too popular in its use of colloquialisms).
    c. Qualitative impoverishment: Replacement of words and expressions with TT equivalents that lack their sonorous richness or, correspondingly, their signifying or iconic features.
    d. Destruction of underlying networks: Destruction of the network of words that is formed throughout the text. Individually, these words may not be significant, but they add an underlying uniformity and sense to the text.
    e. Destruction of expressions and idioms: According to Berman, replacement of an idiom or proverb by its TL equivalent. However, by destruction of proverbs and idioms we mean the loss of expressions and idioms that appear in the ST and are not reflected in the TT. [2]

Methodology

For the purposes of the analysis that has been described, we selected a compilation of songs with their already existing version in a foreign language. The songs were selected within a four-language combination, including English, French, German and Spanish, from different artists and different periods. Likewise, only the lines of the selected songs with a certain linguistic interest were taken into account.

After selecting the extracts from the respective songs, the original versions and the translated versions were aligned and accompanied by a brief explicative/critical comment. Thus, the lyrics of both versions (original and translation) were compared. The parameters were classified into four linguistic categories:

- Type of translation chosen based on Franzon's translation choices
- Linguistic challenges involved in song translation
- Translation techniques employed to solve translation challenges
- Treatment of the ST based on a series of Berman's twelve deforming tendencies

The main objective of the described research was to conclude whether song translation, with all the difficulties it implies, is really necessary in today's society, evaluating the results of the translated songs and the impact they have on the listeners.

In addition, one of the analysed songs has been translated again in order to suggest a more faithful alternative and to put the exposed resources into practice.

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[2] Munday, J. (2012). *Introducing Translation Studies. Theories and Applications.* (3rd Edition). London & New York: Routledge, pp. 281-287

1. Is there a necessity for song translation?

"Dust in the wind" by Kansas, "She loves you" by the Beatles, or "Piano Man" by Billy Joel are just examples from the long list of hits that have been versioned into a foreign language. At a time when everything is translated, should we have songs translated too?

In order to answer the previous question, we are going to analyse first some of the main elements within a song, and secondly, the current function of the song compared to its function at different times in the history of music.

1.1. Elements of the song

From the point of view of music theory, a song was traditionally a "piece of music for voice or voices, whether accompanied or unaccompanied" (Chew et al., 2001). Here are some of the elements of the song as we know it today:

– Melody: "succession or arrangement of sounds organized as an aesthetic whole" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.). It is the core of the song. We may have more than one melody. Usually there is one for the verses and one for the chorus.
– Harmony: "the combining of notes simultaneously, to produce chords, and successively, to produce chord progressions" (Cohn et al., 2001).
– Agogics: related to variations of duration, it is "the quantitative aspect of musical nuances involving all variations from the rigid basic meter (as of retard, pause, accelerando)" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.).
– Silences: absence of sound.
– Timbre: "tonal quality of a sound" (Campbell, 2001). It is the quality of a sound that makes it possible to distinguish the same note produced by different instruments.
– Lyric: "the words of a song" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.).

As a conclusion, it could be said that the textual element of a song, that is, the lyric, is just another element among many others. Music is in fact said to be the "universal language" because melody, harmony, silences, tempo variations, etc. need no translation to reach different cultures. "Translation has the potential to create international / transnational / multicultural communities" (Pérez, 2019, p. 45), but so does music. Lyric would indeed be the only element subject to translation. Should we always translate it? And more important, do we even need to translate it?

1.2. Function of the song

One thing translators always bear in mind is the reason why they translate a text. This means the type of translation and the translation choices depend on the function of the target text. That said, according to Franzon (2014), leaving a song untranslated is a translation decision as any other. Therefore, before we categorically conclude whether song translation is necessary or not, we should reflect on its function.

1.2.1. Function of the song in the Middle Ages

Although music has accompanied the human being since ancient times, its function is easier to identify at certain times in the history of music. Let us take a look at the Middle Ages as an example of a period in which the function of the song required the lyric to be intelligible:

A group of musicians known as minstrels wandered through the courts and cities. At a time when there were no newspapers, they treated their audiences to news and gossip (Brukholder et al., 2019, p. 86). Songs sung by minstrels were indeed a rich source of information and they were therefore supposed to be performed in the language of the audience.

However, music had some other functions too. For example, music was considered to be a purer means of communication with God. Thus, the Ancient Christian Church added music to its prayers. The Gregorian chant, "a term conventionally applied to the central branch of Western Plainchant, was the official monophonic unison chant (originally unaccompanied) of the Christian liturgies" (Levy et al., 2001). Although the repertory was mostly in Latin, the text was intended to be intelligible due to that aim of communicating with God. That is precisely the belief that led to one of the most controversial debates in the history of music. With the birth of polyphony, those defending tradition (*Ars Antiqua*) fought those supporting music development at the expense of the intelligibility of the lyrics (*Ars Nova*) (Brukholder et al., 2019, p. 87). As compositions became more complex, several melodic lines collided making it more difficult to understand the text.

1.2.2. Function of the song nowadays

The 15th century is long gone and, although still heard at church, the function of music has changed too. While "communication is the primary aim and function of a translated text" (Venuti, 2004, pp. 482-83), it is no longer the primary function of songs.

On the one hand, music is praised for being a means of expression and release. Music is since Ancient Times said to be connected to our emotions. Thus, it was used in Ancient Greece as a way of emotional liberation. In other words, music was involved in catharsis (κάθαρσις), "a purification of the emotions through art" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.). According to Pythagoras, music heals the soul as medicine heals the body. However, the emotional component of music would be related to the mode, that is, "the scale type and the melody type" (Powers et al., 2001), and not to the lyric of a song. This is known as the ethos theory: "Greek ethos theory . . . expressed that music can convey, foster and even generate ethical states" (Anderson & Mathiesen, 2001).

On the other hand, commercial music is the prevailing genre these days and the music industry aims for a music that can be danced and listened to for the mere pleasure of listening to music. In this scenario, the intelligibility of the lyric does not seem to be that important. In fact, according to recent figures by Spotify Spain, people would not

only enjoy listening to songs by foreign artists, but also prefer them to Spanish songs. Here are the most listened artists in Spain in 2019: 1) Malone; 2) Billie Eilish; 3) Ariana Grande; 4) Ed Sheeran.

While it is true that understanding the lyric is not essential, there is a general curiosity about the meaning of a song. However, it is rather easy to find a literal translation on several websites (let us remember that translation is not the subject of our study. By "song translation" we mean a singable translation).

That said, it is the function of the song that will determine whether or not it is worth translating a song. We may agree that, broadly speaking, on the basis of the aforementioned arguments, song translation would not be necessary nowadays. However, it is a practice that responds to the insatiable curiosity and creativity of the human being. The question seems to be clear: if a given song were versioned into a foreign language, would fans prefer the translated version to the original? Of course it will depend to a great extent on the quality of the translation, or even on the quality of the performer in case the singer and the musicians were other than the original. In addition, we must remember songs appear in a huge variety of products and formats. This means they can present different functions.

Let us understand why song translation is indeed that complicated. First, we will take a look at challenges shared between song and poetry translation, and secondly, at the difficulty of merging the new textual element within a melodic line.

2. Translatability of songs

In order to carry out an effective analysis, we agree to consider song translation as an equivalent of poetry translation. Songs and poetry share some important elements. In fact, some songs were born as poems. In brief, we could say that songs are poems provided with music. This is why the complexity of translating poetry is present in song translation too.

One of the most controversial debates within the translation community is that on the translatability of poetry. In order to understand the challenges literary translation entails, let us start by taking a look at the definition of literature. Riffaterre (1971) suggests that every text that catches the reader's attention by its form regardless or not of its content is literature. This means the verbal content of a literary text only represents part of its meaning. But in fact, the challenge of poetry translation lays down in the rhythm, rhyme and rest of resources aiming for phonic expressiveness; in other words, resources hidden in the signifier (Torre, 1994, p.160; Bousoño, 1962, p. 372).

This characteristic feature of literary texts and, in particular, poetry, led many authors to claim poetry cannot be translated. "It is, at least it almost always is, impossible to approximate all the dimensions of the original text at the same time" (Ortega y Gasset, 1937 as quoted by Schulte & Biguenet, 1992, p. 110).

It truly seems naïve to think it is possible to fully transmit the totality of the dimensions of a text written in a linguistic system into a completely different system with a different background. To begin with, the exact copy of the original is always impossible simply because every language is unique, and so is its understanding of the universe. "Benjamin Whorf and Edward Sapir in a series of publications in the 1930s researched an idea that the way people think is influenced by the language they speak" (Perlovsky, 2009, p. 518). This is often referenced as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (SWH). In other words, "people who speak different languages would perceive and think about the world quite differently, their worldviews being shaped or determined by the language of their culture" (Oxford Reference, n.d.). If it were true, in its more extreme version, the SWH would mean there are certain thoughts in one language impossible to be understood by those speaking a different language. Consequently, the translation of a source text would never have the very same effect as the original. What is more, how could a translated poem be the exact copy of the original poem when it is a creative product of someone else?

To this, we must add the reformulation concomitant with a translation that inevitably alters the form of a form-based text. In short, we admit both that the form is essential in literary texts and that any translation, that is, any reformulation of the message, would necessarily alter such form.

The impossibility of translation is in a sense not debatable. If every human language is distinct (as it is) in structure, sound, and vocabulary, and if

every language contains unique features, then clearly it is literally impossible to fully render anything written in one language into another. (Burton, 1988, p. 11)

Should we simply admit poetry is untranslatable? Is access to literature determined by birth? By the language we are "assigned", as if it were a culture-lottery?

Translators are aware of these limitations and therefore, there is a wide range of procedures that can be used in order to overcome them. Vinay and Darbelnet (1973) proposed seven oblique or indirect methods that help the translator attain equivalences. Some of these procedures are transposition, modulation, adaptation and equivalence (Siregar, 2016, p. 52). However, sometimes it is just unavoidable not to alter the original. Thus, Antoine Berman established twelve ways in which we can alter the source text. These are known as Berman's twelve deforming tendencies.

We assume a text written in a linguistic system cannot be fully transmitted to a different language. "If there were a perfect equivalence from language to language, the result would not be translation; it would be a replica" (Cassin, 2014, p. 14). That said, maybe we should not aim for a target text that is a duplicate of the original.

Translation is not a duplicate of the original text; it is not—it shouldn't try to be—the work itself with a different vocabulary. I would say translation doesn't even belong to the same literary genre as the text that was translated. It would be appropriate to reiterate this and affirm that translation is a literary genre apart, different from the rest, with its own norms and own ends. The simple fact is that the translation is not the work but a path toward the work. If this is a poetic work, the translation is no more than an apparatus, a technical device that brings us closer to the work without ever trying to repeat or replace it. (Ortega y Gasset, 1937 as quoted by Schulte & Biguenet, 1992, p. 109)

Whether we consider the target text a translation or a new creation, it is a tool that helps us overcome the boundaries of language. This target text is the entry to the original.

As a conclusion, we could say that the result of poetry translation is a poem in itself and should stand on its own artistic merits (Rest, 1976, p. 7). Thus, the translator cannot be a mere intermediary and therefore is expected to have both language competence and a creative faculty. Due to that creative nature, it should be noted that there is no such thing as the perfect translation, for several interpretations may be possible. The source text is like a music score that in its silence hides the real form of the work; the translator is the musician that plays the score. That means that even in the same language, different interpretations are valid, just like the score allows a reasonable margin of variations that show the artistic personality of every player (Rest, 1976, p. 2).

Let us come back to our subject, that is, song translation. The translator should be able to translate both for accuracy and beauty. However, song translation is, in a sense, stricter than poetry translation due to the necessity of merging all those systems

mentioned in poetry into a melodic line. Thus, depending on whether we prioritize the lyric over the music or vice versa, the result of our translation could be even closer to that idea of *recreation*; in other words, the result of our translation could be a completely new song.

Going back to Ortega y Gasset's opinion on the impossibility of approximating all the dimensions of an original at the same time, we may choose one dimension at the expense of some others based on Franzon's song translation choices. Thereby, we may: 1) leave the song untranslated; 2) translate the lyrics not taking the music into account; 3) write new lyrics to the original music with no relation to the original lyrics; 4) translate the lyrics and adapt the music; 5) adapt the translation to the original music (Franzon, 2014, p. 376). By stating the decision of leaving the song untranslated as a valid choice, we are accepting the need for reflecting on whether it really is necessary to translate a song or not. Again, the decision will depend on the purpose of the translation. But first, some more challenges are worth mentioning. Let us focus, not on the nature of the text, but on the structure of the languages.

3. Linguistic challenges involved in song translation (DE, EN, ES, FR)

Since our subject matter is closely related to the sonority of the target song and the effect it causes in the listener, we pay attention to the list of unique features that make each language differ from another, making the search for equivalences even more complicated. The word length, the stress pattern, or the word order are examples of aspects that must be taken into account when translating a song, for we proceed on the basis that accentuation, rhyme, and sonority are to be respected as much as possible. Thus, when it comes to a form-focused translation, the structure of the working languages is particularly relevant.

To begin with, there are about 100 language families. The languages that belong to the same family will be more similar in their form and structure. Thus, "in terms of second language acquisition, [for example,] it will generally be easier to learn a new language from the same language family as the mother tongue" (Frankfurt International School [FIS], n.d.). The growing dichotomy between "non-relative languages" makes formal differences more evident. Therefore, it becomes a real challenge to respect the formal aspects in the translated texts. This makes us have an interest in the following contrastive approach.

In the present analysis, songs are always selected within the language combination of German (DE), English (EN), Spanish (ES) and French (FR). Only two language branches are represented in our four-language combination: Romance (French and Spanish) and Germanic (English and German), both of them branches of a larger group, the Indo-European family. Let us explore the main linguistic challenges concerning these four languages. For the purpose of our analysis, we will only analyse a sample of aspects that may be of interest.

3.1. Phonology

Phonology may be the level at which differences are more obvious. From a quantitative point of view, there are great differences between languages attending to their number of vowels and consonants. (Thibault n.d., p. 6). A simple glance at phonemes reveals a marked contrast between German (17 vowels), English (12), Spanish (5), and French (17). There are even phonemes that exist in one language but do not exist in the other: Spanish' unique /ñ/, for example, or English' /sh/.

In this line, phonotactic rules vary from one language to another too. While the existence of vowels and consonants is universal, the way each language combines them is not. Some languages tend to easily combine a large number of consonants with no necessity of adding vowels between them, as it is the case with German (Thibault n.d., p. 11). In the English language, there is a spread use of diphthongs, which leads to a soft musicality, while this huge present of consonants in German tends to get the opposite effect. In order to get an idea of the sonority of a language, we better ask someone who does not speak that language, for this person will hear sounds, not words.

3.2. Stress pattern

We can easily catalogue English stress pattern as "unpredictable", while that of Spanish and French is rather predictable (FIS, n.d.). In the case of French, it is so regular that one of its more characteristic features is that of the stress tending to be in the last syllable. As for German, its stress pattern is similar to the English pattern, since both languages belong to the same linguistic branch (FIS, n.d.).

When it comes to a song, the linguistic stress pattern coexists with music accents. This may result in an extra limitation: in some languages, the stress has a distinctive function; in other words, the syllable where we place the accent may affect the meaning. This is the case in Spanish, English, Italian and so on. As for French, for example, the accent does not play a distinctive role (Thibault n.d., p. 9).

Here is a good example of how the meaning of Spanish words changes depending on the syllable where we place the accent:

1) *célebre*: adj.

2) *celebre*: v. 1st; 3rd pers. sing. present subj.

3) *celebré*: v. 1st pers. sing. past simple.[3]

When translating a song, it is preferable to respect the location of the accents in the original song, due to the necessity of matching the linguistic accent with the music accent.

3.3. Morphology

Morphology is a key factor when it comes to song translation, for the length of the words is decisive when trying to fit the new lyrics into the very same space as the original. That can turn out to be a real challenge depending on the working languages. English words are known for being generally short. It would not be difficult to have a normal conversation just by using monosyllabic words. That would not be that easy in Spanish, since most Spanish words are longer than English words. French words are even longer, but when it comes to length, it is difficult to beat German words.

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[3] Thibault, A. (n.d.). *Linguistique comparée des langues modernes. Typologie linguistique (I).* (Lecture notes, PDF, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, Paris, France). p. 9

3.4. Grammar

The verb is generally synthetic in Romance languages, contrary to the English verb, which is much more analytical (Thibault, n.d., p. 9). While in Spanish we can condense quite a lot of information in one form of the verb (person, number, tense, mood), auxiliary structures are needed in English (would, will, do). This characteristic feature of the English language can turn out to be challenging for the translator. Here is an extract of "I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do" by ABBA:

I can't conceal it

Don't you see?

Can't you feel it?

Don't you too?

I do, I do, I do, I do, I do

3.5. Lexicon

Some languages appear to be more creative than others regarding new words formation. English, for example, is dynamic; "English is a language with a rich and diverse lexicon" (Carter et al., 2001, p. 116). But also "English changes due to intensive contacts with other languages and language evolution" (Gilsdorf, 2002, p. 364). Whatever word formation processes a language may use, there is another essential source of vocabulary enrichment: loanwords.

"English has borrowed its lexicon from 84 languages, with French (25 %) being the most important donor. Other influent languages are Japanese, Spanish, African languages, German and Greek" (Jackson & Ze Amvela, 2002, p. 42).

German vocabulary has always been influenced by other languages too: "Latin was the most influential one in the Middle Ages; French influences peaked in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and from the nineteenth century onwards, English was the donor language for most of the new German words" (Plümer, 2000 as quoted by De Ridder, 2013, p. 14).

At the time of the Norman invasion of Britain (11th century) the English language was strongly influenced by French. "The change in the traditional trend of English being at the receiving end appears to have changed in the mid-nineteen century with Britain as a superpower economically and technologically" (Barffour, 2016, p. 22). French is considered a rigid language. In French, loanwords are a powerful source of lexis renewal. Thus, French has always delegated a very large part of the work of enriching its vocabulary to the classical languages, which serve as auxiliary languages to fill its lexicogenetic gaps (Picone, 1991, p. 16).

French, at the same time, has greatly influenced other languages. Due to the powerful relations between Spain and France through history, French appears to be one

of the main sources of loanwords in Spanish. Currently, in spite of the Academies' reluctance to formally recognize neologisms and include them in dictionaries, English is as present in Spanish as it is in other languages. Anglicisms are everyday more frequent in informal Spanish (from Spain). This influence is even greater in the case of Spanish from South America, where the geographic proximity to North America has favoured a strong lexical exchange.

That said, we may conclude that words from foreign languages are not completely alien to another language. In fact, it is easy to find foreign words in songs, particularly words that someone who does not speak the language would understand. Here are some examples:

1) "Ciao, adiós" by Anne-Marie

I saw you with her
Kissing and having fun
If you're giving her all of your money and time
I'm not gonna sit here wasting mine on you, yeah, you
Ciao, adiós, I'm done

2) "1, 2, 3" by Sofía Reyes

Hola, comment allez, allez-vous
So nice to meet ya
You say we should go and get a room (No!)

Thereby, the omission of certain words is not unusual in song translation. However, it is not advisable to translate an original into a mix of languages. These choices may come with circumstances, depending on the identity of the song, the target audience and its final function.

Let us now take a look at a selection of translated songs in order to analyse some of the challenges the translator had to face and the procedures employed to overcome the said challenges.

4. Song translations analysis

4.1. Type of translation based on Franzon's translation choices

Translating the lyrics not taking the music into account

Most translations available on the Internet are literal translations that are not meant to be sung. Songs are often translated for the sake of understanding the lyrics, not aiming to provide a singable translation. However, this is not the type of translation analysed in this study.

Leaving the song untranslated

While one of Franzon's suggested choices is that of not translating the song (for which there are plenty of examples), here is a song where the choice has been made not to translate only certain parts:

"Hijo de la luna" Mecano ES → FR	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Luna, quieres ser madre Y no encuentras querer Que te haga mujer Dime, luna de plata Qué pretendes hacer Con un niño de piel, Ah, ah **Hijo de la luna**	Lune tu veux être mère tu ne trouves pas l'amour qui exauc' ta prière dis-moi lune d'argent toi qui n'as pas de bras comment bercer l'enfant **Hijo de la luna**

Had it been translated, the last line of the French verse could have been *fils de la lune*. However, the French version happens to be shorter than the Spanish form. Consequently, the word *lune* would be enlarged. It is preferable to avoid that lengthening, since the sound effect is rather unnatural. Should we choose a longer equivalent for *fils*, *enfant*, for instance, there would be a new problem, this time related to the accentuation: in *hijo*, the accent is placed in the first syllable, while in the French word, *enfant*, it is in the last one.

While it is true that we could easily find a translation, the result seems to be awkward somehow. In addition, the translation strategy is particularly relevant here, since this is the core of the song. Thus, Mecano preferred to maintain the Spanish form, which is the title of the song too and, although evidencing the French song is a translation, it does not result in a major impoverishment.

Writing new lyrics to the original music with no relation to the original lyrics

"Piano Man" "El hombre del piano" Billy Joel; Ana Belén EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
It's nine o'clock on a Saturday The regular crowd shuffles in There's an old man sitting next to me Makin' love to his tonic and gin	Esta es la historia de un sábado de no importa qué mes y de un hombre sentado al piano de no importa qué viejo café.
He says, "Son, can you play me a memory I'm not really sure how it goes But it's sad and it's sweet and I knew it complete When I wore a younger man's clothes	Toma el vaso y le tiemblan las manos apestando entre humo y sudor y se agarra a su tabla de náufrago volviendo a su eterna canción
Sing us a song, you're the piano man Sing us a song tonight Well, we're all in the mood for a melody And you've got us feelin' alright	Toca otra vez, viejo perdedor, haces que me sienta bien. Es tan triste la noche que tu canción sabe a derrota y a miel

The Spanish version of "Piano Man" is more a recreation than a translation. In this case, the main character and the very general idea of him playing at a bar are respected, but the story is told differently.

We must remember the type of translation always depends on the function of the target text. Depending on the aim of the Spanish song, this type of recreation would be more adequate than a proper translation. This song by Billy Joel is autobiographic. Sung by Ana Belén, she could not tell the story as hers, so she becomes a viewer and tells someone else's story. Had Joel sung the Spanish version, its translation would probably have been more faithful.

In case a more literal translation is needed, a translation proposal is included at the end of this analysis.

"I only want to be with you" "Ahora te puedes marchar" Dusty Springfield; Luis Miguel EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
I don't know what it is that makes me love you so I only know I never want to let you go 'Cause you started something, can't you see	Si tú me hubieras dicho siempre la verdad Si hubieras respondido cuando te llamé Si hubieras amado cuando te amé

That ever since we met you've had a hold on me It happens to be true, I only want to be with you	Serías en mis sueños la mejor mujer Si no supiste amar, ahora te puedes marchar
It doesn't matter where you go or what you do I want to spend each moment of the day with you Look what has happened with just one kiss I never knew that I could be in love like this It's crazy but it's true, I only want to be with you	Si tú supieras lo que yo sufrí por ti Teniendo que olvidarte sin saber por qué Y ahora me llamas, me quieres ver Me juras que has cambiado y piensas en volver Si no supiste amar, ahora te puedes marchar
You stopped and smiled at me Asked me if I'd care to dance I fell into your open arms I didn't stand a chance	Aléjate de mí, no hay nada más que hablar Contigo yo perdí, ya tengo con quien ganar

In this case, the music has clearly been favoured over the content. Needless to say the lyrics have not been translated: what was a love song is now an angry song. It is interesting how the same music can express two such different feelings. I would dare say this choice has not been made because of translation reasons. Although with the necessary sacrifices, the message could have been translated into Spanish. However, there is also a possibility the Mexican singer was not interested in doing so. As mentioned, songs are composed of different dimensions and the author may choose one over the others; in this case, Luis Miguel chose the music. Again, it may be related to the aim: maybe the Spanish version was not meant to spread the meaning of the original song; maybe the reason why it was versioned is simply that the melodic line was found potentially interesting.

Should we wonder whether or not it was necessary to translate these two songs ("Piano Man" and "I only want to be with you"), I believe it is quite obvious that it was not. In fact, the lyric has not even been translated. The choice to write a Spanish version was made responding to a mere personal taste, that is, the interest in a musical composition not attending to its textual element. This is possible because communication is not the final aim of the original songs. Had it been important to convey the message, the translator would have been required to respect the textual dimension.

Translating the lyrics and adapting the music

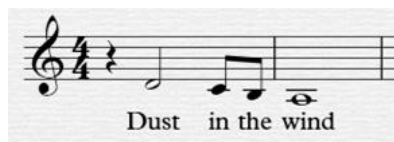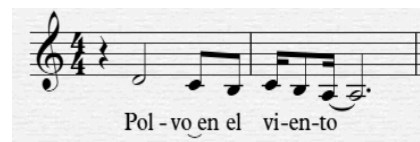| "Dust in the wind" "Polvo en el viento" Kansas EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Dust in the wind	Polvo en el viento

Fig. 1: original song score

Fig. 2: translated version score

This is an example of one of the main challenges in song translation: the lyrics are literally translated and, Spanish words being longer, the melody has been expanded too. The alternative would be to speed up and sing two syllables where there was one; in other words, to split one note in two. Very often, this results in a weird sound effect. Between these two options, I believe a subtly modified melody is preferable so the relation between lyric and music is not that unnatural.

In this particular case, translating the title of the song was rather challenging, since the original line is made up of monosyllabic words. We agreed we should not aim for a translation that is a duplicate of the original. Nonetheless, *dust in the wind* is worth being translated because it is the core of the song. In any case, I believe that maintaining the quality of the song, whether the lyrics are literally translated or not, is vital. The translated version of "Dust in the wind" happens to be a poorer song due to a loss of musicality and rhythm. The languages involved did not facilitate the translation.

Adapting the translation to the original music

We assume this is the case in the following examples, where an effort has been made to respect both the music and the content, with the consequent sacrifices concomitant with translation. Let us analyse the challenges and the translation procedures employed:

4.2. Linguistic challenges involved in song translation

Word length

When translating from English to Spanish, "mostly all versions share a limited addition of syllables. This is due to the fact that Spanish is higher in syllable count" (Barberá, 2019, p. 161). Although there are different strategies, this usually leads to some minor shifts in the melody. Some of the consequences are the addition of anacrusis, "notes preceding the first downbeat of a musical phrase" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.), covering an added initial syllable; the split of a note value; or the transformation of an original melisma, that is, "a group of more than five or six notes

sung to a single syllable" (Crocker, 2001), at the end of a line-bar into two notes (Barberá, 2019, p. 161). Let us analyse the following cases:

"Dust in the wind" "Polvo en el viento" Kansas EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
I close my eyes only for a moment and the moment's gone	**Al cerrar mis ojos** un momento, nada más que uno
dust in the wind, all we are is dust in the wind	**polvo en el viento**, polvo somos y en polvo nos uniremos

This song provides us with two examples where the literal translation into Spanish results in a longer sentence that needs to be fitted in the same space as the original. As mentioned before, the music is subtly modified so that *polvo en el viento* fits. In the case of *al cerrar mis ojos*, we just take advantage of the length of the notes, for it is possible to pronounce two syllables where there was one. However, the sound effect evidences the Spanish lyrics are not the lyrics this music was meant for. Besides, the rhythm is broken by means of an alteration of the accentuation scheme. To be fair, there was a real challenge here. The deformation of the accentuation is basically unavoidable. The English verse is made up of monosyllabic words. When each syllable is sung to a single tone, we say a chant is "syllabic". In the English song, this means each word is sung to a single tone, which is virtually impossible to get when translating into Spanish.

"Tell me you love me" Demi Lovato EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Tell me you love me	Dime que me amas

The singer clearly hurries up and fits a one-syllable longer sentence in the same space as the original with no alteration of the music. In these cases the result is very transparent and reveals the target song is a translation. This is what was avoided by expanding the music in the previous example of "Dust in the wind". In case we prefer not to alter the music, we could look for a shorter equivalent that respects both the meaning and the space restrictions. Here is a potential translation: *Di que me amas*. The Spanish verb *decir* can be used in its pronominal form or not. Thus, we get a one-syllable shorter alternative.

Broadly speaking, from a linguistic point of view, this song by Demi Lovato has been translated into Spanish with little success. The target song is not completely idiomatic and is ultimately an impoverished version of the original song. In this specific

case, although not absolutely necessary, the translation of the song could somehow be justified by the great community of Spanish-speaking fans of the artist and the importance of the song itself, as one of her main hits in the last years.

"[S]e nota que se preocupa por sus seguidores latinos"; "gracias por este homenaje a la comunidad latina" or "[a]mo esta versión, los latinos e hispanohablantes te lo agradecemos de corazón" are some examples of opinions by fans, who seem to appreciate the gesture.[4]

"99 Luftballons" "99 Red balloons" Nena; Angry Salad DE → EN	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
99 Luftballons Auf ihrem weg zum Horizont Hielt man für UFOs aus dem All Darum schickte ein General	99 **red** balloons floating in the summer sky Panic bells it's red alert There's something here from somewhere else

So far we have tackled translations that happen to be longer than the original; however, the opposite is problematic too. Since the English word for *Luftballons* is one syllable shorter, an adjective (*red*) is included so the original space is fully used. This is a good strategy, being the alternative the lengthening of one of the syllables (making one syllable last for what two syllables last in German), which would have resulted in a much less natural musical effect. However, that addition is not enough, for the number 99 is one syllable shorter in the English form too (*ninety-nine* vs. *neunundneunzig*). While German is known for its very long words, English words are mostly short. This feature makes it more difficult to find a translation that is as close as possible to the length of the original and respects the semantic meaning at the same time. Nonetheless, "99 Red balloons" is a good example of a successful translated song. In fact, not many people know this is actually the translation of a German song. Its success may be due to the topic of the song, which is indeed a Cold War-era protest song. We could say this song was used as a symbol, and since the meaning of the lyrics mattered, its translation made sense.

Grammar: use of pronouns

As mentioned in the section about contrastive linguistics, Spanish is a synthetic language, while English is rather analytical. This means the grammatical content of the Spanish verb, including the person, is expressed by the verb endings. This is why pronouns are always present in English but mostly omitted in Spanish. When translating into Spanish, the presence of the pronouns in the target text makes it sound unnatural and evidences its translated nature. Here are some examples:

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[4] Demi Lovato - Tell Me You Love Me (Spanish Version / Audio). *YouTube*. *Comments*. Retrieved on 29 May, 2020, 12:55 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKFJlnCTmss

"Tell me you love me" Demi Lovato EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
You ain't nobody 'til you got somebody	**Tú** no eres nadie si no tienes a alguien

Despite the possibility of omitting the pronoun, there is a reason why it has been kept in the Spanish translation. Let us take a look at the stress pattern in the first line: the stressed syllables in the English song are the first and fourth syllables (_You_ ain't no_body_); the stressed syllables in the Spanish version are the first and fourth syllables too (_Tú_ no eres _nadie_). Should we omit the pronoun, the linguistic accent would not match the musical accent.

We must be cautious to identify there is a synaloepha in the Spanish, that is, "the blending into one syllable of two vowels of adjacent syllables" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.), and that affects the total number of syllables.

"You'll see" "Verás" Madonna EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
You think that I can't live without your love, you'll see	**Tú** piensas que **yo** no podré vivir sin ti

Again, there is a reason why the pronouns are kept in the Spanish translation in spite of being unnatural. This time, let us count the number of syllables: 12 in the English and 12 in the Spanish. We may think that, had they omitted the pronouns, that make a total of two syllables, the final sentence (_you'll see_ / _verás_) which, by the way, is the title of the song, could have been included at the end of the Spanish lines. Nevertheless, once more, it becomes a matter of accentuation because, should we omit the pronouns, the accents in the translation would not match the original accents.

Keeping the pronouns may not be the most idiomatic choice, but we could not say it is grammatically incorrect, so it does not seem to be a bad decision.

Stress pattern

"These boots are made for walking" "Ces bottes sont faites pour marcher" Nancy Sinatra; Eileen EN → FR	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
These boots are made for <u>wal</u>king	Ces bottes sont faites pour <u>mar</u>cher

As mentioned in previous sections, the meaning of French words does not change depending on the syllable where we place the accent. However, it does not mean the result does not sound unnatural. So far everything was working well in this chorus because the words are monosyllabic in both versions. It is not until the very end of the line that there is a disyllabic word both in the English and the French songs with different stress patterns. I am afraid there is no alternative, for the accent of French infinitives is most times placed in the last syllable (with very few exceptions): *marcher, aller, venir, sauter, courir…* Again, we accept that languages are unique and it is not always possible to respect all the dimensions of the original text at the same time, especially when it comes to a text with a creative component and the additional challenge that entails the musical dimension.

"If I were a boy" "Si yo fuera un chico" Beyoncé EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
If I were a <u>boy</u> even just for a day I'd roll out of bed in the morning and throw on what I wanted then <u>go</u>	Si yo fuera un chi<u>co</u> solo por una vez **yo** me vestiría como quiero, con lo que vea <u>pri</u>mero y me voy

On the contrary, Spanish words do change their meaning depending on the accent. In this case, it leads to no confusion because *chicó is not a word we can confuse *chico* with, but the mismatching accents deteriorate the musicality of the song. Some equivalent expressions would adjust to the music accent. Here is an example: *Si yo fuera un chaval* or even *si no fuera mujer*. Nevertheless, in order to solve a problem related to accentuation we would be using an expression that is much less used and hence, less idiomatic. The final result would be little natural either way. Sometimes we just have to choose what we think entails a lower level of deformation. However, it is important to remember that our translation choices do not always have the same consequences, because some sacrifices may not be detected in some cases, but can turn out to be rather obvious and disturbing in some others. Since this line is the core of the song, it is worth making an effort to avoid problems related to sonority.

4.3. Translation procedures in song translation

As mentioned before, the translation of a song should not aim to be the exact copy of the original. Thus, there is a list of procedures translators can use in order not to just transfer the meaning, but also make it sound as natural as possible in the target language. Here are some examples of procedures that can help the translator overcome the challenges of language structure:

Transposition

"Fragile" "Fragilidad" Sting EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
On and on the rain will fall Like tears from a star Like tears from a star On and on the rain will say How **fragile** we are How **fragile** we are	Lloras tú y lloro yo y el cielo también y el cielo también lloras tú y lloro yo qué **fragilidad** qué **fragilidad**

In this case, just by using the noun (*fragilidad*) instead of the adjective (*frágil*) the line happens to be the exact length of the original (5 syllables). We may think it was not that important to even maintain the concept of *fragile* for, generally speaking, the translation of the song is rather free. However, since "Fragile" is the title of the song, it is preferable to transfer that concept to the translation. Transposition can be a useful tool when facing word length challenges, for example. To be strict, the accent scheme is not completely correct, since the stressed syllable happens to be the second one (*qué fragilidad*), which is not the stressed syllable of the noun (*fragilidad*), but it is the stressed syllable of the adjective (*frágil*) and the effect is somehow not that disturbing as it is in other cases.

"A year without rain" "Un año sin lluvia" Selena Gómez EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
I need you by my side Don't know how I'll survive A day without you is like a year without **rain**	Si escapas otra vez, no sobreviviré, Un día sin ti es como un año sin ver **llover**

The literal translation of the last line (*un día sin ti es como un año sin lluvia*) would not fit in the melodic line. First of all, we must notice there are two synaloephas in the Spanish line. Besides, the word *día* is here pronounced as if it were a monosyllabic word, that is, with no hiatus. Consequently, weird as it is, this time the

Spanish version would be shorter than the original. In addition, the line would not end in a stressed syllable (and if it did it would be forced) and there would be no rhyme. Just by using the verb form (*llover*) instead of the noun (*lluvia*) and adding one syllable (*ver*), all our problems are easily and naturally solved.

Modulation

"Chiquitita" ABBA EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
How I hate to see you like this There is no way you can deny it I can see that you're oh, so sad, so quiet	**No quisiera verte así** aunque quieras disimularlo Si es que tan triste estás ¿Para qué quieres callarlo?

Here is a subtle modulation, this is, a small variation obtained by a change in the point of view that does not alter the meaning: if I *hate to see you like this*, this means I *would rather not see you like this*. This choice was probably made in order to get a more natural expression. Let us check how a literal translation would be valid too, for it would have the same number of syllables and would respect the stress pattern too: *Cómo odio verte así*. The result ABBA gets with its translation is kinder and gentler, and probably fits better in the song as a whole.

"Chiquitita" is another great example of successful translated version. Most Spanish-speaking people sing the Spanish version, indeed. What is more, if we did not know the story, we could easily think "Chiquitita" was first written in Spanish. Was this translation necessary? Probably not, for ABBA does not have all its songs translated and they are very popular too. Nevertheless, we admit "Chiquitita" may be one of the most popular ones, if not the most popular song by this Swedish group. It is worth wondering whether it became popular because it was translated or it was translated because of its popularity.

"The next right thing" "Hacer las cosas bien" Frozen 2 EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Can there be a day beyond this night I don't know anymore what is true I can't find my direction; **I'm all alone** The only star that guided me was you	¿Habrá un día ya después de hoy? Ya no sé ni cuál es la verdad No encuentro mi camino, **qué sola estoy** Me iluminabas en la oscuridad, tú
And with the dawn **what comes then**? When it's clear that everything will never be the same Then I'll make the choice to hear that voice and do the next right thing	Amaneció ¿**Y ahora qué**? Si yo sé que nada como antes volverá a ser Pero elijo hoy, oír esa voz Y hacer las cosas bien

Qué sola estoy is another way of saying *estoy completamente sola* ("I'm all alone") in Spanish. It is much more idiomatic. Besides, it rhymes with the first line, which compensates the lack of rhyme between the second and fourth line. To sum up: in the original song, the second and fourth lines rhyme, while the first and third do not, and the opposite in the translation. Likewise, *¿y ahora qué?* is a shorter, simpler and very common expression that can work as an equivalent of *¿qué viene después del amanecer?* ("and with the dawn, what comes then?"). Shorter alternatives are always good, particularly in cases like this one in which the English line is made up of monosyllabic words.

This is one of the big challenges in translation, especially literary translation, since we are supposed to respect the identity of the original but we are also asked to create a text that is natural for the target culture.

"She loves you" "Sie liebt dich" The Beatles EN → DE	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
She says she loves you **And you know that can't be bad** Yes, she loves you And you know you should be glad	Oh, ja sie liebt dich **Schöner kann es gar nicht sein** Ja, sie liebt dich Und da solltest du dich freuen!

Where the English version says *and you know that can't be bad*, the German version says *Schöner kann es gar nicht sein,* which means "and it couldn't be better". It not only changes the perspective, but also omits *and you know* because it is somehow implicit. These changes are more than justified because a literal translation would not fit due to its length.

In addition, let us mention the change in the sonority of the song itself. For instance, the first line, *she says she loves you*, is basically made up of vowels and /s/; however, just by having that accusative in the German version (*dich*), the effect is harder. This difference in the phonological aspect is better appreciated by someone who cannot understand either of the languages, because he or she would focus on the sound and not on the words.

Adaptation

"I look at you" "Te miro a ti" Miley Cyrus; David Bisbal EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
I see forgiveness I see the truth You love me for who I am **Like the stars hold the moon** **Right there where they belong** And I know I'm not alone	Solo en tus ojos veo la verdad Me quieres tal como soy **como el viento ama el mar** **besándolo al pasar** *And I know I'm not alone*

There is a metaphor in the original that would not fit in the translation, so it has been adapted and changed into a different but still a metaphor (a new situation) with an equivalent effect.

Speaking of the necessity of translating a song, this song was not even fully translated. The aim of the translation was the original singer to collaborate with a Spanish artist and hence, only the parts the latter would sing were translated. Song translation is a difficult task and before we face it, it is important to know the reason why we translate the song and the function this translated song will have.

"Ein bisschen Frieden" "A little peace" Nicole DE → EN	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Wie eine Blume am Winterbeginn Und so wie ein Feuer im eisigen Wind **Wie eine Puppe, die keiner mehr mag** Fühl' ich mich an manchem Tag	Just like a flower when winter begins Just like a candle blown out in the wind **Just like a bird that can no longer fly** I'm feeling that way sometimes

In this case, a different metaphor has been used in the translation, but in this specific situation, it happens to be equivalent. Besides, it respects the rhyme scheme of the original.

We may wonder why we would translate this sweet German song into English. Nicole became known all around the world after she won the first prize in the European Song Contest, Eurovision. She was only 17 and represented her country with a ballad that was a call for peace among all people. The message of the song at a time when the Berlin Wall still divided Germany and the popularity Nicole experienced after the contest may justify the translation of the song into a foreign language. Possibly, this song would have never been translated had it not been the winner song of the contest. This is an example of a translation made because of the popularity of a song beyond

national limits. But again, if it was not for the symbolic message, maybe the song could have succeeded without being translated too.

Equivalence

Understanding equivalence as the "use of a different structure with different meaning from that of the original so long as it is appropriate in the communicative situational equivalent to that of the translation" (Siregar, 2016, p. 52), we could say songs are plenty of it. Indeed, equivalence is a frequent translation procedure since we are constantly altering the content so that it matches the music and conveys the message at the same time.

4.4. Treatment of the original in song translation: Berman's deforming tendencies

Going back to previous issues, we agreed song translation (through a comparison with poetry translation) as a duplicate of the original is simply not possible for a number of reasons. Literary translation entails certain sacrifices because, as Ortega y Gasset suggested, it simply is impossible to approximate all the dimensions of the original text at the same time. Antoine Berman established twelve deforming tendencies, in other words, twelve different ways in which we can alter the form of the original text. Here are some examples:

Clarification

"These boots are made for walking" "Ces bottes sont faites pour marcher" Nancy Sinatra; Eileen EN → FR	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
You keep **playin'** **where you shouldn't** be playin' and you keep thinkin' that you'll never get burn	Toi, tu **joues** **avec le feu** et tu t'amuses Mais un jour viendra où tu vas te brûler

In the original English song, the idiom *play with fire* is hidden, but not explicit. The listener is then supposed to recognize the expression, with the aid of the following *get burn*. However, in the French version it is said *tu joues avec le feu*, which makes the meaning of the message clearer; it explains what is only suggested in the English song.

Broadly speaking, we should try to respect it when the original decides not to be too explicit. This sometimes responds to aesthetic reasons, but also creates a connection with the listener, who has a feeling of gratification when they get to catch the hidden meaning of the text. Here is a suggestion: *Tu joues là où tu ne dois pas jouer*. The stressed pronoun (*toi*), for example, is not needed, particularly translating from English to French, since French texts tend to be longer.

Ennoblement

"Speechless" "No callaré" Aladyn EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
'Cause I'll breathe When they try to suffocate me Don't you underestimate me 'Cause I know that I won't go speechless	No podréis destruirme. El miedo no **me apoca**. No ahogaréis mi boca. Y eso no, porque no callaré

We can easily realize this is not a literal translation. However, what catches our attention is the presence in the Spanish version of an expression that raises the register (*el miedo no me apoca*). We should bear in mind these Disney songs are to be listened and sung by children, which means ennoblement may not be the most appropriate deforming tendency to use. Nonetheless, a literal translation would not be much easier to understand if we put ourselves in the shoes of a 5-10 year-old child. Here is an example: *Intenta derribarme / no debes subestimarme*. This new translation would also respect the rhyme and length; however, *subestimarme* ("underestimate") still sounds a little formal. In addition, it is true that this alternative is not as poetic as the original Spanish version, but neither is the English song.

Speaking of the target audience, here is a good reason why it is necessary to translate Disney songs: in Disney films, the songs are immersed in the plot and tell part of the story, so the information hidden in their lyrics cannot be missed. Consequently, not only should we translate the text, but also try it to be appropriate for a child audience.

"When I'm older" "Cuando madure" Frozen 2 EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
This will all make sense **when I am older** Someday I will see that this makes sense One day, when I'm old and wise I'll think back and realize That these were all completely normal events	Ya comprenderé **cuando madure** Lo que no parece ahora normal Un día muy mayor seré Y recordando entenderé Que todo esto que pasa es muy natural

Does this modulation respond to a more natural way of expressing the same meaning? I would not say so. In fact, we would rather translate *when I'm older* by *cuando sea mayor*, but it just needed to be altered due to space, musicality and accent restrictions. Again, it is worth remembering that Disney songs will be sung by children. Consequently, *cuando madure* may not be the best choice, since children may not even

know what it means. Nevertheless, going back to the function of the text, Disney films usually intend to be educational, so this may help children learn a new and more formal expression. In case we rather use a simpler expression, it may fit the accent scheme more easily by changing the order: *Cuando sea grande ya comprenderé / lo que no parece ahora normal*.

"20 de abril" "20th of April" Celtas Cortos; Oysterband ES → EN	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Pero bueno, ¿tú qué tal? Di Lo mismo hasta tienes **críos** ¿Qué tal te va con el **tío** ese? Espero sea divertido	How has your life been I wonder How do you get on with that **guy**? Maybe You've even got **kids** now I hope it all works out fine
Yo, la verdad, como siempre Sigo **currando** en lo mismo La música no me cansa Pero me encuentro vacío	Me, I just go on as usual **This same old road that I ride** Though I don't get tired of the music Sometimes I'm empty inside

The original song presents a colloquial register, sometimes bordering on a vulgar register or even slang. The register of the English translation is in this verse more neutral. However, the register of the English song as a whole is not higher than the register of the original song. We assume there was not an attempt to make the English version less colloquial. In fact, when the original song has such a marked identity, the translator will tend to transfer it to the target song.

Qualitative impoverishment

"Chiquitita" ABBA EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Chiquitita, you and I **cry** But the Sun is still in the **sky** and shining above you	Chiquitita, no hay que llorar Las estrellas brillan por ti allá en lo alto

First of all, we recognize that where there was a *Sun* in the English song there are *estrellas* ("stars") in the Spanish. This could be understood both as a hyperonimous (the Sun is a star) and an adaptation, because the reference to a celestial body is kept, but the object is changed. However, what matters here is the fact that the English expression had some additional qualities, something of interest in the sound, due to the rhyme between *cry* and *sky*, which is not achieved in the translation. We could translate it by: *Chiquitita, no hay que llorar / mira el sol radiante brillar / allá en lo alto*. Again,

there are just too many dimensions in a song and sometimes we are forced to prioritize some ones over some others.

Destruction of underlying networks

"Irreplaceable" "Irreemplazable" Beyoncé EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
You must not know about me, you must not know about me I can have another you by tomorrow So don't you ever for a second get to thinking **You're irreplaceable**	¿Qué sabes tú de mí? No me hagas reír Me verás con otro hombre a mi lado Ya lo ves, traidor, voy a sustituirte **A olvidar tu amor**

You're irreplaceable has not been translated, but substituted by *voy a sustituirte, a olvidar tu amor*, which leads to a problem, because the title of the song in Spanish is "Irreemplazable", a word that does not appear a single time in the song. In the original, the final line of the chorus matches the tittle of the song. An effort should be made to, at least, include the word that gives name to the song. However, much as we try to reformulate the last lines of the chorus, the Spanish word *irreemplazable* cannot substitute *irreplaceable* because their stress patterns do not match. A transposition may be required so we do not use the adjective. Here is an example:

Qué sabes tú de mí,
qué sabes tú de mí.
Me verás con otro hombre a mi lado.
No te vayas a creer que eres tan difícil
de reemplazar

Destruction of expressions and idioms

"Chiquitita" ABBA EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Chiquitita, tell me the truth **I'm a shoulder you can cry on**	Chiquitita, dímelo tú **En mi hombro, aquí llorando**

In Spanish we do have the expression *ser un hombro en el que llorar*. It is not a drastic destruction of the expression, since, although the idiom is not used in its original form, it is easily identifiable. It would have been used had the space and the accentuation permitted it. This time, the emphasis is put on euphony.

"Under the sea" "Bajo el mar" La Sirenita EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
The seaweed is always greener In somebody else's lake	Tú crees que en otros lados las algas más verdes son

The original song hides the idiom *the grass is greener in somebody else's yard*. It is rather satisfactory to the English-speaking listener who recognizes the trick. That specific idiom does not exist in Spanish; it has simply been translated literally. As we have mentioned throughout this study, the context and function of the song will determine to a great extent the translation procedures we must employ. Although in these type of expressions a literal translation is not usually advisable, it does work in this song. We can simply keep the comparison between the seaweed here and somewhere else and it makes perfect sense. In a world where fish sing, why would we not talk about seaweed?

4.5. Translation proposal

After having analysed a compilation of songs that exemplify some of the main procedures and challenges involved in song translation, I am about to analyse my own translation in order to have a personal experience as a song translator and put into practice some of the aspects that have been highlighted throughout this thesis.

Since the existing translation of this song could be said to be a recreation, as opposed to a translation *sensu stricto*, I chose to translate "Piano Man" by Billy Joel. The following translation should be a faithful one and its aim is to get a balance between the totality of the dimensions of the song.

"Piano Man" "El hombre al piano" Billy Joel EN → ES	
ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
It's nine o'clock on a Saturday The regular crowd shuffles in There's an old man sitting next to me Makin' love to his tonic and gin	A las nueve de un sábado noche, los de siempre llegando a su bar. Y a mi lado sentado hay un viejo, dando amor a su triste coñac.

In this more faithful translation, modulation and adaptation have been favoured in order to respect euphony and convey the meaning at the same time. There is a good example at the end of this verse. It consists of a change in the name of the drink; however, it is still an alcoholic drink, so it does not affect the meaning. By using this modulation, we not only get the Spanish lyrics to fit in, but also respect the rhyme (*bar* / *coñac*).

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
He says, "Son, can you play me a memory I'm not really sure how it goes But it's sad and it's sweet and I knew it complete When I wore a younger man's clothes" La la la, di da da La la, di da da da dum	Dice "hijo, anda, tócame una canción, no sé bien cómo es. Es amarga y sabía cantarla cuando aún era lisa mi piel." La la la, di da da La la, di da da da dum

Here is a clear case of clarification. In the original song, the old man asks for *a memory*. We easily guess what he means; however, that hidden meaning would not be that obvious in the Spanish version, so we clarify from the beginning that he wants the piano man to play him a song.

In addition, we change the metaphor at the end of the verse representing the image of a young man. This new metaphor is shorter than the literal translation would be, and lets us respect the rhythm and the rhyme of the original song.

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Sing us a song, you're the piano man Sing us a song tonight Well, we're all in the mood for a melody And you've got us feelin' alright	Tú eres el hombre al piano, tócanos una canción, que tu música sube los ánimos y nos hace sentirnos mejor.

The Spanish translation is clearly longer than the original, so it implies the omission of *sing us a song tonight*. Since it is only the repetition of the first line, it does not imply any loss. Then, the translation becomes freer than it generally is due to space restrictions. The different possible translations for *we're all in the mood for a melody* would be too long, so we prioritize respect for rhythm and rhyme (euphony) at the expense of extreme faithfulness to the textual content.

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Now John at the bar is a friend of mine He gets me my drinks for free And he's quick with a joke or to light up your smoke But there's someplace that he'd rather be	En la barra, John llena mis copas, nunca me deja pagar. Y parece de humor, hace bien su labor, mas se iría a algún sitio mejor.

This verse is a compilation of adaptations:

1. If the barman gets Billy his *drinks for free*, it means he does not let him pay;
2. if *he's quick with a joke*, he seems to be in good humour;
3. if *he's quick to light up your smoke*, he is attentive and treats his clients well; and
4. if *there's someplace that he'd rather be*, we expect this place to be a better one.

Summing up, we could say this verse has been interpreted and reformulated. This has been made attending to space restrictions. At the impossibility of making a literal translation, we make use of the resources that help us overcome the constraints of this type of translation.

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
He says, "Bill, I believe this is killing me" As the smile ran away from his face "Well I'm sure that I could be a movie star If I could get out of this place"	Dice "Bill, todo esto me mata", y su cara se torna de gris "sé que puedo llegar a lo alto si algún día saliera de aquí".

In principle, we could think this verse includes a generalization. Where the original says *be a movie star*, the Spanish says the general expression *to get to the top*. However, I would dare say it is still a clarification. Does John want to become a movie star? In my translation, I interpreted what he really meant and, although a more general idea, I believe it rends explicit what the barman really wishes for.

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
Now Paul is a real estate novelist Who never had time for a wife And he's talkin' with Davy, who's still in the Navy And probably will be for life	Paul vende casas y escribe. Nunca tuvo tiempo de amar. Y ahora habla con Adam, que está en la armada, y puede que no vuelva más.

To begin with, we changed the name of a character for the sake of the rhyme. It may not be important for the listeners, but we should first know whether the names in the original song respect real people's names. This is indeed an autobiographic song and we know all the characters are based on real people. With the name comes another modification: *navy* has been translated by *army*, again, in order to respect the rhyme. They are both military branches, but they take different tasks. Euphony has been favoured, though the translation is quite balanced so that it conveys the meaning too.

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
And the waitress is practicing politics As the businessmen slowly get stoned Yes, they're sharing a drink they call loneliness But it's better than drinkin' alone	Una joven les sirve las copas, poco a poco les sube el alcohol a esos solitarios empresarios que juntos se sienten mejor.

First of all, we omit that *the waitress practices politics*. Furthermore, in the Spanish song it is said that she is young, which would be an addition, since that is never said in the original. But what is more important is the fact that, broadly speaking, the original verse is more poetic. We clarify these businessmen are lonely, while the original song expresses this idea indirectly, made-up with beautiful words. In a sense,

this rends the translation poorer than the original song. There is an effort, though, to create the paradox of a group of people that are lonely together.

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
It's a pretty good crowd for a Saturday And the manager gives me a smile 'Cause he knows that it's me they've been comin' to see To forget about life for a while	Un buen público, para ser solo sábado. El jefe sonríe hacia mí. Y es que sabe que todos vinieron por mí a escuchar y olvidar lo demás.

The first line of the verse has been literally translated, but the translation is two syllables longer than the original and we need to speed up in order to fit it in. However, the stressed syllables coincide and hence, the sound effect is not that awkward.

ORIGINAL	TRANSLATION
And the piano, it sounds like a carnival And the microphone smells like a beer And they sit at the bar and put bread in my jar And say, "Man, what are you doin' here?"	El piano parece una fiesta, el micrófono apesta a anís, en la barra me dan sus propinas y dicen "buen hombre, ¿por qué estás aquí?"

The translation procedures employed in this verse are not new: once more, we generalize by translating *carnival* by *party*, and change the name of the drink. *Cerveza* ("beer") would not keep the rhyme and, being longer than the original word, would destroy the rhythm and alter the accentuation pattern.

By and large, there is an attempt to respect all the dimensions of the song. Nonetheless, we admit sometimes it seems impossible to convey the totality of the dimensions at the same time. Thus, euphony has been favoured and the linguistic content has been subtly modified, although the meaning has always been conveyed. Some would say this is not a faithful translation, but what it really is not is a replica, for that does not exist. As mentioned in our study, there are always tools at the translator's disposal that can help us overcome the difficulties of song translation. Most resources are taken from poetry translation. However, the text-music linkage adds an extra challenge that makes song translation differ from any other translation specialty.

As a conclusion, we should assume the outcome of our translation could never be the exact copy of the original, and it should not aim to be so. Likewise, song translation offers us the possibility of playing with the dimensions of the song. That means what we call "sacrifices" may simply be translation decisions, and those are concomitant with the decision-making process that is translation. Let us talk about it more globally:

Conclusion

The previous analysis evidences the complexity of song translation as one of the most controversial fields within translation. Song translation is at the same time a rigorous and creative task. The coexistence of a great number of dimensions makes of song translation one of the most difficult translation specialties. In spite of the great effort it demands from the translator, it is one of the least appreciated tasks too. Hence, we wonder whether song translation, as a demanding—and at times underestimated—labour is worth it.

In order to answer the previous question, we started by listing some of the main components of the song. That list revealed that among those components, only one is subject to translation: the lyric. It follows from this that the necessity of translating a song will be determined by the necessity of understanding that single element that is affected by language limitations, and that the necessity of understanding the lyrics is determined by the function of the song. The presence of non-linguistic systems that do not need to be translated, in other words, the linkage between text and music, makes song translation differ from poetry translation, even though both have been considered as equivalents throughout this thesis. On the one hand, despite not being translatable, those constraints concerning musical features must be tackled. On the other hand, poetic style must be taken into consideration too. The translator must be able to translate both for accuracy and beauty. This inherent complexity leads to scarcity of practitioners devoted to song translation.

The translator is always expected to bear in mind the intended function of the target text regardless of the type of text. This means we will have to ask ourselves about the reasons why a song is supposed to be translated, its final function, the target audience, the artist that will perform the translated version and a long list of elements that surround and affect the alleged translation.

Broadly speaking, translation is a decision-making process. As such, throughout this study we have looked at three decision-making levels: type of translation, based on Franzon's translation choices; oblique translation procedures as problem-solving methods; and Berman's deforming tendencies as treatment of the original text. In addition, we have highlighted some of the most common linguistic challenges involved in song translation.

Regarding the first level, knowing the final function of the target text is particularly important when it comes to a multidimensional type of text. After we find the reason why we are asked to translate a song and the role this translated song will play, we will be able to choose one dimension at the expense of the others. Contrary to what we could expect, the choice of one dimension over the others may not be a sacrifice. The very context may require it. Let us think of "Piano Man" by Billy Joel, whose version was performed by Ana Belén: since it is an autobiographic song, if the singer changes, the content inevitably changes too. However, in the case of Disney

songs, for example, since the role of the target song is the same as that of the original song, we are expected to respect all the dimensions as much as possible.

In reference to the second level, it should be noted that, though challenging, there are recourses at the translator's disposal to cope with some of the constraints of singable translation. The similarities between poetry and songs allow us to make use of some of the procedures employed in poetry translation. This is the case of oblique translation procedures, aiming for naturalness as we attempt to respect features such as stress patterns, number of syllables, rhythm and rhyme.

Finally, the target text may always deform the original text somehow. As Cassin (2014) suggested, there is no such thing as a perfect equivalence from language to language, which would not be a translation, but a replica. Thus, we classify some of the tendencies according to Berman's deforming tendencies in order to conclude which ones appear to be more appropriate. In general, we should base our decisions on the final function of the song. In addition, our translation choices may vary depending on the target audience. Therefore, we may try to avoid clarification, so that we do not destroy the connection with the listener, who is supposed to understand the meaning that is hidden in the original lyrics; or, when addressed to a child audience, we may also avoid ennoblement in case it will result in too high a register; and even more demanding, we may not want to incur qualitative impoverishment if it leads to the loss of a rhyme.

All these limitations become even more challenging depending on the languages involved, in other words, pairs of languages that may show many differences in metrics, phonetics and morphology. The more contrasts they present, the harder it will be to make a faithful form-based translation.

Nonetheless, it is not the complexity of the task that must determine whether song translation is necessary or not. In fact, translators are used to facing challenges. Translation is, generally speaking, an ambitious task, since it aims to transmit a message written in a linguistic system to a different system with different backgrounds. This goes beyond the semantic level. Translators are expected to overcome not only linguistic boundaries but also cultural ones. Our profession seems to be as challenging as valuable. Without translation, our access to knowledge would be restricted depending on our native language.

With reference to the last idea, song translation is precisely different from other translation specialties because songs are not that affected by language boundaries. We may think the quality of a given literary translation is more or less improvable but, in a sense, we are forced to accept and embrace the target text if we really wish to have access to that specific work. However, in case the result of song translation is not to the liking of the audience, there is nothing that forces them to accept that translation. Because the main function of the song is no longer that of communication, the general public does not seem to mind listening to foreign songs even if they do not understand the lyric. Hence, if a song is translated with little success, the audience can easily go back to the original song. The public is by and large used to listening to foreign bands

without the lyrics sung in a foreign language being an obstacle, not to mention the fact that English has become a lingua franca in the music industry too.

While the previous idea could be said to be the general trend, songs appear in a huge variety of products. Some of the songs that have been analysed in this thesis belong to children's films. Their translation is justified by the aim of the song, which is telling part of the story. In other cases, songs are symbols of a major cause ("99 Luftballons" as a Cold War-era protest song). Their translation responds to the desire to get the message across borders. Songs may be used as a didactic tool too. These are some examples of circumstances that may demand a song to be translated. It does not mean a song whose function is not communication cannot be translated; it only suggests that its translation would be "optional".

As a conclusion, we could never say whether song translation is necessary or not, for the necessity of every translation is somehow determined by the context. We can only assume that songs are indeed capable of reaching different cultures without being translated, and that makes this domain unique. Maybe it depends on whether or not the universality of the musical language is enough.

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