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Chapter 1 - Introduction

This thesis proposes a combination of audiovisual translation studies, translation studies in songs, and musical theatre studies with the aim of exploring the creation and transformation of meanings in transferring songs into other languages and forms of expression. More specifically, it focuses on the interrelation between linguistic, musical, and vocal elements in translation, with particular emphasis on their interaction in audiovisual translation contexts. Special attention is paid to the concept of singable translation, not only in its technical but also in its multifaceted sense, including rhythm, intonation, vocal expression, and so on.

The aim of this first chapter is to briefly outline the thesis's key points, clarify its objectives, and describe how these will be achieved. This chapter will begin with its placement in relation to Translation Studies, and with the theoretical and methodological problems it is grounded on.

It then introduces the central research questions that guide the study, focusing on how meaning is negotiated in the translation of songs in musical theatre across different media, how linguistic, musical, and vocal constraints shape translational choices, and how *singability* interacts with translation issues and issues of accessibility in audiovisual contexts such as subtitling and dubbing. In addition, the thesis explores how translation contributes to the reconfiguration of voice, identity, and performance within musical texts. These questions are addressed throughout the thesis from both a theoretical and an analytical perspective.

Finally, it provides an overview of the structure of the thesis and of the case studies selected, explaining how they contribute to the overall investigation.

Translation is commonly described as the transfer of meaning from one language to another. However, it is found that this definition is no longer applicable when dealing with translations where the meaning is not included in the words. In an audiovisual or performative context, language is only part of a larger system of signification. In other words, it is part of an interplay with other signifiers such as sound, image, and gesture. If, however, the context is expanded to that of musical theatre or musical cinema, the situation is once again different. In that case, translation cannot be reduced to a linguistic

operation, but must be understood as a process of negotiation across multiple semiotic layers.

Translation Studies has changed a lot in the last few decades. It has moved away from a linguistic and source-oriented view and toward views that focus on the cultural, social, and multimodal aspects of meaning. This change did not happen on its own; it was a reaction to bigger changes in how people communicate, new technologies, and the growing number of texts shared across different media, languages, and cultures. In this changing context, audiovisual translation has become an increasingly interesting area of study because it challenges traditional assumptions about translation and the translational process.

Unlike written texts, audiovisual products are inherently multimodal: meaning is constructed through the interaction of verbal and non-verbal elements across both acoustic and visual channels. Dialogue, music, sound effects, gesture, performance, and editing all contribute to the overall communicative effect, creating a complex network of interdependent semiotic resources. In such contexts, translation can no longer be understood as a simple transfer of linguistic content. Instead, it must be seen as a process of negotiation across multiple modes, in which the translator operates within a system of constraints that are at once linguistic, technical, temporal, and cultural.

This complexity is evident when it comes to musical theatre. Musical theatre is a hybrid form between drama, music, and performance, where words, music, and voice are interlinked and central to the narration. Songs in musicals do not constitute some secondary element; instead, they are crucial to the narrative structure and character development. They express emotions, strengthen the storyline and convey the meaning through words, music, voice and so much more. Consequently, the translation of songs within this context raises a number of specific challenges, which cannot be fully addressed through models developed for either literary translation or non-musical audiovisual translation.

The current research is a result of the identification of this gap. Although song translation is increasingly discussed in Translation Studies, this topic is usually examined focusing either on the textual aspect or on the musical aspect, without considering the multimodal nature of musical theatre. In addition, research in audiovisual translation usually focuses mainly on the translation of dialogue, with less emphasis being placed on the translation of songs as a complex semiotic phenomenon. This thesis aims to deal with this weakness by also concentrating on the translation of songs in musical theatre.

The research seeks to examine the negotiation of meaning during the transmission of songs across languages and media, and how this process is influenced by the interplay of linguistic, musical, and vocal elements. Special attention is paid to the idea of singable translation, which is not only the ability to write a text that can be sung, but also a broader practice that includes rhythm, pronunciation, vocal articulation, and performability. In this context, singability is regarded not merely as a technical limitation, but as a fundamental aspect of meaning creation, intricately associated with concepts of vocalisation, and audience reception.

A further aim of the study is to examine the link between translation and accessibility, with a focus on audiovisual settings where subtitles, dubbing, and other mediating tools come into play. Musical texts make this connection especially difficult. In this case, the translator has to keep an eye on clarity for the viewer, on timing, and on meaning, while also responding to the music itself and the performance-driven features of the source material. To address these issues, the thesis also turns to more foundational theory about what translators do. They are understood as active decision-makers, with choices guided by cognitive, emotional, and social factors. Translation is framed as a process of growth, situated in particular cultural and institutional settings and guided, or constrained, by conventions, audience expectations, and workplace limits.

From a methodological point of view, the study adopts an interdisciplinary and triangulated approach. It combines Corpus-Based Translation Studies, multimodal analysis, and cognitive-affective research, in order to account for both the textual features of translated products and the processes underlying their production. This triangulation makes it possible to move beyond purely descriptive accounts, linking observable patterns in translated texts to broader explanatory frameworks. At the same time, it acknowledges the limitations of any single method, particularly when dealing with phenomena that involve multiple semiotic layers.

From a methodological point of view, the study adopts an interdisciplinary approach. It combines both quantitative and qualitative perspectives in order to account for different levels of analysis. A quantitative approach is applied to the analytical commentary of the songs in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, where they are examined systematically with reference to Zabalbeascoa's framework on humour, Delabastita's model of semiotic channels, and Díaz Cintas' work on subtitling. Alongside this, a qualitative approach is used for the in-depth analysis of selected songs, one from each musical. These case studies include detailed tables with time codes, the English source text, and available audiovisual

translations, such as original subtitles, Italian subtitles, and dubbing. In addition, singable Italian translations developed by the author are proposed, taking into account the constraints of performance and the strategies discussed by Low, as well as by Mogol and Anastasi.

The three selected case studies constitute the primary analytical corpus of the thesis, providing the basis through which the theoretical framework is explored and applied.

Three case studies are taken into account in this discussion: *My Fair Lady*, *Once*, and *Six: The Musical*. These musicals have been selected not only for their importance within the musical theatre context, but also for the way they interact with linguistic and cultural contact. They are all included in the English-speaking musical world, but offer three distinct configurations of contact, interaction, and identity, which line them up with the idea of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures in Contact.

My Fair Lady focuses on interaction among speakers using the same language but belonging to different social classes. Linguistic variation, particularly Cockney accents and standard British language, considered as Received Pronunciation, becomes a clear marker of identity, power, and social mobility. The show spread worldwide, especially with the American film adaptation, but its linguistic and cultural setting remains in London, and pronunciation drives the whole story as a central narrative and ideological element.

Once shifts things up. In this musical, linguistic and cultural interaction takes place between speakers of different national backgrounds. An Irish Guy's meets a Girl's Czech immigrant, pointing out how communication operates as a bridge, and not always as a dividing path. Songs play a central role in the story, gradually becoming the primary way of communication between the protagonists, expressing what they are not able to articulate through spoken dialogue. The musical's dimension is naturalistic, in both the stage and film versions, as music is integrated in the narrative and it is not something that only reinforce what is conveyed through spoken words.

Six: The Musical stands apart in its style and delivery. It is built like a pop show, and developed inside the British historical context. This musical reimagines the lives of Henry VIII's six wives through a contemporary pop concert. Straight talk to the crowd, minimal staging, strong focus on vocal performance. Unlike the other two case studies, *Six* exists, at the moment of this work, only on the theatrical stage, and has not been adapted into a film version, which makes it relevant for examining translation in a solely performative

and non-movie context. Contact gets reshaped as the interaction between historical voices that did not meet in real life, mediated through a modern and globalised concept.

Altogether, these three case studies open doors to exploring varied types of musical theatre, from the classical *My Fair Lady*'s old-school, to the naturalistic and intimate approach of *Once*, and the modern concert-based *Six*. This diversity enables a comparative analysis of how translation operates across different genres, media, and performative conditions, highlighting how linguistic, musical, and cultural elements interact.

The thesis addresses these questions by dividing into different sections after this opening chapter.

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical and methodological foundation; it situates the study within Translation Studies more broadly, following the shift from language-based methods to cultural, social, and multimodal viewpoints. Particular attention is dedicated to audiovisual translation and to the challenges that multimodal materials present, focusing on subtitling as a practice shaped by technical, semiotic aspects and accessibility constraints. The chapter also explores song translation within audiovisual contexts, taking into account the notion of singability, the interaction between verbal and musical structures, and the decision-making processes involved in translating lyrics for performance.

Chapter 3 shifts to musical theatre as a global, historically evolving medium. This chapter traces its evolution across the anglophone world and highlights its hybrid nature and its capacity to bring together different cultural and performative traditions. The focus is on the classification of musical theatre forms and to the role of cultural historical dynamics. The chapter also introduces the selected case studies and examines the interplay of words, music, and vocal technique as a key element in both performance and translation.

Chapter 4, 5, and 6 focus on the analytical examination of the three case studies, *My Fair Lady*, *Once*, and *Six: The Musical*, which constitute the primary corpus of the research. Each case study is examined in detail, with attention to the relationship between language, music, performance, and their connections, such as the ways in which songs are adapted across media and languages through subtitling, dubbing, and singable translation.

The thesis concludes by bringing together the main results of the study and by reflecting on their implications for future research in audiovisual and performative and singable translation.

Following the conclusion, three appendices are included, one for each musical, containing the complete transcriptions of the song lyrics, transcribed by the author of the thesis.

Chapter 2 - Audiovisual Translation and Multimodality: Subtitling and the Challenges of Singable Translation

2.1 Introduction: Shifting Paradigms in Translation Studies

Translation Studies (TS) has, in recent decades, moved significantly away from purely linguistic, source-oriented models towards frameworks that emphasise social, cultural, and empirical dimensions[1]. This evolution can be seen in the form of major disciplinary changes, as represented by the "cultural turn" of the 1980s and 1990s, which viewed the translated text as a cultural object in its socio-political and ideological contexts[2]. Following this, the discipline experienced a further shift, often called the "sociological turn" or "social turn", which emerged since the beginning of the millennium and foregrounded the agency of the translator and the social nature of translation practices[3]. This sociological focus views translation not only as a linguistic transfer but as a complex social phenomenon, highly dependent on various factors, including professional organisations, market dynamics, and working conditions[4].

Alongside these theoretical shifts, methodological innovation has also played an important role. Translation Studies has increasingly moved toward empirically investigation, combining descriptive approaches with both quantitative and qualitative methods to better understand how translation works in practice[5]. A development of this

[1] Susan, Bassnett "Culture and Translation", in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Porter, Catherine, Bermann, Sandra, Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 2014, p. 13.
[2] Juliane House, *Translation as Communication across Languages and Cultures*, New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 21; Basil Hatim, Jeremy Munday *Translation. An advanced resource book*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p.337; Binhua Wang, Jeremy Munday, *Advanced in Discourse Analysis of Translation and Interpreting. Linking Linguistic Approaches with Socio-Cultural Interpretation*, London, Routledge, 2020, p. 9; R. Kelly Washbourne, Benjamin Van Wyke, *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translation*, London, Routledge, 2019, p. 79.
[3] Binhua Wang, Jeremy Munday, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Andrew Chesterman, "The Name and Nature of Translator Studies", *Hermes. Journal of Language and Communication Studies*, 42 (2009), pp. 13-22; Elle V. Dam, Karen Korning Zethsen, "Translation Studies. Focus on the Translator", *Hermes. Journal of Language and Communication Studies*, 42 (2009), pp. 7-12; Antoinette Fawcett, Karla L. Guadarrama, Rebecca Hyde Parker, *Translation. Theory and Practice in Dialogue*, London, Continuum, 2010, pp. 166-167; Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *Introducing Translation Studies. Theories and Applications*, London, Routledge, 2022, p. 198; Binhua Wang, Jeremy Munday, *op. cit.*, p. 1; R. Kelly Washbourne, Benjamin Van Wyke, *op. cit.*, p. 449.
[4] Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, London, Routledge, 2011, p. 279; Andrew Chesterman, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-22; Kobus Marais, Reine Meylaerts, *Complexity Thinking in Translation Studies. Methodological Considerations*, New York, Routledge, 2019, p. 104.
[5] Dorothy Kenny, *Lexis and Creativity in Translation. A Corpus-based Study*, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 48; Kirsten Malmkjær, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies and Linguistics*, New York, Routledge, 2018, p. 343.

scientific shift has been the rise of Corpus-Based Translation Studies (CBTS), which allowed researchers to study recurring patterns in translated language in a more organised way[6].

The traditional emphasis on rational cognitive processes, which characterised early Translation Process Research (TPR)[7], has also expanded to acknowledge the translator as a human agent influenced by emotional and affective factors[8]. Research now recognises emotion as an important factor in shaping human cognition and decision-making during translation[9].

Furthermore, the presence of screen-based texts and the complexity of modern communication have necessitated a profound engagement with multimodality and Audiovisual Translation (AVT)[10]. This field challenges the notion of translation as a simple verbal transfer, demanding systems capable of analysing the interplay between linguistic, visual, and acoustic semiotic resources[11]. It is essential to acknowledge the interplay of the various semiotic modes that together constitute the filmic text, each contributing to the overall meaning-making process. These modes are central not only to film analysis but also to multimodal research in audiovisual translation (AVT), as highlighted in the works of Delabastita (1989), Zabalbeascoa (2008), Díaz Cintas and Remael (2015), and Boria et al. (2019). The filmic text can thus be understood as a multimodal construct including four primary modes[12]:

- The **aural-verbal mode**, which includes dialogues, voice-over, narration, and song lyric.

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[6] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *The Routledge Handbooks of Translation and Cognition*, New York, Routledge, 2021, p. 13; Riccardo Moratto, Defeng Li, *Advances in Corpus Applications in Literary and Translation Studies*, New York, Routledge, 2023, p. 103; Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[7] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op.* cit, pp. 294-295.
[8] Ivi, p.15; Séverine Hubscher-Davidson, *Translation and Emotion. A Psychological Perspective*, New York, Routledge, 2018.
[9] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 294.
[10] Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Yves Gambier, Sara Ramos Pinto, *Audiovisual Translation. Theoretical and Methodological Challenges*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018, p. 40; Luis Pérez González, *Audiovisual Translation. Theories, Methods and Issues*, London, Routledge, 2014, p. 185.
[11] Łukasz Bogucki, *A Relevance-Theoretic Approach to Decision-Making in Subtitling*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2020, p. 25; Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *Subtitling. Concepts and Practices*, New York, Routledge, 2021, p. 65; Kobus Marais, Reine Meylaerts, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79; Christopher Taylor, "The Multimodal Approach in Audiovisual Translation", in *The Multimodal Approach in Audiovisual Translation*, ed. Gambier, Yves, Ramos Pinto, Sara, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018, pp. 39-52.
[12] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

- The **aural-nonverbal mode**, encompassing music, sound effects, and ambient noises.
- The **visual-verbal mode**, referring to on-screen written texts such as subtitles, credit titles, letters, advertisements, and newspaper headlines.
- The **visual-nonverbal mode**, which involves cinematographic elements such as editing, photography, mise-en-scène, and gestures.

Following Díaz Cintas, the visual-verbal mode includes all written elements visible on screen, including subtitles. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that subtitles differ from other elements, as they are added through audiovisual translation rather than being part of the original audiovisual text, creating an additional layer of meaning

Table 2.1. Semiotic Channels Involved in a Film Subtitles[13]

Acoustic Channel	Verbal	• Dialogues • Voice-over / Off-screen voices • Lyrics
	Non-Verbal	• Music • Natural Sounds • Sound Effects
Visual Channel	Verbal	• Superimposed Titles (location names, time indications) • Written Signs on the Screen (displays: signs, letters, messages) • Subtitles
	Non-Verbal	• Images / Pictures • Composition (mise-en-scène) • Editing / visual sequencing • Gestures • Facial expressions

[13] Author's elaboration based on Elisa Perego, "Evidence of Explicitation in Subtitling. Towards a Categorisation", *Across Language and Cultures* 4-1 (2003), pp. 63-88.

Each of these modes interacts dynamically with the others, producing a complex network of meaning that translation must interpret and recreate across linguistic and cultural boundaries[14]. While the audiovisual text is composed of interacting verbal and non-verbal elements across acoustic and visual channels, audiovisual translation introduces additional layers, such as subtitles and captions, which are superimposed onto the original product.

This chapter aims to explore these three interconnected areas, CBTS, Multimodality/AVT, and Affective-Cognitive research, demonstrating how their interaction forms the foundation for modern and validated translation research methodologies, particularly through the use of triangulation to address the intricate nature of the translation process and product. In simple terms, triangulation means looking at the same phenomenon from different angles, combining methods and data in order to get a more complete picture.

2.2 Corpus-Based Translation Studies: Methods, Applications, and Challenges

Corpus Linguistics (CL) has become a central methodological approach in Translation Studies (TS), allowing researchers to investigate translated language through the analysis of large collections of texts.

In this context, Corpus-Based Translation Studies (CBTS)[15] has developed as a key area within the discipline. By applying corpus analysis techniques and software to electronic collections of texts, it makes it enables researchers to identify recurring patterns and tendencies in translated language and to analyse translation on the basis of larger and more representative sets of data[16]. A corpus is defined as a large, electronic collection of texts compiled according to specific, principled criteria for systematic empirical analysis[17]. The design of a corpus is never neutral, as it is closely tied to the research question and directly impacts the kind of results that can be produced[18]. For this reason, different types of corpora have been developed, each for a specific analytical purpose.

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[14] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
[15] Riccardo Moratto, Defeng Li, *op. cit.*, p. 103; Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.
[16] Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, p. 342; Gabriela Saldana, Sharon O'Brian, *Research Methodologies in Translation Studies*, London, Routledge, 2014, p. 60.
[17] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236; Dorothy Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 22; Julie McDonough Dolmaya, *Digital Research Methods for Translation Studies*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2024, p. 40; p. 109.
[18] Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

Among the most commonly used types of corpora are the following:

- **Parallel Corpora**. These include source-language texts (STs) aligned with their target-language translations (TTs)[19]. They are useful for observing how specific linguistic features are rendered across languages, for investigating equivalence relations between lexical items or grammatical structures, and for examining translation problems and mistakes[20]. Parallel corpora raise some methodological issues, especially when it comes to identifying features that are truly comparable across different linguistic systems[21].
- **Monolingually Comparable Corpora (MCC)**: These consist of translated texts in a target language(s) and original (non-translated) texts in the same language, matched for criteria like register, genre, and time period[22]. MCCs are primarily used to study the characteristics of translated language, often referred to as translation universals, such as explicitation, normalisation, simplification, shining through)[23]. Shining through refers to the influence of the source language on the target text, which results in traces of the original language being visible in the translation. Other tendencies include explicitation, understood as the tendency to make information more explicit, simplification, which involves reducing linguistic complexity, and normalisation, whereby translations tend to conform to more conventional patterns in the target language. However, comparing original texts and translations in the same language makes it difficult to specify the exact cognitive or linguistic factors triggering observed phenomena[24].
- **Multilingually Comparable Corpora (MLCC)**: Often emerging from the combination of parallel and comparable corpora, these allow for cross-linguistic comparisons of original texts, translated texts, or a mix of both[25].
- **Multiple Translation Corpora (MTC)**: These consist of a single source text translated by multiple translators (professionals and students) into one or more target languages. Examples include the CRITT TPR-DB (Translation Process Research Database). Resources like CRITT TPR-DB make it possible to compare

[19] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.
[20] Ivi, p. 416; p. 190.
[21] Ivi, p. 191.
[22] Ivi, p. 235-236.
[23] Ivi, p. 13; Gabriela Saldana, Sharon O'Brian, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, p. 345.
[24] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 190.
[25] Ivi, p. 417.

translation strategies and to observe differences between beginner and expert translators, providing useful insight into how translation competence develops [26].

Across these different corpus types, issues such as balance and representativeness[27] remain central. In practice, translation flows between languages are often uneven, which can make it difficult to build corpora that fully reflect real-world translation practices[28]. These difficulties become more evident in the context of audiovisual translation, where the presence of non-verbal elements adds an additional layer of complexity to both corpus design and analysis[29].

CBTS has provided substantial data supporting hypotheses about phenomena typical of translated language, which often have assumed cognitive origins, such as something in the translator's mind affecting how texts are processed simultaneously in two languages[30].

- **Testing Cognitive Hypotheses**. Corpus analysis, as mentioned above, is recognised for documenting features like explicitation, normalisation, simplification, and shining through[31]. Shining through (or interference from the source language) is explored using corpus data.
- **Investigating Cognitive Phenomena**. While core cognitive concepts like chunking, and schematisation are more challenging to demonstrate using corpus linguistic methods, attempts have been made to relate translation shifts to different levels of familiarity in the translators' minds[32].
- **Methodological Depth**. Corpus studies range from corpus-illustrated research (using the corpus primarily for examples) to descriptive operationalisation (comparison of frequency counts) and explanatory research using sophisticated bivariate or multivariate statistical analysis[33]. The incorporation of multivariate statistical techniques adds reliability to the interpretation of findings[34]

[26] *Ibidem*; Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.
[27] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-236.
[28] Gabriela Saldana, Sharon O'Brian, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
[29] Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.
[30] Dorothy Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 47; Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.
[31] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 13; p. 194
[32] Ivi, p. 13.
[33] Gabriela Saldana, Sharon O'Brian, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[34] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

Despite their advantages, using corpus methods presents several challenges, particularly when investigating complex or less obvious linguistic features:

- **Linguistic Annotation and Querying**. Many researchers still rely on untagged, unlemmatised KWIC (Key Word In Context) concordances, which are inadequate for grammatical or semantic investigations. KWIC concordances display occurrences of a word together with its immediate context, but without additional linguistic annotation, they offer only limited information. Deep linguistic annotation (syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic) is required to operationalise abstract hypotheses such as explicitation or simplification[35].
- **Multilingual and Typological Issues**. Working with multilingual corpora can be challenging because languages are structured differently, which makes it difficult to segment texts in comparable ways. Simple string-based searches are often not sufficient to capture these differences[36].
- **Multimodality**. A major challenge in AVT corpus work is the complexity and multimodality of the texts[37]. Analysing dialogue without taking into account visual and non-verbal sound elements, leads to incomplete results. Consequently, most AVT corpora are based on dialogue transcriptions with some additional information, rather than being fully multimodal[38].
- **Connecting Product to Process**. Corpus data primarily offer access to the translation *product* and resulting *patterns*[39]. To explain how and why translators made decisions leading to normalisation or shining through, corpus analysis must be complemented with process-based research and cognitive experiments[40]

Overall, these issues highlight that that corpus methods cannot be applied in isolation. Their effectiveness depends on the integration of other analytical tools and complementary approaches, especially dealing with complex, multilingual and multimodal data.

[35] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 418-419.
[36] *Ibidem.*
[37] Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238; Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, p. 320.
[38] Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.
[39] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 13; p. 426.
[40] Ivi, p. 426; Riccardo Moratto, Defeng Li, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

2.3 Multimodality and Audiovisual Translation (AVT)

The rise of screen-based texts and digital technologies has established Audiovisual Translation (AVT) as a rapidly expanding field, forcing TS to address inherently multimodal and multimedial texts[41].

AVT is defined as a branch of TS concerned with the transfer of multimodal and multimedial texts into another language and/or culture[42].

- **Multimodality vs. Multimediality**. A crucial distinction is made between *mode* and *medium*[43].
  - **Mode** refers to the socially and culturally shaped resources for making meaning, such as linguistic elements (speech, writing), gesture, gaze, static and dynamic images, sound, facial expressions, colour, and posture[44]. Modes are semiotic resources with specific affordances (potentials and constraints) shaped by their material and social history[45].
  - **Medium** relates to the material form that conveys the message, such as paper, film, ink, or hyperspace[46].
- **The Audiovisual Text**. Audiovisual texts are characterised by different types of signs, and viewers understand them through a combination of verbal elements (spoken and written language) and non-verbal elements (sounds, images, and other visual cues). The various sign systems (or signifying codes), linguistic, paralinguistic, musical, iconographic, and photographic, operate simultaneously and are articulated according to specific filmic rules[47].
- **Intersemiotic Cohesion**. In multimodal texts, different semiotic resources are complementary and interact to create a coherent overall meaning. This

[41] Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2; Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, p. 233; Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[42] Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[43] Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 187; Ivi, p. 310.
[44] *Ibidem*; Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 434; Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 310; Monica Boria, Ángeles Carreres, María Noriega-Sánchez, Marcus Tomalin, *Translation and Multimodality. Beyond Words*, London, Routledge, 2020, p. 13; p. 72.
[45] Monica Boria, Ángeles Carreres, María Noriega-Sánchez, Marcus Tomalin, *op. cit.*, p. 13; p. 28; p. 30; Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, p. 236; Kobus Marais, *A (Bio)Semiotic Theory of Translation. The Emergence of Social-Cultural Reality*, New York, Routledge, 2018, p. 78.
[46] Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 434; Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 187; Ivi, p. 310.
[47] Łukasz Bogucki, *op. cit.*, p. 25; Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, p. 4; Yves Gambier, Sara Ramos Pinto, *op. cit.*, p. 11; Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

> redundancy or interdependence among modes (e.g., in a sad scene, knowing the emotion from dialogue, intonation, expressions, music, camera angles) means that a message can often be inferred even if one source is obscured[48].

Throughout the twentieth century, increasing attention to linguistic minorities prompted media industries to take a leading role in supporting accessibility and linguistic inclusion. The current digital era has further accelerated such developments: digital technologies have transformed not only film production but also the ways audiovisual content is perceived, accessed, and distributed.

A brief terminological clarification is needed. Early scholarship used the term "Film Translation" to refer to the translation of cinematic dialogue, at a time when television had not yet achieved its current cultural diffusion. Subsequently, "Screen Translation" emerged to identify translation practices associated with content distributed via different types of screens: cinema, television, and computers. The more general notion of "Language Transfer" highlights the verbal component of audiovisual products, which works with non-verbal elements such as sound effects and images. Today, the most widely adopted labels are "Audiovisual Translation" (AVT)in English and "Traduzione Audiovisiva" (TAV) in Italian, both foregrounding the multisemiotic nature of filmic and television texts[49].

Audiovisual texts integrate two basic components: the acoustic dimension, including dialogue, sound effects, and broader soundtracks[50], and the visual dimension. Their interdependence produces a complex and multi-coded text whose translation is often challenging and requires careful mediation of several semiotic layers. As in other forms of translation, the process involves moving from a source language to a target language, yet AV translators frequently emphasise that subtitling and dubbing do not constitute "translation" in the conventional sense[51].

[48] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 436; Monica Boria, Ángeles Carreres, María Noriega-Sánchez, Marcus Tomalin, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
[49] Elisa Perego, *La Traduzione Audiovisiva*, Roma, Carocci Editore, 2021, pp. 7-8.
[50] The soundtrack is not only the musical component of a film or stage production, but also the ensemble of sounds, noises, and effects that permeate the entire show.
[51] Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

2.3.1 AVT Modalities and Practices

Audiovisual translation encompasses a wide spectrum of thirteen recognised modalities, which can be grouped into two main categories:

- Dominant or Standard Methods
  - Interlingual Subtitling
  - Dubbing
  - Consecutive Interpreting
  - Simultaneous Interpreting
  - Voice-Over
  - Free Commentary
  - Simultaneous Translation
  - Multilingual Production

- Challenging or Specialised Methods
  - Script Translation
  - Live or Real-Time Subtitling
  - Surtitling
  - Audio Description
  - Intralingual Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

These modalities differ significantly in purpose, target audience, workflow, and technological requirements. They may also be classified according to whether they replace the original soundtrack, as in dubbing and voice-over, or preserve the original audio while adding a written layer, as in subtitling and surtitling[52].

The main audiovisual translation modalities can be outlined as follow:

- **Interlingual Subtitling.** A written, condensed translation of the spoken track, displayed at the bottom of the screen. It is prepared in advance and is considered a transparent mode of translation, as the original audio remains intact[53].

[52] Ivi, p. 23.
[53] Ivi, p. 23.

- **Live Subtitling**. Produced in real time during broadcasts such as interviews or breaking news. It requires a relay interpreter (a person who listens and reformulates the message) and a respeaker/technician (someone who conveys the message rapidly), making it highly demanding due to time pressure[54].
- **Surtitling**. Developed in the 1980s to translate theatre, opera, and musical performances. The translated text is projected above (or around) the stage, enabling audiences to follow the sung or spoken material without altering the live performance[55].
- **Dubbing**. A process of post-synchronisation replaces the original dialogue with a newly recorded track in the target language. It requires precise lip-synchrony, making the adaptor's role crucial. Dubbing must preserve the illusion that actors are speaking the target language, while also conveying humour, dialects, wordplay, and culturally specific references.
- **Voice-Over**. A hybrid, low-cost solution in which a translated voice track is superimposed onto the original audio, which remains audible at a lower volume. Dialogue does not need to match lip movements, making it faster and cheaper than dubbing[56].
- **Narration and Commentary**. These modes involve a reworked and often reduced version of the source dialogue, presented by a single narrator without the obligation of synchrony. Commentary allows even greater adaptation, sometimes adding or removing information to suit the target audience[57].
- **Audio Description**. Designed for blind or visually impaired viewers, this mode provides verbal descriptions of visual elements, complementing the existing soundtrack. It must strike a balance between detail and conciseness, adapting to diverse perceptual needs.

A comparison between dubbing and subtitling highlights a number of key differences, as illustrated in the table below.

[54] Ivi, pp. 23-24.
[55] Ivi, pp. 24-25.
[56] Ivi, pp. 28-30.
[57] Ivi, pp. 30-32.

Table 2.2. Distinctive Features of Dubbing and Subtitling[58]

Dubbing	Subtitling
Expensive	Low-cost
Loss of the original dialogue	Preservation of the integrity of the original dialogue
Slow and laborious procedure	Relatively fast procedure
Presents itself as a local, domesticated product	Fosters language learning
Voice actors' voices may be reused and become repetitive	Original voices of actors are retained
Advantageous for audiences of children and/or (semi-)illiterate viewers	Advantageous for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences
Full respect for original images	Partial cleaning/reduction of the original images
Minimal reduction of the original text	Greater reduction of the source text
Preserves turn-taking overlaps (when several actors speak at the same time)	Does not preserve turn-taking overlaps (overlapping speech must be simplified)
Allows the viewer to focus on the image	Splits the viewers' attention across three levels: image, written text (L1), and soundtrack
Allows greater manipulation of dialogues	Dialogues are more difficult to manipulate
Can convey more sociolinguistic variation in the target version	Can convey fewer sociolinguistic variations in the target version
The viewer can follow the plot without shifting attention away from the screen	The viewer may be distracted if they do not read the subtitles, which can hinder plot comprehension
Bound to lip-synchrony	Bound to spatial-temporal constraints
Use of a single linguistic code	Simultaneous use of two linguistic codes → potential confusion for the viewer
Original text = more polysemiotic when spoken	Original text = more polysemiotic when both spoken and written
Preservation of orality → more natural isosemiotic translation	Diamesic variation (shift from spoken to written code) → diasemiotic nature of the translation
Provides a stronger cinematic illusion	Offers a weaker cinematic illusion

AVT modes are generally categorised into revoicing and subtitling[59]. Traditional AVT research focused heavily on technical constraints (space, time, synchrony), but recent studies emphasise understanding these modes as distinct translational and semiotic practices[60].

[58] Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, p. 27; Jorge Díaz Cintas, *La Traducción Audiovisual. El Subtitulado*, Salamanca, Ediciones Almar, 2001, pp. 49-50; Henrik Gottlieb, *"Subtitling. People Translating People", in Teaching Translation and Interpreting 2 Insights, Aims, Visions. Papers from the Second Language International Conference. Elsinore. Denmark 4-6 June 1993*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994, pp. 261-274.
[59] Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, p. 313.
[60] Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, p. 233; Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 19; Jorge Díaz Cintas, *New Trends in Audiovisual Translation*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2009, p. 176.

Table 2.3. AVT Modes and Their Main Characteristics

AVT Mode Category	Key Modes/Practices	Description
Revoicing (Oral Output)	Lip-synchronised Dubbing, Voice-Over, Narration, Free Commentary	Original soundtrack is replaced (Dubbing) or volume is lowered and a target language translation is superimposed (Voice-Over). Dubbing requires synchronisation of sound and lip movements.
Subtitling (Written Output)	Interlingual Subtitling, Surtitling	Written texts, usually along the bottom of the screen, accounting for dialogue and other linguistic elements in the visual image.
Assistive AVT (Access)	Subtitling for the d/Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing (SDH), Audio Description (AD), Sign Language Interpreting (SLI)	Practices focused on accessibility, often involving intersemiotic transfer (e.g. spoken word to written text or description).

Subtitling consists of displaying a written, condensed translation of the original dialogue at the bottom of the screen. Because the written text appears simultaneously with the source-language audio, it is often described as a *transparent* mode of translation. Subtitles are produced asynchronously, prepared and edited before integration into the final audiovisual product, and therefore allow the translator sufficient time to refine condensation, segmentation, and phrasing[61]. It should be noted that subtitling does not suppress multilingualism; rather, it enhances the film's linguistic plurality by introducing an additional written L2 while allowing the original L1 and any L3 to remain audible in the target version[62].

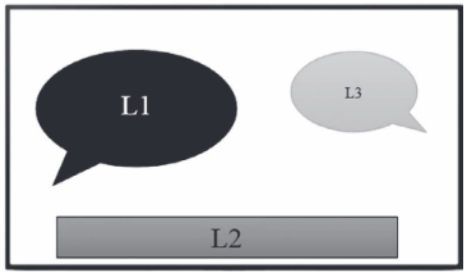


Figure 2.1. Multilingualism in Subtitling[63].

[61] Elisa Perego *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.
[62] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
[63] *Ibidem*.

In contrast, *real-time or live subtitling* is generated during the broadcast of unscripted events such as interviews or breaking news. A relay interpreter (or respeaker) reformulates the source utterance into a more concise version, while a technician converts it into written text at high speed. Unlike pre-prepared subtitling, this modality is cognitively demanding and unsuitable for cinema or theatre, as it relies on rapid reaction rather than prior textual planning[64].

Emerging in the 1980s as an adaptation of subtitling, *surtitling* is used primarily in theatre, opera, and musical performances. Translated text, usually condensed and adapted, is projected above the stage, though some venues place screens below or beside the performance area. The placement above the scenic space explains the term "surtitles." Some modern theatres provide individual seatback screens offering subtitles in multiple languages, enhancing accessibility without altering stage dynamics[65].

Dubbing replaces the original soundtrack with a newly recorded dialogue track in the target language. This process requires careful *post-synchronisation*, aligning translated dialogue with actors' lip movements (lip-synchrony), temporal pacing (isochrony), and gestures or facial expressions (kinetic synchrony). The adaptor plays a central role: the translated script must reproduce the *illusion* that the actors are speaking the target language. This entails reproducing humour, wordplay, dialects, accents, cultural references, and emotional nuances. Dubbing is both costly and labour-intensive, but it allows viewers, especially children or low-literacy audiences, to follow the narrative without reading subtitles[66]. Table 2.2, adapted for the purposes of this thesis, outlines the main differences between subtitling and dubbing, highlighting contrasts in cost, processing speed, information density, preservation of original voices, language-learning potential, and the cognitive demands placed on viewers.

Situated between subtitling and dubbing, *voice-over* adds one or more translated voices over the original track, which remains audible at reduced volume. Unlike dubbing, voice-over does not require precise synchrony or adaptation to lip movement. The translated dialogue is typically read by professionals, actors, or journalists, who maintain a neutral, documentary-like tone. This method preserves partial access to the original audio while remaining less expensive and faster to produce than full dubbing. It is particularly

[64] Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.
[65] Ivi, pp. 24-25.
[66] Ivi, pp. 25-28.

effective in documentaries, interviews, and news segments, where auditory clarity outweighs dramatic illusion[67].

Narration differs from voice-over because it involves a more radical reworking of the original dialogue. The source text is translated, simplified, and adapted beforehand, then read by a single narrator. Synchrony with lip movements is unnecessary, though narrative pacing must broadly follow the temporal progression of the original content. Direct speech is frequently transformed into indirect speech, and the narrator may add contextual or explanatory information to facilitate comprehension. This modality is more formal and interpretative than voice-over, prioritising summarisation and cohesion[68].

Commentary, frequently paired with narration in documentaries and short films, allows even greater freedom from the source text. As an intermediary between translation and adaptation, commentary may add or omit information to aid cultural accessibility. Its low level of textual fidelity makes it ideal for educational or ethnographic programming, where the aim is to contextualise unfamiliar cultural content for the target audience.

Audio description targets blind and visually impaired audiences by inserting verbal descriptions of essential visual elements into the natural pauses of dialogue and soundtrack. It supplements the auditory component of audiovisual material with information about actions, settings, gestures, and visual details. The challenge lies in providing descriptions that are neither excessive nor insufficient, considering the varying degrees of visual impairment. Viewers blind from birth rely on these descriptions differently from those who have become visually impaired later in life, as the latter possess established visual memory frameworks for interpreting shapes, colours, and spatial relations[69].

Surtitling and *subtitling* involve transforming an oral source text into a written target text projected on a screen.

- **Surtitling (Opera and Theatre)**. This practice started in Toronto, and requires adherence to extreme constraints related to space, time, rhythm, and coherence[70].

[67] Ivi, pp. 28-30.
[68] Ivi, pp. 30-31.
[69] Ivi, p. 32.
[70] Nicole Nolette, "Surtitling and the New Networks of Theatre Translation in Toronto", *Translation Studies*, 15-3 (2022), pp. 306-322.

- The primary strategy is condensation and deletion to capture the main idea. This frequently results in significant textual compression (e.g., a 30% reduction in word count compared to the original script).
- "Gunta's Rules", the standardised norms in Toronto theatre, dictate that each slide must express a single, coherent idea, redundancy (like proper nouns or repetition) must be avoided, punctuation should be limited (favouring the period over the exclamation point), and contractions are preferred (e.g., *won't* over *will not*).
- Time constraints require captions to remain on screen for a minimum duration (e.g., typically no less than 2 seconds, and a full two-line caption for at least 6 seconds)[71].

- **Spoken Introductions**. These are oral translations designed to introduce a foreign song to the audience. They must be short, digestible, and avoid ambiguities or complex syntax, relying on the emphasis possible through spoken delivery[72].
- **Translations for Reading (Glosses/Program Notes)**.
  - *Study Translations (Glosses)*: Aimed at performers or singing teachers, these strive for the deepest possible understanding of the text's function and subtext. They often employ word-for-word translation alongside prose versions, permitting explicitation through footnotes or square brackets to explain complex linguistic or cultural details (e.g., translating a specific Paris prison name or an ancient metrical pattern).
  - *Program Translations (Communicative)*: Intended for the concert audience to digest quickly, these should be reader-friendly, idiomatic, and generally take the form of prose or unrhymed free verse[73].

2.3.2 AVT in Context: Countries and Practices

Audiovisual Translation has historically developed along distinct geographical and cultural lines, particularly within Europe, where countries were traditionally divided into *dubbing countries* and *subtitling countries*[74]. The criterion underlying this dichotomy was principally demographic: nations with larger populations tended to invest in dubbing,

[71] Peter Low, *Translating Song. Lyrics and* Texts, London and New York, Routledge, 2017.
[72] *Ibidem*.
[73] *Ibidem*.
[74] Ivi, p. 16.

while smaller countries often opted for subtitling as a more cost-effective solution. Over time, however, this division has become increasingly fluid, as globalised media flows and digital distribution have diversified national practices[75].

The European market long remained at a disadvantage compared to the American one, being fragmented into local productions and autonomous linguistic markets. This fragmentation is now diminishing, with a growing number of European countries experimenting with or combining dubbing and subtitling depending on audience expectations, cost, and genre. Initially regarded as a less prestigious option, subtitling has gained considerable recognition for its ability to preserve the original linguistic and cultural texture of a film, while also supporting second-language acquisition. Its rising popularity is further driven by the international success of non-Western media, such as Korean and Chinese dramas, Japanese anime, and K-pop, whose circulation relies heavily on subtitled formats[76].

Conversely, countries historically committed to protecting national languages, such as Italy, France, Spain, the United Kingdom, and German-speaking regions, have maintained strong dubbing traditions. In Italy, for example, the dominance of dubbing has roots in Fascist cultural policies, which prohibited exposure to foreign languages and reinforced a monolingual audiovisual environment. Although Italy has long been renowned for the quality of its dubbing industry, recent decades have witnessed a decline due to increased workloads and reduced production budgets.

Despite these differences, the choice between dubbing and subtitling remains largely pragmatic. *Dubbing* is significantly more expensive, up to ten times the cost of subtitling, making it feasible only when strong commercial returns are expected. In countries where subtitling is the norm, dubbing may even be perceived as intrusive, interrupting the authenticity of the original performance[77].

The history of subtitling is instead closely intertwined with the technological evolution of cinema. The medium emerged in 1895, when the Lumière brothers screened *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* in Paris on 18 December of that year, marking the birth of silent film. For several decades, cinema relied on visual narration accompanied by written supplements, with sound film only arriving in 1925. The transition from silent to sound cinema was gradual rather than abrupt, shaped by innovations in image and sound

[75] Ivi, pp. 17-18.
[76] Ivi, pp. 19-20.
[77] Ivi, pp. 17-22.

recording, editing, and projection technologies. The earliest form of written mediation in silent cinema was the *intertitle* (or *caption*), consisting of brief descriptive or dialogic sequences inserted between shots. Although often regarded as anti-cinematic for interrupting narrative flow, intertitles served an essential explanatory and narrative function. Around 1917, these inserts evolved into *overlaid intertitles* placed directly on the image, allowing more seamless integration with the visual narrative. With the advent of synchronised sound in 1927, intertitles progressively gave way to true subtitles, which accompanied the spoken dialogue while preserving uninterrupted visual action[78].

Initially, however, international distribution relied on the production of multiple-language versions of the same film, sometimes involving different casts and even different directors. This practice proved too costly and inefficient, prompting the transition to subtitling and, slightly later, to dubbing, which gained traction around 1932. Subtitling thus emerged not only as a technological solution but also as a pragmatic response to global film circulation, enabling faster and more economical linguistic adaptation. Its evolution reflects broader shifts in cinematic technology and in the internationalisation of film markets[79].

2.3.3 Challenges and Humour

These considerations foreground a series of central challenges that shape contemporary research in audiovisual translation, revealing how multimodal constraints, shifting translational boundaries, and participatory practices complicate established theoretical models.

- **Semiotic Constraint**. The visual elements of the original production (images, character interaction, and nonverbal signs) are usually retained and cannot be easily replaced, severely restricting the translator's decisions in the verbal sphere[80]. The translation must articulate new intermodal synergies to maintain the cohesion between channels[81].
- **Co-text Approach**. Recognising AVT as multimodally constituted requires adopting a co-text approach, treating all semiotic resources (images, sounds,

[78] Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.
[79] Ivi, pp. 34-39.
[80] Jorge Díaz Cintas, *op. cit.*, p. 9; p. 24; Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
[81] Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 214; Jorge Díaz Cintas, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

gestures) as signifying elements that make meaning independently and in relation to each other, necessitating holistic multimodal choices by the translator[82].

- **Scope of Translation**. AVT forces a redefinition of what is translated. By moving away from language-centric analysis, the focus shifts to transposing meaning across various modes, rather than strictly transferring linguistic elements[83]. This raises questions about how to define equivalence (how do we identify equivalent target resources for non-verbal modes?) and whether translating non-verbal cues by verbal resources constitutes translation or merely explanation[84].
- **Non-professional Practices (Self-Mediation)**. Amateur translation cultures (e.g., fansubbing) challenge traditional constraints by operating beyond the assumption that translation is limited to language manipulation, sometimes adapting visual or acoustic components, leading to intermodal shifts of meaning[85]. This shift emphasises expressivity over referentiality and is driven by networked communities of users or "prosumers"[86].

This new way of thinking about translation as the negotiation of multimodal constraints instead of just a language transfer is especially clear when translating *humour* in audiovisual texts.

Most people recognise humour immediately, but it is hard to describe it. For audiovisual translation, what matters is identifying the recurring features of humour and the practical obstacles they create for translators working under screen-based constraints. Humour can often be conceptualised in terms of (un)translatability; however, the worldwide popularity of comedies, across print, stage, and screen, demonstrates that humour is indeed translatable. For this reason, the real question is not if humour can be translated, but how it is translated and how much it costs.

It can be helpful to think of humour less as an abstract quality of individual lines and more as something that happens in a certain situation. Most of the time, humour makes people laugh (or at least smile), but the "fun" effect is not always the same. Despite aiming for laughter, some sentences can make audiences laugh unintentionally, while others fail,

[82] Monica Boria, Ángeles Carreres, María Noriega-Sánchez, Marcus Tomalin, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.
[83] Ivi, p. 24; p. 28; p. 45; p. 80.
[84] Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
[85] Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 19; Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
[86] Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 185; Ivi, p. 253; Ryoko Sasamoto, *Relevance and Text-On-Screen in Audiovisual Translation. The Pragmatics of Creative Subtitling*, New York, Routledge, 2024, p. 1.

and many only reach certain groups. This instability is mainly due to the fact that humour is based on co-text (the dialogue, scene structure, and timing around it) and on larger contexts that are social, cultural, linguistic, temporal, and sometimes even personal. Distance is important: between languages, between cultural traditions, and between historical moments (topical jokes get old quickly). Translating humour requires a series of decisions: determining what is intended to be humorous in the source text, predicting how the target audience will interpret it, and then rephrasing the material in a way that could reasonably generate a similar reaction without compromising narrative coherence.

Zabalbeascoa's work[87] is especially useful in AVT because it moves the focus away from finding exact matches and toward managing priorities when there are limits. Humour may be central or just a local decoration; a joke may have important plot information or not; and the translator may need to keep the meaning in some cases and focus on the comic effect in others. This priority-based approach also allows for a practical classification of jokes: various types of humour present distinct translational challenges, frequently necessitating different strategies. So, a clear classification is not just a way to organise things; it is also a way to analyse them and make sure that decisions are made the same way in all case studies.

The following table summarises the main types of audiovisual jokes, as outlined by Zabalbeascoa[88], and the corresponding translational challenges they typically imply.

Table 2.4. Zabalbeascoa's AVT-Oriented Humour Analysis Grid

Joke Type (Zabalbeascoa)	**Source of Humour**	**Typical translation difficulty**	**Common solution paths (template)**	**AVT-specific risks to check**
1. International/Bi-National Jokes	Widely recognisable referents. Humour not dependent on wordplay or obscure cultural knowledge	Low to medium	Literal rendering. Light reformulation	Overestimating target familiarity. Space/time limits may force compression
2. National Culture/Institutions Jokes	Culture bound institutions,	Medium to high	Substitution with target-culture equivalent.	Incoherence with plot/world. Loss of specificity.

[87] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*, Manchester, St. Jerome Pub, 2007, pp. 212-229.
[88] *Ibidem*.

	practices, “local” references		Generalisation. Selective explicitation	Viewer confusion if referent is not clear
3. Community-Based Humour (sense of humour)	Insider traditions, stereotypes, intertextual community scripts	High	Functional substitution. Relocation of the humorous effect. Mitigation or neutralisation where necessary	Ethical sensitivity. Variable audience reception. Risk of misinterpretation or offence
4. Language-Dependent Jokes	Wordplay, polysemy, phonetic play, idioms, names, metalinguistic features	Very high	Replace with different wordplay. Creative rewriting. Compensation. Occasional sacrifice	Literal translation may create nonsense. Timing and reading speed. Register consistency
5. Visual Jokes	Editing, sight gags, facial expression, gesture, viewer knows more than characters	Often low	Frequently no verbal intervention. Minimal anchoring if needed	Cultural limits of “universal” visuality. Subtitle can distract from image if overloaded
6. Aural Jokes	Non-verbal sounds/noises, paralinguistic cues not dependent on lexical meaning	Often low	Usually no translation. In accessibility contexts, descriptive labels	Missed cue if audience relies on text; subtitling for the d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH) may require sound description decisions
7. Complex Jokes	Combination of two or more channels (verbal + visual; verbal + cultural; verbal + aural, etc.)	Very high	Prioritise coherence. Balance multiple semiotic priorities. Multimodal compensation	Inconsistencies with image or sound. Loss of timing. Repercussions for plot comprehension

Zabalbeascoa says that when translating humour in dubbed TV comedies, it is rare to find direct links between the source and target text elements. Instead, translators have to work with changing priorities and balance a lot of different and often conflicting constraints to keep the intended comic effect.

These limitations can be cultural, linguistic, technical, or professional, and they often require major changes to the original text. To get the same reaction from the audience, jokes may need to be changed, rephrased, or even replaced completely. In this way, translating humour in audiovisual contexts shows how important effect-oriented strategies are over formal fidelity. It also shows how the translator is an active mediator working in a complex multimodal environment. These considerations are not confined to the translation of spoken dialogue in audiovisual media but also encompass other modalities of multimodal performance, such as musical theatre. As discussed in Chapter 4, *My Fair Lady* is a very relevant case study in this area. It is a useful place to look at intersemiotic translation, how meaning is negotiated across different modes, the social importance of voice, and how sociolectal variation can be represented across different media.

In addition to functional taxonomies of audiovisual humour such as the one proposed by Zabalbeascoa, it is useful to account for the cognitive mechanisms underlying humorous effects in multimodal texts. From this perspective, humour may be interpreted as arising from what has been described as *incongruity*, understood as a conflict between what is expected within a given cognitive or social framework and what actually occurs in the communicative stimulus.

As argued by Vandaele[89], *incongruity* does not operate only at the verbal level but may emerge across different semiotic resources, including linguistic form, sociolinguistic register, visual framing, narrative structure, and audiovisual interaction. In audiovisual media, humorous effects frequently result from the interaction between multiple layers of meaning-making, where established cognitive schemes, whether linguistic, social, or genre-based, are disrupted or contradicted. This perspective allows humour to be described not only as a textual or lexical phenomenon, but also as a multimodal process involving the negotiation of expectations across verbal, visual, and aural channels. In the context of musical performance, such incongruities may arise from tensions between vocal delivery and orchestration, between aspirational semantic content and socially marked pronunciation, or between visual framing and narrative positioning, ultimately contributing to the construction of humorous effect.

[89] Jeroen Vandaele, "'Each Time We Laugh'. Translated Humour in Screen Comedy", *Translation and (Re)Location of Meaning. Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminars on Translation Studies 1994-1996*, ed. By Jeroen Vandaele, CETRA/KULeuven, 1999, pp. 237-272.

The notion of incongruity is therefore adopted in this study as a complementary analytical lens, enabling the identification of humour that is embedded in multimodal configurations rather than exclusively in verbal wordplay. While incongruity is foregrounded as a particular productive analytical lens for examining humour arising from multimodal interaction, other mechanisms such as *superiority*-based humour may also be relevant in cases where comic effects derive from social positioning or evaluative judgement.

2.4 The Translator as a Cognitive, Affective, and Social Agent

The translator is increasingly understood as an active agent, that is, a figure who makes decisions and operates within specific cognitive, emotional, and social contexts. Modern TS acknowledges that the translator is neither a neutral transcoder nor a calculating rational actor, but a complex human agent whose output is shaped by professional context, social position, and internal emotional landscape[90].

The classical cognitive paradigm in Translation Process Research (TPR) emphasised information processing and rational choices[91]. However, recent research in psychology has highlighted the central role of *emotion* in shaping human cognition, showing that most thoughts are influenced by feelings. Emotion can be triggered by internal factors (personal well-being, feelings, attitudes) or external factors (source text, performance feedback, working conditions)[92].

- **The Role of Affect**. Emotion and affect influence a translator's attention, judgment, decision-making, and problem-solving activity[93]. Emotions, can be seen as temporary states or more stable tendencies, and can be studied as short-term reactions or as longer-lasting patterns[94].
- **Three Areas of Emotional Influence**. Emotional influence is conceptualised across three distinct areas affecting the translator[95]:

[90] Elle V. Dam, Karen Korning Zethsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-12; Antoinette Fawcett, Karla L. Guadarrama, Rebecca Hyde Parker, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167; Séverine Hubscher-Davidson, *op. cit*., p. 34; Mary Snell-Hornby, *The Turn of Translation Studies*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006, p. 172; Kelly Washbourne, Benjamin Van Wyke, *op. cit.*, p. 523.
[91] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295.
[92] Ivi, pp. 294-296; p. 299.
[93] Ivi, p. 15; Ivi, p. 296.
[94] Séverine Hubscher-Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[95] Ivi, p. 2; Ivi, pp. 37-38.

- **Emotion Perception**. Dealing with emotional material contained in source texts (STs). Translators are arguably the most intimate readers of STs The emotional concepts found in foreign STs, often constrained by language, may differ across cultures, impacting the translator's perception This stage involves intense emotional identification or "borrowing" the emotional states conveyed in the ST, sometimes leading to physical effects[96].
- **Emotion Regulation**. Dealing with the translator's own emotions arising during the translation process. Empirical research shows that emotions have a regulatory effect on behaviour: *positive emotions* (e.g., emotional commitment) improve creativity and style, while *negative emotions* (e.g., anxiety) enhance accuracy and coherence (e.g., in terminology). Strategies for managing emotion (e.g., situation selection to avoid frustration) are integral to this process[97].
- **Emotion Expression**: Dealing with the potential emotions of target readers. This is the communication of emotion-related information in the target text (TT). Translating is an act of written expression, and effective translators manage emotional aspects methodically, often employing rhetorical strategies and evaluative language to construct authorial voices. Translation provides a structured environment for expression, which can offer benefits similar to expressive writing, such as enhancing self-awareness and processing emotional information[98].

- **Implications for Competence and Training**. Emotional competencies are now recognised as an integral part of translation competence[99]. Training for future translators should include learning how to manage emotion, especially given the emotional labour involved in translating sensitive material[100].

[96] Ivi, p. 2; pp. 84-85.
[97] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 301.
[98] Séverine Hubscher-Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 2; p. 145; pp. 167-170; p. 186.
[99] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 15; p. 305.
[100] Séverine Hubscher-Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 174; Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 305; p. 35.

The sociological turn emphasises the need to study translation as a social phenomenon, moving beyond textual products to focus on the human agents involved and their socio-cultural context[101].

- **Models of Translation Sociology**. Translation sociology is commonly divided into three strands[102]:
  1. **Sociology of Translations**: Focuses on translations as products within international markets and literary systems[103].
  2. **Sociology of Translators**: Investigates the agents themselves, covering issues such as status, rates of pay, working conditions, gender, identity, and the public image of the profession. Key concepts here include the translator's *habitus*[104].
  3. **Sociology of Translating**: Concerns the observable process of the translation event, including working procedures, quality control, cooperation (team translation), and most centrally, translation norms[105].
- **The Translator's *Habitus***: Highly influential concepts borrowed from French social theory, notably Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, focus on the relationship between agency and structure[106]. The concept of *habitus*, a socially acquired system of embodied dispositions shaped by and individual's social and biological trajectory, is used to explain translator's choices and behaviour[107].
- **Actor-Network Theory (ANT)**: Derived from Bruno Latour, ANT focuses on dynamic networks comprising both human and non-human actors (e.g., texts, technologies)[108]. In ANT, translation itself is used to describe the processes of interpretation and displacement by which an idea or fact moves within a network[109]. Assemblage thinking, a key concept related to ANT, allows social

[101] Binhua Wang, Jeremy Munday, *op. cit.*, p. 1; Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 279; Gabriela Saldana, Sharon O'Brian, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
[102] Andrew Chesterman, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-22.
[103] *Ibidem*.
[104] *Ibidem*.
[105] *Ibidem*.
[106] Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 280; Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, p. 200; Washbourne, Benjamin Van Wyke, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
[107] Washbourne, Benjamin Van Wyke, *op. cit.*, p. 523; Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 280; Kobus Marais, Reine Meylaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
[108] Kobus Marais, Reine Meylaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 280; Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, p. 200.
[109] Kobus Marais, Reine Meylaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

complexity to be explored across various scales, emphasising that social entities like "translation" and "translators" are emergent[110].

- **Functionalism and Norms**: Functionalist theories (e.g., Skopos theory by Reiss and Vermeer) reflect an earlier paradigm shift away from purely linguistic models, asserting that the prospective purpose (skopos) of the target text dictates the translation strategy, thus prioritising the client's or commissioner's needs and the target culture[111]. Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), building on polysystem theory, investigates norms as socially shared values regarding what constitutes appropriate translational behaviour in a particular context[112]. These norms are temporally, geographically, and culturally constrained[113].

2.5 Methodological Triangulation in Translation Studies

The complexity in translation, whether resulting from the multisemiotic nature of the text, the nuances cognitive processes of the agent, or the encompassing social context, necessitates a move towards *multi-method approaches* and *triangulation*[114].

Triangulation involves combining methodologies, such as corpus data, cognitive experiments, and sociological observation, to gain a deeper, more robust understanding of translational phenomena[115].

A crucial form of triangulation is the effort to link product-oriented researched (CBTS) with process-oriented research (TPR)[116].

- **Corpus and Cognitive Triangulation**. While corpus analysis identifies patterns (e.g., normalisation or shining through), process research (using methods like eye-tracking or keystroke logging) is needed to explain the underlying cognitive decisions (how and why) that trigger these patterns[117]. For instance, corpus-

[110] Kobus Marais, Reine Meylaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Ivi, p. 121.
[111] Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha, *op. cit.*, p. 116; Jorge Díaz Cintas, *op. cit.*, p. 70; Susan, Bassnett *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[112] Andrew Chesterman, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-22; Yves Gambier, Sara Ramos Pinto, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
[113] Luis Pérez González, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
[114] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Ivi, p. 426; Ivi, p. 126.
[115] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Ivi, pp. 426-427; Ivi, p. 126; Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, p. 348.
[116] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 426.
[117] *Ibidem*; Ivi, p. 427.

assisted studies of literary translation performance at the textual level can be complemented by psychological studies that test cognitive factors[118].

- **Integrating Neuroscience**: Future directions involve the integration of highly controlled neurocognitive data into user-activity corpora, despite the methodological challenges posed by ensuring ecological validity (as authentic translation involves complex problem-solving of whole texts, not just single words). Triangulating controlled studies with sentence-context studies helps complement experimental control with ecological validity[119].

Multimodality presents its own methodological challenges, especially as most data collection and academic dissemination methods remain heavily logocentric (language-focused)[120].

- **Beyond Verbal Output**. New methods are required to elicit and disseminate meaning of nonverbal resources beyond verbal output, thus avoiding the risk of forcing multimodal meaning into inappropriate linguistic categorisations. Examples include asking participants to draw or gesture their meanings in qualitative reception studies[121].
- **Integrating Multimodality in AVT Research**. Technology can help integrate multimodality into research methods for AVT modes like SDH and AD, specifically through the design of computer interfaces that facilitate the study of semiotic interaction and cohesion[122].
- **Semiotic Shift**. A core necessity arising from multimodality is the paradigm shift from language to meaning, and subsequently, a disciplinary shift from linguistics to semiotics[123]. This shift allows researchers to analyse the transposition of meaning across various nonverbal and verbal modes, acknowledging that language is merely one mode among many[124].

[118] Riccardo Moratto, Defeng Li, *op. cit.*, p. 276.
[119] Fábio Alves, Arnt Lykke Jakobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 427.
[120] Monica Boria, Ángeles Carreres, María Noriega-Sánchez, Marcus Tomalin, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.
[121] *Ibidem*.
[122] Yves Gambier, Sara Ramos Pinto, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Christopher Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-52.
[123] Monica Boria, Ángeles Carreres, María Noriega-Sánchez, Marcus Tomalin, *op. cit.*, p. 23; p. 29; Kirsten Malmkjær, *op. cit.*, p. 297; Kobus Marais, *op. cit.*, p. 178.
[124] Kobus Marais, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79; Monica Boria, Ángeles Carreres, María Noriega-Sánchez, Marcus Tomalin, *op. cit.*, p. 14; p. 27.

Sociological approaches advocate for a methodology that links micro-analysis (textual/linguistic choices) to macro-analysis (socio-cultural and ideological interpretations).

- **Contextual Validation**. Sociological questions (e.g., text selection, norm-governed behaviour) must be triangulated with sociotextual profiles, patterns of audience reception, and specific historical contexts. For example, applying of Bourdieu's sociology often requires a close analysis of specific translation choices in order to illustrate broader changes related to social fields, different forms of capital, and the dominant assumptions (*doxa*)[125] that shape translational practices.
- **Addressing Power and Ideology**. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methods, combined with corpus data, are useful for investigating concealed ideological bias and power structures, ensuring that textual analysis is linked to contextual factors[126]. CDA helps elucidate how discourse shapes and is shaped by ideology in translation[127].

From a methodological perspective, this study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to account for both recurring patterns and deep interpretative processes. The quantitative dimension is applied to the analytical commentary on the musical numbers in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, where songs are examined one by one. This stage of the analysis draws on Zabalbeascoa's framework for humour, Delabastita's model of semiotic channels (acoustic and visual), and Díaz Cintas' work on subtitling, allowing for a structured examination of linguistic, audiovisual, and semiotic features.

Alongside this, a qualitative approach is adopted for the close analysis of selected songs, one from each musical. These case studies are explored through detailed tables including time codes, the English source text, and the corresponding audiovisual translations, such as original subtitles, Italian subtitles, and dubbing. Particular attention is given to the development of singable Italian translations, which are formulated and analysed in relation to performative constraints and theoretical models, including Low's Pentathlon Principle as well as metrical strategies discussed by Mogol and Anastasi. This

[125] Jeremy Munday, Sara Ramos Pinto, Jacob Blakesley, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
[126] Basil Hatim, *op. cit.*, p.337; Gabriela Saldana, Sharon O'Brian, *op. cit.*, p.108.
[127] Binhua Wang, Jeremy Munday, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

combined approach makes it possible to connect the analysis with interpretation, which is essential when studying multimodal and performative texts such as musical theatre songs.

2.6 Subtitling: Technical, Semiotic, and Formal Aspects

The effectiveness of subtitles varies according to viewing conditions and the technological characteristics of the medium. In cinema, spectators generally exhibit higher reading speeds, and the large screen enhances subtitle legibility; consequently, the reading time decreases by approximately 30% compared to standard television. Conversely, television subtitling must account for smaller screens, varied resolutions, and closer viewing distances, all of which affect character size and clarity.

Audiovisual translation is inherently intersemiotic, as defined by the interplay between verbal and iconic codes. Subtitlers must therefore mediate linguistic content while synchronising with images, soundtrack, gestures, facial expressions, and shot transitions. The translator's task involves not only cross-linguistic transfer but also a shift from oral discourse to written text, requiring interpretive decisions that respect both the temporal constraints of the medium and the multimodal environment in which subtitles appear[128]. Subtitling rests on several foundational notions widely discussed in translation studies:

- **Equivalence** describes the relationship between the source and target text, whether at the level of single words or larger lexical units. Achieving equivalence may require replacing idioms or culture-bound elements with functionally appropriate expressions. The concept also includes *dynamic equivalence*, which emphasises the *effect* on the target audience and may involve adapting unclear or culturally specific elements to ensure comprehension[129].
- **Adequacy** concerns the translator's capacity to identify the dominant element of each utterance, the component that must be preserved to maintain coherence.

[128] Dirk Delabastita, "Translation and Mass-Communication. Film and T.V. Translation as Evidence of Cultural Dynamics", *Babel* 35-4 (1989) pp. 193-218.
[129] Jean-Paul Vinay, Jean Darbelnet *Comparative Stylistics of French and English. A Methodology for Translation*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995, pp. 255-256; Eugene Albert Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating. With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*, Leida, Brill Academic Pub, 2003, pp. 156-192; Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-44.

While equivalence tends to be *source-oriented*, adequacy is *target-oriented*, addressing the needs and expectations of the receiving audience[130].

- **Fidelity** evaluates the degree to which the translation remains faithful to the source. The classic saying "translator-traitor" reflects the tension between accuracy and pragmatic constraints. Fidelity requires deep knowledge of both linguistic and cultural systems to avoid misrepresentations or loss of essential meaning[131].
- **Translatability** examines whether a text can be effectively rendered in another language. Certain lexical or cultural items may lack direct equivalents, creating challenges that blur the boundaries between translatable and untranslatable content[132].

Danish scholar Henrik Gottlieb identifies five characteristics that distinguish subtitling from other translation practices[133]:

1. **Written**. Subtitling involves written mediation of spoken discourse.
2. **Additive**. It adds a written layer to the original soundtrack without replacing it.
3. **Immediate**. Subtitles appear in *real time*, are transient, and cannot be re-read.
4. **Synchronous**. They must match the rhythm of speech and shot transitions.
5. **Polymedial**. Subtitles coexist with multiple channels (*visual* - images, written text; *audio* - dialogue, music).

Unlike dubbing, which is immediate, synchronous, and polymedial, but neither written nor additive, subtitling introduces a unique form of *prepared translation*, created prior to presentation[134].

[130] Elisa Perego *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.
[131] Ivi, pp. 45-46.
[132] Ivi, pp. 46-47.
[133] Henrik Gottlieb, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-274.
[134] Henrik Gottlieb, "Subtitling. People Translating People", in *Teaching Translation and Interpreting. Insights, Aims, Visions. Papers from the Second Language International Conference. Elsinore. Denmark 1991*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1992, pp. 161-170.

Table 2.5. Major Types of Translation Using Five Qualities of Subtitling as Parameters[135].

	Form	Role	Exposure	Presentation	Text-Type
	WRITTEN	**ADDITIVE**	**IMMEDIATE**	**SYNCHRONOUS**	**POLYMEDIAL**
Subtitling	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dubbing	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Consecutive Intepreting	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Translated drama	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Comincs Translation	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Literary Translation	Yes	No	No	No	No

Evaluating the quality of a subtitled version requires examining how each verbal segment is conveyed in terms of its stylistic and semantic properties. Within professional practice, the techniques typically employed can be grouped into ten main strategies, which reflect the range of subtitling procedures used in the field[136]:

Table 2.6. Strategies Used in Translation[137].

N.	Type of Strategy	Character of Translation	Media Specific Type
1	**Expansion**	Expanded expression, adequate rendering (culture-specific references, etc.)	No
2	**Paraphrase**	Altered expression, adequate rendering (non-visualised language-specific phenomena)	No
3	**Transfer**	Full expression, adequate rendering ("neutral" discourse – slow tempo)	No
4	**Imitation**	Identical expression, equivalent rendering (proper nouns, international greetings, etc.)	No
5	**Transcription**	Anomalous expression, adequate rendering (non-standard speech, etc.)	Yes
6	**Dislocation**	Differing expression, adjusted content (musical or visualised language-specific phenomena)	Yes
7	**Condensation**	Condensed expression, concise rendering (normal speech)	Yes

[135] Henrik Gottlieb, *op. cit.*, p. 163.
[136] Ivi, p. 166.
[137] *Ibidem*.

8	**Decimation**	Abridged expression, reduced content (fast speech of some importance)	Yes
9	**Deletion**	Omitted expression, no verbal content (fast speech of less importance)	Yes
10	**Resignation**	Differing expression, distorted content ("untranslatable" elements)	No

Strategies 1-7 generally yield correspondent translations, with condensation, often mistaken for semantic loss, typically preserving meaning and most stylistic nuances, aside from redundant features of spoken language. When subtitling entails substantial loss of semantic or stylistic content, it falls within strategies 8 and 9, where significant reductions are mitigated by support from the audiovisual channels. The final strategy, resignation, is common across translation modes and emerges when culture-bound or idiomatic elements cannot be rendered due to conflicting non-verbal cues[138].

Several terms are used in the field, each with distinct functions:

- **Subtitles**. Written translations of dialogue positioned at the bottom of the screen. In everyday English, the term *caption* may sometimes overlap, though not accurately.
- **Captions**. In Italian commonly associated with social media usage, captions originally refer to *explanatory text*, such as contextual information provided on screen. In the United States, "captions" also refer to *subtitling for the d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH)*[139].
- **Displays**. On-screen text that already exists in the original (e.g., street signs, newspapers, on-screen messages). In subtitling, these are reproduced rather than added[140].

Subtitles may be *open*, embedded in the image and non-removable, or *closed (concealed)*, selected by viewers from a separate file and typically used in DVDs, Blu-rays, and streaming platforms[141].

Subtitling must also adhere to a series of *formal constraints*:

[138] Henrik Gottlieb *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.
[139] (SDH) = Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
[140] Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-52.
[141] Ivi, pp. 51-52; Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

- **Spatial Constraints**[142]
    - Subtitles generally appear at the *bottom* of the screen, except in languages with vertical writing systems (e.g., Chinese) or when visual elements make alternative placement necessary.
    - Each line should occupy approximately *two-thirds of the screen width*.
    - Two-line subtitles must be vertically stacked, with the *upper line shorter* to facilitate eye movement.
- **Character Limits**[143]
    - A typical line allows *33–40 characters*, depending on the font.
    - Overly long lines reduce legibility and interfere with the visual frame.
- **Timing Constraints**[144]
    - Subtitle exposure ranges from *1.5 seconds* (short entries) to *6–7 seconds* (longer ones), depending on speech rate and scene duration.
    - Good subtitling balances reading time with narrative continuity.

Optimal *Readability* depends on suitable font type, size, and colour contrast, strategic placement on the screen and clarity and speed of presentation[145].

Segmentation involves dividing dialogue into coherent units that preserve meaning. Subtitles should ideally convey a single concept per line, with minimal eye movement. Two-line subtitles require careful distribution to avoid breaking syntactic or semantic cohesion[146].

Synchrony must be maintained between subtitle entrance/exit and spoken dialogue, visual cues and narrative rhythm, and actor speech, facial expressions, and scene changes[147].

Because subtitles shift the message from oral to written form, *punctuation* plays a crucial role in conveying intonation, emphasis, hesitation, and rhetorical structure. Common markers include:

[142] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-96
[143] Ivi, pp. 97-99.
[144] Ivi, pp. 100-116.
[145] Delia Chiaro, Christine Heiss, Chiara Bucaria, *Between Text and Image: Updating Research in Screen Translation*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008, pp. 211, 225.
[146] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, pp.
169-178.
[147] Ivi, pp. 101-103.

- full stops, commas, colons, semicolons, ellipses,
- question and exclamation marks,
- quotation marks for citations or marked expressions,
- dashes for turn-taking within the same subtitle.

Formatting may also distinguish voice qualities:

- *italics* for distant voices
- CAPITALS for shouting
- differentiated fonts in musical works (e.g., spoken vs. sung text). Lyrics can also be written in *italics*, sometimes with a quaver (eighth note ♪) at the beginning and at the end of the subtitle[148].

2.7 Subtitling: Types, Functions, and Strategies

Subtitling serves a dual communicative function: its primary aim is to facilitate access to cinematic and theatrical productions across linguistic boundaries, but it also fulfils a crucial socio-cultural role by providing accessibility for d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) viewers. In general, subtitling can be divided into two main types: intralingual and interlingual, each serving different audiences and requiring distinct textual strategies[149].

In educational settings, *reversed subtitling*, that is, subtitles presented in the foreign language while the film dialogue remains in the learners' mother tongue, has proven particularly effective[150]. The nature and multifunctionality of subtitles can be summarised as shown in the following table, where SL refers to the source language and TL to the target language[151].

[148] Ivi, pp. 178-200; Elisa Perego *op. cit.*, pp. 52-57.
[149] Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
[150] Elisa Perego, "Evidence of Explicitation in Subtitling: Towards a Categorisation", *Across Language and Cultures* 4-1 (2003), pp. 63-88.
[151] Annamaria Caimi, Elisa Perego, "La Sottotitolazione. Lo Stato dell'Arte", *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata*, 34-1, 2, (2002) pp. 19-51.

Table 2.7. Intralingual and Interlingual Subtitling: Definitions, Functions, and Audiences.

	Intra-Lingual Subtitling		**Inter-Lingual Subtitling**	
Definition	Subtitles in the Same Language as the Original (SL = TL)		Subtitles in a Language Different from that of the Original (SL ≠ TL)	
Addressees	d/Deaf, Hard of Hearing	Foreign Language Learners	Hearing Audience	Foreign Language Learners
Distinctive Features	Written and Simplified Transposition of the Original Dialogues	Unabridged, Simultaneous Transcription of the Original Dialogue	Standard: Film Dialogues in L2, Subtitles in L1	Reversed: Film Dialogues in L1, Subtitles in L2
Function	Main or Auxiliary Means to Access Audio (visual) Information	Supporting Tool in Different Language Learning Contexts	Written Means to Access Foreign Film Through the Reproduction and the Adaptation of SL Dialogues	Fostering the (Incidental) Acquisition of Foreign Vocabulary

These two types differ not only in their linguistic configurations, but also in their intended audiences and communicative purposes.

Intralingual Subtitling consists of rendering spoken dialogue into written text *in the same language* as the original soundtrack. It may be *complete*, providing a verbatim transcription, or *partial*, adapted to audience needs through reduction or simplification. Complete intralingual subtitles create a "vertical" transmission (SL → SL), transferring speech into writing with minimal alteration. Intralingual subtitles serve two main groups:

- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing viewers**, for whom they are an indispensable access tool.
- **Language learners**, who can use intralingual subtitles to support listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

Intralingual subtitling has gained traction relatively recently in Italy, becoming widespread only from the late 1980s onwards. In English-language contexts, it is commonly labelled "English [CC]", where "CC" stands for Closed Captioning[152].

By contrast, *Interlingual subtitling* transfers a spoken text from a source language (SL) into a written version in a target language (TL), creating a "diagonal" transmission (SL speech → TL writing). This process inherently involves both translation and diamesic shift (oral → written), making it more complex than intralingual subtitling. Interlingual subtitles are designed for:

- Hearing audiences who need linguistic mediation.
- Second-language learners, for whom exposure to TL subtitles may foster vocabulary retention.

In educational contexts, subtitling can also take on specific forms, such as *reversed subtitling*, where the audio remains in the learner's L1 while the subtitles appear in L2. This creates simultaneous activation of visual and auditory referential channels and is particularly effective in the early stages of language acquisition.

One of the most distinctive features of subtitling is *Reduction*. It is not merely a stylistic choice but an intrinsic feature of subtitling. Because written text requires more time to read than spoken discourse does to process, and because subtitles must fit within strict spatial and temporal limits, the subtitler is compelled to compress the source text. This is especially true in scenes with high speech rates, dense information, or rapid shot changes. Even when the original contains humorous or culturally salient elements, subtitles must prioritise clarity, semantic coherence, and viewer comprehension over verbatim reproduction[153].

As noted by Perego, subtitles typically condense the source text by 30–50%, though the rate may vary depending on genre, pacing, and dialogue complexity. This reduction must occur without distorting narrative logic or character intent, requiring the subtitler to identify the communicative nucleus of each utterance[154].

This process is closely linked to what is known as a diamesic shift, converting content from an oral to a written code. Speech is inherently redundant, fragmented, and often

[152] Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-71.
[153] Ivi, p. 73.
[154] Ivi, pp. 76-77.

semantically diffuse, while written text requires syntactic cohesion and conceptual compactness. In practice, this involves a number of transformations, such as:

- Incomplete or elliptical structures into clear sentences
- False starts, repetitions, fillers, hesitations into concise forms
- Colloquialisms and prosody into readable cues
- Paralinguistic information into punctuation, formatting, or omission.

This process results in textual standardisation, which may obscure oral features such as dialect, sociolect, register variation, or pragmatic nuance. For this reason, subtitling tends to adopt a neutral or semi-formal register, unless stylistic markers are essential for characterisation[155]. Overall, subtitling requires a careful balance between accuracy, readability, and the constraints of the audiovisual medium.

2.8 Subtitling Strategies: Models and Approaches

Subtitling relies on a range of strategies that balance fidelity to the source text with readability and processing constraints. Gottlieb identifies *ten strategies*, which range from faithful transfer to creative reformulation:

- **Expansion** – adding brief clarifications when the original is culturally dense.
- **Paraphrase** – rephrasing dialogue that would be unclear if translated literally.
- **Transfer** – a faithful rendering of the source text.
- **Imitation** – retaining names, forms of address, and idioms unchanged.
- **Transcription** – reproducing unfamiliar terms or accents (e.g., dialect words).
- **Dislocation** – adapting elements such as humour or songs through re-creation.
- **Condensation** – reducing length while preserving meaning.
- **Decimation** – severe reduction in fast-paced scenes; high loss of content.
- **Deletion** – removing non-essential items such as fillers.
- **Resignation** – signalling that certain elements (e.g., puns) cannot be fully translated.

[155] Ivi, pp. 73-77.

Gottlieb's model highlights how subtitles move along a continuum between semantic fidelity and functional intelligibility[156].

A different perspective is offered by Kovačič. She organises subtitling strategies into *three main groups*, each balancing accuracy with readability:

1. **Ineffective renderings** – errors or omissions that distort meaning.
2. **Partially effective renderings** – reductions or paraphrases that preserve only core meaning.
3. **Effective renderings** – precise, cohesive subtitles that maintain both semantic value and pragmatic intent.

The model's central concern is *relevance*: a subtitle must convey the *right* amount of information to allow viewers to interpret visual cues and narrative flow without overload[157].

Similarly, Lomheim proposes a model based on *six core strategies*, each reflecting a distinct type of textual intervention:

- **Deletion (Effacement)**. The removal of non-essential elements that do not compromise narrative comprehension. Comparable to Gottlieb's *deletion*.
- **Condensation**. The reduction of textual material while preserving the communicative nucleus of the utterance.
- **Addition (Expansion)**. The introduction of supplementary information when needed to ensure clarity or coherence, paralleling Gottlieb's *expansion*.
- **Hypernymy (Hyperonymie)**. A simplification strategy whereby a specific term is replaced with a more general one.
- **Hyponymy (Hyponymie)**. The inverse operation: a general term is replaced with a more specific or explicit one.
- **Neutralisation**. The elimination of stylistic, emotive, or cultural connotations present in the original.

[156] Henrik Gottlieb *op. cit.*, pp. 161-170.
[157] Irena Kovačič, "Relevance as a Factor in Subtitling", in *Teaching Translating and Interpreting 2. Insights, Aims and Visions. Papers from the Second Language International Conference Elsinore, 1993*, ed. Dollerup, Cay, Lindegaard, Annette, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994, pp. 245-252; Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-114.

These six procedures show that subtitling not only reduces but also *modifies* the semantic granularity and pragmatic colouring of the source text, adjusting lexical specificity and connotative load in accordance with medium constraints and audience needs[158].

Together, these models show that subtitling involves a constant negotiation between accuracy, reduction, and audience comprehension. These challenges become particularly evident when dealing with elements such as:

- puns and wordplay
- songs
- dialects and sociolects
- culture-specific items
- slang
- humour
- intertextual references.

These elements often resist direct translation due to *synchronicity constraints* and the need for brevity. When translation is impossible or would produce confusion, subtitlers resort to *strategic paraphrase*, *creative reformulation*, or, in Gottlieb's terms, *resignation*[159].

2.9 Subtitling for the d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (SDH) and the Rendering of Song Lyrics

To accurately address the needs of accessibility for individuals with hearing loss, it is essential to first recognise the heterogeneous nature of this audience, commonly referred to collectively as d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH)[160]. The intentional use of the capitalisation convention *d/Deaf* reflects a significant distinction acknowledged within

[158] Sylfest Lomheim, "The Writing on the Screen. Subtitling. A Case Study from Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK), Oslo", in *Word, Text, Translation. Liber Amicorum for Peter Newmark*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 1999, pp- 190-207; Elisa Perego, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-118.
[159] Henrik Gottlieb *op. cit.*, pp. 161-170.
[160] Agnieszka Szarkowska, "Towards Interlingual Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing", *Perspectives. Studies in Translatology*, 21-1 (2013), pp. 68-81; Soledad Zárate, *Captioning and Subtitling for d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing Audiences*, London, UCL Press, 2021, p. 20.

Deaf studies and related academic fields, differentiating between audiological status and cultural identity[161].

The term lowercase *deaf* refers primarily to the physiological condition of profound hearing loss[162]. Historically, this medicalised perspective viewed deafness as a deficiency requiring correction, often leading to a focus on oral teaching methods, assistive devices like Hearing Aids (HAs) and Cochlear Implants (CIs), and assimilation into the mainstream hearing society[163].

Conversely, uppercase *Deaf* denotes a linguistic and cultural minority group[164]. Members of the Deaf community typically use a sign language, such as American Sign Language (ASL), British Sign Language (BSL), Lingua dei Segni Italiana (LIS) as their primary language and share distinct cultural values and common experiences[165]. ASL, BSL and LIS are independent linguistic systems with their own grammar and structure. This group generally does not regard deafness as a disability or an impairment but rather as a source of strength, cultural identity, and diversity. The struggle for the recognition of sign language underlies nearly every political action undertaken by this community[166].

The broader *Hard of Hearing (HoH)* category usually includes individuals with residual hearing who often rely on spoken language and assistive listening devices, generally identifying more closely with the majority hearing society[167]. The use of the

[161] H-Dirksen Bauman, Jennifer L. Nelson, Heidi M. Rose, *Signing the Body Poetic. Essays on American Sign Language Literature*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006, p. XXVII; Karen Kyriakou, "Teaching Music to Deaf Students. A Personal Reflection", *Australian Journal of Music Education*, 54-2 (2022), pp. 52-59; Stephanie Lim, "At the intersection of Deaf and Asian American performativity in Los Angeles: Deaf West Theatre's and East West Players' adaptations of Pippin", *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 11-1 (2017) pp. 23-37; Jemina Napier, Leeson Lorraine, *Sign Language in Action*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 50-52.

[162] Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 20; H-Dirksen Bauman, Jennifer L. Nelson, Heidi M. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. XXVII; Karen Kyriakou, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-59; Jeannette Di Bernardo Jones, "Imagined Hearing. Music-Making in Deaf Culture", in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, ed. Howe, Blake, Jensen-Moulton, Stephanie, Lerner, Neil, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 68.

[163] Diane Brewer, "West Side Silence: Producing West Side Story with Deaf and Hearing Actors", *Theatre Topics*, 12-1, (2002), pp. 17-34; Karen Kyriakou, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-59; Jemina Napier, Leeson Lorraine, *op. cit.*, p. 23; Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[164] Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 20; H-Dirksen Bauman, Jennifer L. Nelson, Heidi M. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. XXVII; Karen Kyriakou, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-59; Jemina Napier, Leeson Lorraine, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-52; Jeannette Di Bernardo Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[165] Jeannette Di Bernardo Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 56; Anabel Maler, "Musical Expression Among Deaf and Hearing Song Signers", in in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, ed. Howe, Blake, Jensen-Moulton, Stephanie, Lerner, Straus, Joseph, Neil, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 184-204.

[166] Jeannette Di Bernardo Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[167] Agnieszka Szarkowska, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-81; Jemina Napier, Leeson Lorraine, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-23; Ana Tamayo, Frederic Chaume, "Subtitling for d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children: Current Practices and New Possibilities to Enhance Language Development", *Brain Sciences*, 7-75, (2017), pp. 1-13.

umbrella term d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) or d/Deaf is employed to ensure inclusivity across this spectrum of experiences and identities[168].

Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH) is a form of media accessibility that translates spoken and acoustic information into written text[169]. SDH is often considered intralingual subtitling, as the language of the dialogue and the subtitle language are the same[170]. SDH significantly differs from conventional subtitling intended for hearing audiences, which typically only translates dialogue (interlingually). The core function of SDH is to make sound visible[171].

SDH requires the transcription of verbal elements (dialogue) but crucially demands the inclusion of relevant non-verbal acoustic information, such as sound effects, speaker identification, paralinguistic features (like intonation or accents), and music descriptions[172]. This supplementary information is vital because intersemiotic redundancy (the interplay between auditory and visual cues) is either limited or non-existent for the DHH audience, meaning the subtitles are essential rather than redundant[173]. SDH subtitles are typically enclosed in square brackets or accompanied by symbols (like musical notes) to denote non-dialogue content[174].

SDH subtitles are specifically designed for viewers with hearing impairments and therefore differ substantially from standard interlingual subtitles. Their goal is to compensate for the loss of auditory information by integrating *additional descriptive elements*, typically enclosed in brackets:

- [UPBEAT MUSIC]
- [TELEPHONE RINGS]
- [ELIZA COUGHS]

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[168] Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 20; Russ C. Palmer, Stina Ojala, "Vibrational Music Therapy with D/deaf Clients", *Voices. A World Forum for Music Therapy*, 22-3 (2022), pp. 1-13; Jemina Napier, Leeson Lorraine, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-54.
[169] Pablo Revuelta, Tomás Ortiz, Maria J. Lucía, Belén Ruiz, José Manuel Sánchez-Pena, "Limitations of Standard Accessible Captioning of Sounds and Music for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People. An EEG Study", *Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience*, 14-1 (2020), pp. 1-9.
[170] Victoria García-Prieto, Ignacio Aguaded, "The accessibility of BBC television to users with disabilities: from the law to user satisfaction", *Profesional de la Información*, 30-5 (2021), pp. 1-15.
[171] *Ibidem*.
[172] Pablo Revuelta, Tomás Ortiz, Maria J. Lucía, Belén Ruiz, José Manuel Sánchez-Pena, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-9; Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Victoria García-Prieto, Ignacio Aguaded, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-15.
[173] Agnieszka Szarkowska, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-81.
[174] Paweł Aleksandrowicz, "Can subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing convey the emotions of film music? A reception study", *Perspectives. Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 28-1 (2020), pp. 58-72.

- [FOOTSTEPS ON STAIRS]
- [GIRL WHISPERS]
- [IN IRISH ACCENT]

Such subtitles complement dialogue with contextual, paralinguistic, and environmental cues, enabling DHH viewers to reconstruct events that hearing viewers would perceive aurally.

Subtitling for Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers (SDH), also known as captioning, provides on-screen written text representing dialogue, paralinguistic cues, music, and sound effects, thereby granting access to the audiovisual content for audiences with hearing impairments[175]. SDH is produced exclusively for pre-recorded material. Historically, in countries with strong dubbing traditions, such as Spain, Germany, Austria, France, and Italy, Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers could only access domestically produced programmes that were later intralingually subtitled, while imported content was typically dubbed and therefore remained largely inaccessible. In subtitling-dominant regions such as Portugal, Greece, the Netherlands, Croatia, and the Scandinavian countries, these audiences were generally served by the same interlingual subtitles used for hearing viewers, despite their inadequacy, as they lacked essential paralinguistic information. The introduction of DVDs marked a turning point: foreign films distributed in markets like Germany, Italy, and the UK increasingly offered two interlingual subtitle tracks, one for hearing audiences and another specifically designed for viewers with hearing impairments[176].

A key distinction between interlingual and intralingual subtitling lies in their respective use of colour. SDH subtitles routinely employ multiple colours to signal different speakers and to highlight specific lexical items, compensating for information that hearing audiences access through the soundtrack. By contrast, interlingual subtitles have traditionally avoided polychromy, since hearing viewers do not require such cues; consequently, a single colour is typically used throughout. In professional practice, white and yellow are the predominant choices. In cinema, subtitles appear white because they are laser-engraved onto the celluloid and thus take on the colour of the projection screen itself. Yellow subtitles, instead, indicate electronic projection rather than engraving, a

[175] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
[176] Ivi, pp. 20-21.

technique that preserves the film print. Although electronic subtitling theoretically permits a broad palette, industry conventions continue to favour white and yellow[177].

Because hearing-impaired viewers often have *slower reading speeds*, SDH subtitles must follow specific guidelines:

- remain on screen longer than standard subtitles
- employ short, clear, and syntactically simple phrasing
- provide condensed but complete information, even at the cost of redundancy
- reduce the original dialogue by approximately 50%, depending on speech rate and scene complexity.

SDH subtitles may also include visual differentiation strategies such as:

- *different font colours* to distinguish speakers (limited to 2–3 legible colours: white, yellow, cyan, green; avoiding red, blue, magenta)
- *name tags* before lines
- *positioning changes* to signal off-screen voices
- *capitalisation* to express loudness
- *use of musical symbols* (e.g., ♪) to denote sung material.

When the soundtrack and subtitles are in the same language, viewers may also rely on *lip-reading*, and news broadcasts often integrate *sign-language interpreters* alongside subtitles.

Music plays an integral role in audiovisual media by establishing the scene, illustrating a character's emotional state, and inducing specific emotions in the viewer, such as sadness or fear[178]. Since DHH viewers may have limited access to the auditory elements of music, SDH professionals must make conscious decisions about how to convey this information[179]. SDH guidelines generally encourage the inclusion of information about

[177] Ivi, p. 136.
[178] Paweł Aleksandrowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-72; Frances Choi, "Equal Access Requires Full Captioning of Music and Song Lyrics for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing", *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Review*, 37-3 (2017), pp. 271-304; Pablo Revuelta, Tomás Ortiz, Maria J. Lucía, Belén Ruiz, José Manuel Sánchez-Pena, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-9.
[179] Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 75; Paweł Aleksandrowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-72.

music, particularly if it highlights the scene's mood or is critical to the plot[180]. When instrumental music serves to intensify the scene's atmosphere (non-diegetic music) or sets a mood, SDH employs specific descriptive methods[181]. Common methods for conveying musical information include:

2 **Mood Description**. This method includes the emotion the music arouses and sometimes the type of music, e.g., [MELANCHOLIC ORCHESTRAL MUSIC] or [SCARY MUSIC][182]. In some studies, this approach was chosen as the most suitable option by a majority of DHH participants (over 60%)[183].

3 **Author and Title**. Providing the title and name of the composer is recommended only if the composition is widely known or if its direct identification is necessary for understanding the plot[184].

4 **No Information**. Some experts suggest omitting music descriptions altogether if the emotion is already clearly conveyed by the on-screen action, minimising distraction from the visual elements. However, captions that only signal the presence of music (e.g., [MUSIC]) are generally considered to have little informative value[185].

In practice, a study comparing different subtitling methods found that, for emotionally intense scenes, the perceived emotional intensity experienced by DHH viewers remained similar regardless of whether mood description, author/title citation, or no information was provided about the non-diegetic music. This suggests that visual cues (acting, body language, mimics) can sometimes compensate for the lack of aural cues[186].

SDH can also utilise non-textual representations, such as icons representing instruments and musical notes to indicate rhythm, although the practicality of this depends heavily on current subtitling software limitations[187].

[180] Paweł Aleksandrowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-72; Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
[181] Paweł Aleksandrowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-72; Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
[182] Paweł Aleksandrowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-72.
[183] *Ibidem*.
[184] *Ibidem*.
[185] *Ibidem*.
[186] *Ibidem*.
[187] Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

When a song contains lyrics, especially if they are plot-pertinent or sung by a character (diegetic music), transcribing the lyrics is standard practice[188]. Netflix guidelines, for example, advise writing out song lyrics[189].
Conventional orthotypographical markers are used to distinguish lyrics from dialogue:

- Lyrics are usually presented in italics.
- The start of the lyrics is conventionally indicated by a musical note (quaver ♪ or beamed notes ♫). The use of older conventions like the hash mark (#) is discouraged as it dates back to obsolete Teletext limitations[190].

Unlike dialogue, *lyrics* are generally left unedited, even when transcription results in a reading speed higher than the recommended maximum, as editing or abbreviating well-known songs would be inaccurate[191]. Despite the clear need for full lyric access, the inclusion of music and song lyrics in captions continues to be challenging, often halted by producers citing the "copyright defense". Advocates argue that omitting lyrics denies the DHH audience equal access to the emotional and contextual depth provided by the musical content[192].

It is a misconception that DHH individuals cannot enjoy music. Deaf people have a nuanced connection to sound and music, which they often experience somatically through vibrations[193]. Developments in technology, such as hearing aids (HAs) and cochlear implants (CIs), have enabled many severely hearing-impaired individuals to engage with and enjoy music[194]. For those who use sign language, musical performance is often translated into visual and kinetic art forms, utilising the poetic techniques, rhythms, and visual language inherent in sign language (Signed Music, Translated Songs)[195]. This rich

[188] Paweł Aleksandrowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-72; Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 70; Micòl Beseghi, "Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Audio Description and Audio Subtitling in Multilingual TV Shows", *Languages*, 8-2 (2023), pp. 1-17.
[189] Paweł Aleksandrowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-72; Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
[190] Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
[191] Ivi, p. 70.
[192] Frances Choi, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-304.
[193] Jeannette Di Bernardo Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 55; Anabel Maler, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-204; Stephanie Lim, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-37; Russ C. Palmer, Stina Ojala, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-13; Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
[194] Shiho Akaki, Rumi Hiraga, Keiichi Yasu, Keiji Tabuchi, Hiroko Teresawa, "Design and Evaluation of Instrument Sound Identification Difficulty for the Deaf and Hard-of Hearing", *Proceedings of 2022 APSIPA Annual Summit and Conference*, (2022), pp. 723-728; Chasin, *Music and Hearing Aids. A Clinical Approach*, San Diego, Plural Publishing Inc., 2022, pp. 33-34.
[195] Jeff Calhoun, Michael Arden, Linda Bove, Tyrone Giordano, David J. Kurs, Steven Landau, et al., "Deaf west Theatre and the Broadway Musical. Big River and Beyond", *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 9-1 (2015), pp. 85-104; Anabel Maler, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-204.

engagement demonstrates that the experience of music extends beyond the auditory channel, encompassing senses and body awareness[196].

2.10 Song Translation and Singability in a Multimodal Perspective

This section moves on from the discussion of subtitling and accessibility to song translation, which is a related but complicated area of audiovisual translation. Translating songs is difficult because it requires language to work with music and performance. This means that songs cannot be seen as just language texts. Instead, they should be seen as multimodal constructs where meaning comes from the combination of lyrics, melody, rhythm, and cultural context. Translating them necessitates more than a word-for-word conversion between languages; it demands navigating musical constraints alongside communicative and audience-related factors.

The next sections discuss how songs are multimodal objects, how audiovisual contexts affect their translation, and the challenges that arise when making translations that are easy to sing, with a focus on accessibility and inclusion.

2.10.1 Song as Multimodal and Cultural Practice

Recent theoretical research has emphasised that lyrics should be understood as communicative events shaped by context, medium, and audience. This perspective sees translation as a performative act, requiring attention not only to language but also to voice, identity, and performative function. The translator of songs operates within a multimodal system, negotiating meaning, expression, and audience reception across languages and cultures. The concept of "song" itself is expanded; it is not just a text to be translated, but a dynamic interplay of lyrics, melody, rhythm, and cultural codes[197].

Music, and especially vocal music, plays a central role in cultural identity and interpersonal expression across all human societies. While instrumental music can easily transcend linguistic borders, vocal music, combining lyrics, melody, and performance, presents specific challenges when transferred from one language to another. As Peter Low observes, "most of the music that people love most is vocal music" [198], deeply rooted in

[196] Soledad Zárate, *op. cit.*, p. 75; Jeannette Di Bernardo Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 56; Russ C. Palmer, Stina Ojala, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-13.
[197] Johan Franzon, Annjo K. Greenall, Sigmund Kvam, Anastasia Parianou, *Song Translation. Lyrics in Contexts*, Berlin, Frank & Timme, 2021, pp. 13-33.
[198] Peter Low, *Translating Song. Lyrics and* Texts, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, p. 1.

rituals, emotions, and storytelling traditions that are fundamentally verbal in nature. Music has always travelled across spaces and cultures, constantly reshaping itself through processes of adaptation, hybridisation, and reinterpretation. Far from being static, it is intrinsically dynamic: every composition builds on existing elements, melodies, rhythms, or harmonic structures, while transforming them into something new[199]. This interplay of memory and innovation is what allows music to resonate universally while remaining contextually specific to the culture that produces and reinterprets it[200].

Historically, music has been a powerful vehicle of cultural transmission. In oral societies, it coexisted with poetry and dance to preserve collective memory and to reframe inherited narratives for contemporary audiences[201]. This dual capacity, rooted in the past but oriented toward the present, has made music an inherently transnational and transcultural art form.

In today's multimodal landscape, the global circulation of music has only intensified. Digital technologies and visual media have not diminished their relevance; rather, they have amplified it. Music now not only shapes but also complements other modes of expression, becoming a key semiotic layer in film, advertising, and social media[202]. As a result, translation plays a pivotal role in facilitating the movement of songs and their meanings across borders, enabling audiences to engage with repertoires far removed from their linguistic and cultural backgrounds[203]. Research concerning the intersection of translation and music has historically been marginalised within translation studies, despite the profound role music plays in individual lives and societal structures[204]. Addressing this rich field demands a multidisciplinary approach that integrates concepts from translation studies, musicology, media studies, cultural studies, and semiotics[205].

Every song possesses both a verbal and a musical dimension. Vocal music is widespread across human cultures and encompasses numerous genres, including opera, folk songs, stage musicals, and musical films. A primary challenge for translation scholars lies in understanding the meaning derived not only from the written text but also from musical elements such as melody, pitch, duration, loudness, timbre, dynamics,

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[199] Lucile Desblache, *Music and Translation. New Mediations in the Digital Age*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 101.
[200] *Ibidem*.
[201] Ivi, p. 102.
[202] Ivi, pp. 102-104.
[203] Ivi, p. 104.
[204] Susam-Sarajeva Şebnem, "Translation and Music. Changing Perspectives, Frameworks and Significance", *The Translator*, 14-2 (2008), pp. 187-200.
[205] *Ibidem.*

rhythm, tempo, and stress. Translation research in this area aims to deepen the understanding of the diverse forms that translation can take and of how it interacts with other modes of expression[206].

These considerations highlight how song translation cannot be reduced to a purely linguistic operation, but must be understood as a multimodal process shaped by musical, cultural, and performative constraints. These complexities become even more evident when songs are embedded within audiovisual contexts, where additional semiotic layers further influence translation choices.

2.10.2 Song Translation in Audiovisual Contexts

When songs are part of audiovisual texts, such as movies or stage musicals, translating them is even harder because it is necessary to think about how the lyrics and music work together and how the visual and story elements add to the difficulty. In these situations, song translation is part of a broader field called audiovisual translation, as mentioned before, in which different types of signs work together simultaneously.

Communication may be understood as a form of semiotic work through which meaning is continuously produced in social interaction, regardless of the medium involved. Within Multimodal Social Semiotics[207], meaning-making is approached from three interconnected perspectives. At the most general level lies *semiosis*, the process through which meaning is actively created across different forms of representation and communication. A second perspective focuses on *multimodality*, examining what different semiotic modes may share and how they interact in communicative processes. A third perspective considers the *different ways in which each mode contributes to meaning*, which are shaped by its material properties and history of social use. For example, spoken language uses intonation as a meaning-making resource, whereas other sound-based modes such as music do not organise meaning through the same semiotic categories. Likewise, linguistic concepts such as verbs cannot be directly applied to modes such as image, gesture, or music without risking conceptual simplification. Unlike traditional linguistic approaches that separate form and meaning, Multimodal Social Semiotics treats them as integrated within the sign itself. Signs are not simply used in

[206] *Ibidem.*
[207] Gunther Kress, *Multimodality. A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 60.61.

communication but are newly produced in response to the interests of individuals operating within specific social contexts, where the conditions of use are integral to meaning-making. Audiovisual Translation deals with texts combining verbal, visual and sonic codes (including music)[208].

2.10.3 Singable Translation and Accessibility

The challenges mentioned above are particularly evident in *singable translation*, where not just the translation of ideas is involved but also ensuring that the translation is singable within the musical setting. In this context, translation is subject to a new set of constraints that consider linguistic elements from a musical perspective.

Song translation in film musicals often employs strategies, such as dubbing dialogue but not translating songs, which can lead to poor reception, as observed historically in Italy regarding British and American musicals[209].

Jokes are classified as operative texts rather than informative texts, meaning the goal is to replicate the humorous effect. For puns, the translator searches for equivalents, ranging from near links (pentagon model) to more remote ones (hexagon model). For culture-specific obscurity, explicitation (like footnoting) is difficult in humorous contexts because the text must remain punchy[210].

Songs occupy a unique place in the communicative spectrum, as they are not only expressive oral texts but also rhythmic, melodic, and often poetic. As such, they cannot be treated as ordinary prose or even typical literary texts[211]. Translating them requires a multi-layered sensitivity to language, sound, culture, and performance. Furthermore, while some songs allow for freer adaptation due to their "musico-centric" focus, where music dominates, others are intensely "logocentric," depending heavily on the words' semantic and poetic value[212].

The translator of songs must therefore go beyond interlingual transfer of content. They are tasked with replicating complex musico-verbal interactions: syllabic alignment, rhyme schemes, rhythm, emotional tone, cultural references, and performative

[208] Pierangela Diadori, *Teoria e Tecnica della Traduzione. Strategie, Testi e Contesti*, Firenze, Le Monnier Università, 2012, p. 221.
[209] Susam-Sarajeva Şebnem, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-200.
[210] Peter Low, "Translating Jokes and Puns", *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 19-1 (2011), pp. 59-70.
[211] Peter Low, *Translating Song. Lyrics and* Texts, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 4-5.
[212] Ivi, pp. 10-12.

functions[213]. This is particularly critical in the context of *singable translation*, where the target text must be singable in performance and not only comprehensible on paper.

Given the transnational diffusion of musical theatre, the commercial and artistic success of translated musicals, and the growing need for accessibility (particularly for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences), the singable translation of lyrics has become a central concern in audiovisual translation studies. This chapter also explores the theoretical frameworks and practical challenges involved in this process, drawing primarily on Peter Low's foundational model of *Pentathlon Principle*[214], as well as broader perspectives from translation studies, musicology, and accessibility research.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the accessible and inclusive dimension of singable translation. Music and performance do not exclusively address hearing audiences; they also involve deaf and hard-of-hearing people, for whom musical experience is shaped in alternative ways, often through subtitles, rhythmic visualisation, bodily perception of vibrations, and sign language. In this perspective, singable translation should not be conceived merely as a linguistic or aesthetic transfer, but also as a social practice that fosters equal participation and removes communicative barriers.

Multimodal communication must be placed within the larger changes that have reshaped modern meaning-making practices in order to more effectively frame this approachable and participatory viewpoint. The discovery of previously underutilised semiotic resources like image, gesture, sound, or spatial organisation should not be interpreted as the result of recent scholarly attention to multimodality. These modes have long existed in human cultures and have been studied in a variety of academic fields, including psychology, musicology, art history, and mathematics. Their existence is not historically new; rather, what is new is the growing effort to theorise them all together within a single framework that addresses the way in which various semiotic resources interact to produce meaning. Deeper shifts in the communicative environment itself are reflected in this theoretical convergence. Wide-ranging social, economic, cultural, and technological advancements over the last few decades have drastically changed the environment in which communication occurs. Globalisation has gradually changed stable social structures and norms, leading to more flexible and context-dependent forms of communication. The way meaning is produced, shared, and understood has changed profoundly as a result of these advancements. The transition from print-based to digitally

[213] Ivi, pp. 20-23.
[214] Peter Low, *Translating Song: Lyrics and* Texts, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 39-40.

mediated environments and the gradual shift from writing's dominance to the growing prominence of visual and audiovisual modes of representation are two examples of these changes. The transition from page to screen has changed the hierarchy of semiotic resources used in meaning production, and has also created new environments for communication. Design has become a key idea in social-semiotic approaches to communication within this changing communicative ecology. Design also emphasises the agentive role of individuals in shaping meaning according to their situated interests and communicative goals, in contrast to competence-based models that emphasise adherence to established conventions as a form of social regulation. According to this viewpoint, meaning-making is no longer a retrospective engagement with inherited norms and practices, but rather a prospective activity focused on the anticipated future consequences of semiotic action. As a result, design reinterprets communication as an active process in which people use the semiotic resources at their disposal to achieve socially situated goals. By doing this, it extends the insights of critique and competence into a forward-looking model that places multimodal meaning-making within a larger social-semiotic theory[215].

From a social-semiotic standpoint, the essential unit of communication is not language by itself, but the sign, conceived as the dynamic amalgamation of form and meaning. Signs are not limited to linguistic expression; they exist across all semiotic modalities and must be analysed in relation to the broader sign complexes to which they contribute. Meaning-making arises from *semiosis*, the active generation of signs in social interactions. From this perspective, signs are not merely utilised as pre-existing entities; rather, they are perpetually shaped and restructured in accordance with contextual communicative requirements. This focus on making signs rather than just using existing sign systems is a key part of social-semiotic approaches to communication. People, influenced by their social histories and functioning within culturally structured contexts, interact with socially accessible semiotic resources in both agentive and generative manners, actively creating meaning through communicative action.

In multimodal theory, *semiosis* serves as a comprehensive system for all forms of representation and mediation, regardless of medium. For instance, speech and music both use sound as a material resource and can change pitch, but they are organised in different ways. Spoken language may utilise intonation as a semantic category, whereas musical

[215] Gunther Kress, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-8.

soundtracks do not function according to the same semiotic distinctions. In the same way, analytical categories based on language, such as verbs, nouns, or clauses, cannot be blindly applied to other forms of communication, such as images, gestures, or music, without risking a change in meaning. Even though it may be hard to maintain the analytical separation between general semiotic processes, intermodal relations, and mode-specific features in practice, it is still useful for understanding how different semiotic resources work together in complex communication settings[216].

Recent field studies on *Same Language Subtitling* (SLS) provide further evidence of the multimodal potential of lyrics when combined with written text. By displaying song lyrics in synchrony with the audio, SLS stimulates a richer, more layered experience that benefits both hearing and d/Deaf audiences. Viewers tend to read the text almost automatically[217], which not only enhances comprehension but also facilitates memorisation and engagement. These findings resonate with accessibility strategies in musical theatre, where surtitles and captions similarly expand participation and contribute to a more inclusive performance environment.

As several scholars have pointed out[218], singable translation also carries a social and cultural responsibility. Low highlights how the translator's choices are never neutral, since they influence the way songs circulate across cultures and reach different audiences. Similarly, Kaindl[219] emphasises the multimodal and performative nature of song, which requires translation to be conceived not only as an interlingual operation but as a practice that negotiates cultural meaning within a social context.

From this perspective, music itself can be understood as a system of signification. As highlighted by Carpi [220], the classification of differences among musical motifs draws on the taxonomy developed by Kaindl (1995). This structure distinguishes, in particular:

- *Signs associated with characters*, expressed through psychological, physiological, or sociological states

[216] Ivi, pp. 60-62.
[217] Brij Kothari, "Film Songs as Continuing Education. Same Language Subtitling for Literacy", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33-39 (1998), pp. 2507-2510.
[218] Peter Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-20.
[219] Klaus Kaindl, "The Plurisemiotics of Pop Song Translation: Words, Music, Voice and Image", in *Song and Significance: Virtues and Vices of Vocal Translation*, ed. Gorlée Dinda L., Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2005, pp. 235-262.
[220] Beatrice Carpi, "A Multimodal model of analysis for the translation of songs from stage musicals", *Meta*, 62-2 (2020), pp. 420-439.

- *Signs linked to situational references*, employed to denote spatial relations or objects.
- *Signs connected to concepts and ideas*, which establish a relationship between music and specific abstract notions.

Music and translation are closely linked and play an important role in shaping identities and facilitating cultural exchange across contexts and cultures[221]. Musical experiences, whether dancing, singing folk songs, or listening to global pop, transcend linguistic barriers while simultaneously anchoring listeners in specific cultural contexts. Music can evoke a sense of place and cultural belonging even when the lyrics are not understood, thanks to its semiotic richness and affective power[222].

These perspectives reinforce the idea that singable translation, from its very outset, must be regarded as a form of *cultural mediation* that affects accessibility, reception, and participation.

2.11 Logocentric and Musico-centric Songs: Meaning and Translation Priorities

Not all songs present the same challenges in translation. One of the most important distinctions for song translators is between *logocentric* and *musico-centric* songs. The first type of song is word-driven, where poetic devices, or verbal humour are crucial to the experience and meaning is anchored in the lyrics, while the latter relies more heavily on musical elements such as rhythm, melody, performance, and instrumentation[223]. This dual nature creates unique challenges and opportunities for translation.

Historically, the relationship between words and music has been fluid, with vocal music often acting as a bridge across linguistic and cultural borders. From sacred chants to opera and folk repertoires, lyrics have either been translated, adapted, or left in their original language depending on the cultural, political, or commercial context[224].

In contemporary popular music, English has become the dominant global language[225]. This dominance is due not only to historical and cultural factors but also to the structural properties of English itself, such as its high number of monosyllabic words, which

[221] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
[222] Ivi, pp. 1-2.
[223] Peter Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5; Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-107.
[224] Ivi, pp. 176-178.
[225] Ivi, pp. 113-114.

facilitate rhythmic alignment and global comprehension[226]. However, this hegemony often leads to a paradox: while lyrics remain untranslated, audiences still engage with the music, either focusing on its sound and performative qualities or constructing meaning through visual and contextual cues[227]. For translators, recognising the balance between verbal and musical elements is essential. Songs with a high degree of logocentricity may require careful adaptation to preserve semantic depth, while musico-centric songs may allow for greater flexibility, prioritising prosody and rhythm over literal fidelity.

In the digital age, this interplay has become even more prominent. The growth of audiovisual translation and the widespread circulation of music online have blurred the lines between linguistic transfer, cultural mediation, and creative adaptation[228]. Translation in this context goes beyond the straightforward rendering of lyrics: it encompasses transcreation, mediation, and multimodal negotiation that allow music to resonate with diverse audiences[229].

This categorisation has direct implications for translatability. Musico-centric songs, often characterised by repetitive or emotionally vague lyrics, can travel more easily across linguistic borders, as listeners focus on mood and musical energy rather than verbal nuance. In contrast, logocentric songs, such as narrative ballads, satirical songs, or dramatic monologues, are highly dependent on textual content. Their successful translation, particularly for performance, requires maintaining both *semantic clarity* and *stylistic integrity*, even when this collides with musical constraints[230].

Low[231] provides a useful classification of logocentric song types:

- **Narrative songs**, in which the storyline unfolds through lyrics.
- **Comic songs**, where humour often relies on linguistic features.
- **Dramatic songs**, as in musical theatre or opera, where lyrics convey emotional progression or character interaction.
- **Protest songs**, which carry sociopolitical messages.
- **Dialogue songs**, often with two voices (or roles) interacting through lyrics.

[226] Ivi, p. 190.
[227] Ivi, pp. 184-185.
[228] Ivi, pp. 3-6.
[229] Ivi, pp. 68-69.
[230] Peter Low, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[231] *Ibidem*.

These categories are particularly relevant in the context of musical theatre, where lyrics typically drive character development and narrative. When working with logocentric texts, translators must prioritise semantic fidelity, even at the expense of preserving every musical element. As Low argues, the translator must constantly ask: "How important are the words of this particular song?"[232]

2.12 Song Lyrics as Expressive Oral Texts

Song lyrics share important characteristics with other forms of poetic and oral expression. While not all song texts qualify as high literary poetry, many display stylistic features typical of lyric verse, such as rhyme, metaphor, alliteration, and a heightened use of language. This proximity to poetry makes them especially challenging to translate. As Low points out, songs "play with language" and are often crafted to "express the unsayable" [233], utilising figurative language, invented words, and poetic devices.

Delia Chiaro[234] affirms that the language problems that come up when translating *humour* are not the same as those that come up when translating referential texts between languages. All types of translation deal with problems of equivalence and the link between language and society. But *jokes* and *wordplay* add extra levels of difficulty that are not usually found in the translation of simple, informative prose. For example, *humour that is specific to a certain culture* often relies on shared background knowledge that may not be available outside of that culture's original context. In these instances, translation may be formally practicable but functionally inadequate in terms of audience reception.

Language-specific jokes are even harder to translate because they often depend on the phonetic, lexical, or syntactic features of the source language to be funny. It is especially hard to translate when sociocultural references and linguistic play intersect, creating multiple layers of meaning that do not easily cross from one language to another. Chiaro notes that this kind of humour often shares structural similarities with literary discourse and, in some cases, with poetic language. From this viewpoint, humour can be perceived as a creative application of language that diverges from the norms of strictly referential prose. Using Jakobson's distinction between referential and poetic functions, it is possible to say that jokes activate the poetic function, either through formal language play or

[232] Ivi, p. 10.
[233] Ivi, p. 20.
[234] Delia Chiaro, *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, pp. 84-89.

through meanings that are already in the culture. Some jokes work by messing with language, while others work by playing through it. In both cases, though, they break from clear communication norms in a way that is similar to the stylistic and expressive features of literary, and, most importantly, lyrical, texts.

However, song lyrics are not only poetic; they are oral texts. They are created to be heard, not read, and must therefore function effectively in live or recorded performance. This orality introduces additional layers of complexity: pronunciation, syllabic stress, intonation, and rhythm all become central to meaning and aesthetic effect[235]. Oral delivery also limits the listener's capacity to reprocess information, unlike written texts that can be reread at leisure. As such, lyrics tend to favour clarity, emotional immediacy, and memorable structures, often through devices like repetition, phonic parallelism, or refrains[236].

The past century has seen the emergence of a distinctive mode of poetic and dramatic translation, often labelled *translation*, *adaptation*, *imitation*, or *version*[237], in which poet-translators exercise considerable creative agency. Such works may diverge from their source texts, sometimes because the translator intentionally reshapes them according to personal aesthetic aims, and sometimes because the translator relies on an intermediary gloss or literal rendering of a language they know imperfectly or not at all. This practice now exists across a range of modern literatures, irrespective of linguistic dominance or cultural status. Translation, understood in this framework, is interpretive because it removes the source text from its constitutive contexts. Structural differences between languages oblige the translator to dismantle, reorder, and ultimately relocate the source text's chain of signifiers. In doing so, three essential contextual layers are lost:

- **Intratextual context**, comprising the text's linguistic patterning and verbal texture.
- **Intertextual and interdiscursive context**, which includes pre-existing forms, themes, and networks of reference familiar to source-culture readers.

[235] Ivi, p. 21.
[236] Ivi, pp. 22-23.
[237] Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything. Theory and Practice*, New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 174-175.

- **Contexts of reception**, such as editorial presentation, critical discourse, and subsequent adaptations, all of which shape meaning as the work circulates in its original culture.

Because these dimensions cannot be carried over intact, no reader of a translation can experience it as a reader fully embedded in the source culture does, even bilingual readers will necessarily encounter each version differently[238]. Moreover, every translation is produced within a particular cultural hierarchy whose values, ideologies, and power structures shape the translator's interpretive choices. The intertextual relationships created through quotation, imitation, or stylistic echo inevitably transform both the source work and the receiving culture. In translation, as in original writing, repetition never produces identity: citation and imitation generate new meanings rather than replicating the old[239]. Song lyrics are also expressive texts, in the sense proposed by Katharina Reiss[240], who classifies texts not only by content (informative), or effect (operative), but also by their expressive function, how they convey the personal or artistic intention of the author. This classification is particularly useful for song translation, as it highlights the importance of preserving not just *what* is said, but *how* it is said and *why*. For instance, when a character in a musical sings "I," it is often an expressive utterance charged with subjectivity, identity, or emotional vulnerability, not merely a grammatical subject[241].

This expressive function is reinforced by performance. Music inflects the meaning of words: a slow, minor-key melody can make even neutral lyrics sound melancholic, while bright harmonies can render sarcasm joyful. Thus, as Peter Newmark argues, song lyrics must be interpreted "alongside [music's] pitch contours, harmonic setting, rhythmic and metrical characteristics, as well as its performative features"[242]. Translators who ignore the musical and performative dimension risk producing texts that are technically accurate but emotionally or stylistically flat.

Finally, many song lyrics include colloquial language, idioms, and non-standard varieties; elements that enhance naturalness and emotional authenticity but often resist direct translation[243]. In these cases, translators must weigh whether to preserve dialects,

[238] Ivi, pp. 180-182.
[239] *Ibidem*.
[240] Peter Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.
[241] *Ibidem*.
[242] Ivi, p. 21.
[243] Ivi, pp. 25-29.

cultural references, or informal tone, and to what extent such elements can be "transplanted" into the target culture without distortion or loss.

Recent research has also emphasised that the oral and expressive qualities of lyrics are not experienced uniformly by all audiences. For deaf and hard-of-hearing people, songs are often accessed through alternative semiotic channels, including written subtitles, rhythmic visualisation, or the bodily perception of sound vibrations. This perspective highlights the multimodal character of songs, where meaning emerges not only from words and melody but also from visual, kinetic, and spatial dimensions of performance. Integrating such an approach allows scholars to reconsider "orality" in song translation as a complex multimodal phenomenon, which involves auditory, visual, and corporeal layers and demands translation strategies sensitive to diverse modes of reception.

The spontaneous tendency to match what is heard with what is seen also suggests that subtitled lyrics can play a subtle role in enhancing audience comprehension and retention. Research on SLS (Same Language Subtitling) demonstrated that synchronised text does not detract from entertainment but rather integrates incidental learning into everyday cultural practices[244]. Applied to song translation, this insight reinforces the value of multimodal strategies, where written and sung texts operate together to create a fuller, more accessible semiotic experience.

Music has travelled widely over the decades, and as a result, it shifts with every piece of culture and place. Music is a product of something that already exists: a song comes from a melody, a beat, from the rhythm or a chord progression that takes something in common but it is in fact taken from where it went and makes it into something new with the right sort of mixture of memory and creativity to make the connection between the past and present through a mixture of song of today. Music, dance, and poetry all took part in oral societies and worked together to keep the texts flowing and move their meanings on to the next generation of people. Even in today's media landscape, where visual culture dominates, music remains a powerful expressive form precisely because of its interactive and participatory nature: more people sing or play instruments than engage in other creative media.

The spread of English in popular music globally has also had an impact on the above factors. English is the best language for the lyrics of a song that is intended for people all over the world because of the numerous short and flexible words that can be used. This

[244] Brij Kothari, *op. cit.*, pp. 2507-2510.

makes people feel that they do not have to translate the language of the song, and this is evidence of the universality of music[245].

2.13 Constraints of Singability and Performance

As already mentioned before, the translation of songs for performance is shaped by a range of constraints that extend beyond linguistic transfer. These include musical, rhythmic, and vocal factors, as well as medium-specific conditions such as subtitling or dubbing. Understanding these factors is essential for analysing how translators make decisions at different levels of the translation process.

2.13.1 Levels of Decision-Making in Song Translation

Subtitling songs presents specific challenges stemming from standard spatial and temporal constraints, the heterogeneity of musical genres, and the cognitive load involved when viewers must read subtitles while simultaneously processing music and lyrics. Many issues typical of audiovisual translation, such as the treatment of marked language, cultural references, and humour, also recur in this context. Decisions about whether a song should be subtitled depend on several factors, including its narrative relevance, the language of performance, audience comprehension, and possible overlaps with dialogue or on-screen credits.

Copyright considerations are equally decisive: as song lyrics are *protected intellectual property*, translated subtitles can only be included when the necessary permissions have been secured from both the author and the rights-holding company. In practice, distributors may therefore instruct subtitlers to translate only plot-pertinent songs for which rights have been granted. While well-known or narratively marginal songs may remain without subtitles, songs that are integral to the film's narrative, especially in musicals, generally require translation; when copyright does not impose restrictions, subtitling represents the most reliable solution[246].

Franzon[247] introduces a tripartite model of decision-making in song translation, emphasising the need for strategic reflection on three levels: **macro** (project-level

[245] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-104.
[246] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *Subtitling. Concepts and Practices*, New York, Routledge, 2021, pp. 178-200.
[247] Johan, Franzon, et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

decisions), **mezzo** (song-level), and **micro** (line/word-level). At the macro level, decisions are made about whether to translate the lyrics at all, or whether to translate them into subtitles or voiceover. At the mezzo level, a decision has to be made about how closely to follow the original in terms of musical structure and semantic content. At the micro level, a range of detailed decisions about rhyme, stress, and phonetic compatibility are relevant. These levels of decision are always interconnected, and each one has its own unique constraints that need to be reconciled in a final translation.

Decisions about translating songs always involve a dialogue between musical and linguistic rhythm. Musical tempo, beat, and phrasing all place constraints on a translation that may conflict with the prosodic patterns of the receiving language. These factors affect not only the positioning of stressed syllables but also the preservation of rhyme, as well as the overall "flow" that listeners expect. Desblache[248] notes that rhythm is perceived differently across cultures: in some contexts, the beat takes precedence, while in others, prosodic naturalness dominates. This creates additional challenges, requiring translators to balance semantic fidelity with performative ease, ensuring that the translated lyrics remain both singable and expressive

2.13.2 The Pentathlon Principle (Peter Low)

When translating songs not merely for reading but for singing, the translator must address a distinct set of constraints that go well beyond semantic fidelity. The musico-verbal bond, the interdependence between lyrics and music, is the defining feature of songs, and singable translations must respect this bond if they are to succeed in performance[249].

Peter Low identifies five major constraints that shape singable translation, which he collectively terms the **Pentathlon Principle**[250]. This model compares song translation to a pentathlon, in which the translator is required to perform across five disciplines, even if not necessarily to the same degree. These five areas are:

1. **Sense**. The meaning of the original lyrics.
2. **Naturalness**. Fluency and idiomatic expression in the target language.

[248] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-145.
[249] Peter Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.
[250] Ivi, pp. 39.40.

3. **Rhythm**. The alignment of syllables with musical meter.
4. **Rhyme**. The replication or creative substitution of rhyme patterns.
5. **Singability**. The physical ease of articulation and performability of the translation.

These five priorities often come into conflict. Preserving all elements perfectly is virtually impossible, so the translator must balance them according to the song's function, genre, and performance context. For example, a comic patter song may demand absolute fidelity to rhythm and syllable count, while a dramatic ballad may prioritise naturalness and emotional tone.[251].

2.13.3 Franzon's Double Fidelity and Performative Constraints

The interplay between music and lyrics represents a crucial constraint in singable translation. To produce a target text that resonates with the original, translators must strive to maintain a similar relationship between words and music. Understanding the semantic and affective potential of music, even if a universal system of musical meaning remains elusive, enables more informed translational choices[252].

Building on this functionalist perspective, Johan Franzon offers an even more layered model of analysis for singable translation. He contends that singability is "not a property inherent in the text alone" [253], but emerges from the dynamic interplay between lyrics, melody, and performance context. This perspective reframes the notion of constraints by introducing factors that transcend the text itself, such as tempo, melodic phrasing, articulation, vocal range, the performer's timbre, and even cultural expectations of genre or style.

In his 2008 study, Franzon delineates **three interdependent levels of singability**[254]:

- **Prosodic level**, which addresses the alignment of syllabic structure, stress patterns, and intonation with the musical meter

[251] Ivi, pp. 40-41.
[252] Tim Reus, "How Music and Lyrics Interact. A Translation-Oriented Analysis of Musical Narrative in Disney's 'Let it Go'", *Studia Translatorica* 14 (2024), pp. 133-153.
[253] Johan Franzon, "Song Translation and the Intangible. Fidelity Beyond the Text", in Franzon Johan, Greenall Annjo K., Kvam Sigmund, Parianou Anastacia, *Song Translation. Lyrics in Contexts*, Berlin, Frank & Timme (2021), pp. 11-18.
[254] Johan Franzon, "Choices in Song Translation. Singability in Print, Subtitles and Sung Performance", in *The Translator*, 14-2 (2008), pp. 373-399.

- **Poetic level**, which involves rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and other rhetorical devices
- **Semantic-reflexive level**, which pertains to the emotional and conceptual resonance of the translated lyrics.

These levels do not operate in isolation but must converge harmoniously in the final product to achieve a truly performable and expressive result.

A singable lyric achieves	by observing the music's	which may appear in the text as
1. **a prosodic match**	*melody*: music as notated, producing lyrics that are comprehensible and sound natural when sung	syllable count; rhythm; intonation, stress; sounds for easy singing
2. **a poetic match**	*structure*: music as performed, producing lyrics that attract the audience' attention and achieve poetic effect	rhyme; segmentation of phrases/lines/stanzas; parallelism and contrast; location of key words
3. **a semantic-reflexive match**	*expression*: music perceived as meaningful, producing lyrics that reflect or explain what the music 'says'	the story told, mood conveyed, character(s) expressed; description (word-painting); metaphor

Figure 2.2. Functional Consequences of Match between Lyrics and Music[255]

The translator's challenge, then, lies in managing the inevitable tensions among these layers, "sacrificing some elements to preserve others" [256], depending on the priorities of the target version. This leads to what Franzon terms a model of **double fidelity**, in which the translator must navigate a dual faithfulness: on the one hand, fidelity to the source text (its meaning, tone, and stylistic qualities), and on the other, fidelity to the performative demands and musico-cultural context of the target version. Double fidelity is not about ideal compromise, but about making *purpose-driven decisions* that serve both artistic and communicative goals.

Franzon's framework encourages the translator to go beyond surface-level equivalence and adopt a **context-sensitive, performative orientation**, where the goal is not to

[255] Johan Franzon*,"Choices in Song Translation. Singability in Print, Subtitles and Sung Performance", The Translator*, 14-2 (2008), pp. 373-399.
[256] Johan Franzon, "Song Translation and the Intangible. Fidelity Beyond the Text", in Franzon Johan, Greenall Annjo K., Kvam Sigmund, Parianou Anastacia, *Song Translation. Lyrics in Contexts*, Berlin, Frank & Timme (2021), pp. 14-16.

replicate a song word-for-word, but to recreate its impact, tone, and function in a new language and musical environment.

A striking example of this dynamic tension between textual fidelity and performability is offered by the song *Show Me* form the musical *My Fair Lady*, originally composed by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe (1956). Franzon refers to this case to illustrate the need for translators to decide "whether to prioritise lyrical meaning or performance constraints"[257]. In the Italian dubbed version of the 1964 film adaptation, the lyrics are substantially adapted to suit prosody and rhyme, resulting in substantial deviations from the original lyrics.

A personal analysis of the film, streamed via Amazon Prime Video, reveals that the original English subtitles match the lyrics sung literally, confirming their alignment with the source material. However, the Italian subtitles do not match the dubbed singing voice; instead, they reflect a more literal translation of the English text. This discrepancy highlights the divergent purposes of the two translation modes: while dubbing seeks to maintain rhythmic and expressive fluidity in performance, subtitling often aims at semantic clarity and readability.

Such a case exemplifies the impossibility of achieving full equivalence across modes and layers. The dubbed Italian lyrics function effectively within their performative constraints, achieving prosodic coherence and musicality, but at the cost of literal fidelity. The subtitles, conversely, maintain semantic proximity to the original, but are in no way singable. This reinforces Franzon's theory of *double fidelity* and underscores the translator's need to make strategic, medium-specific choices.

The following excerpt from the song *Show Me* exemplifies the kind of textual and performative divergence discussed by Franzon, showing how the original English lyrics, the Italian dubbed version, and the Italian subtitles (as streamed on Amazon Prime Video) follow different translation logics and constraints[258].

[257] Ivi, p. 17.
[258] All transcripts of material provided in examples are my own, based on the streamed version of the film on Amazon Prime Video (last accessed: 7 August 2025).

Table 2.8. Comparison Between Original English Lyrics and Italian Dubbed Version in *Show Me* (*My Fair Lady*)

Original English Lyrics (sung in the film)	**Italian Dubbed Version (sung in the film)**
Don't talk of stars	Tu sai parlar
Burning above	Solo d'amor
If you're in love	Non sai che farfugli
Show me	
Tell me no dreams	Tu non saprai
Filled with desire	Baciarmi mai
If you're on fire	Cosa mi dai
Show me…	Sogni

Table 2.9. Comparison Between English and Italian Subtitles in *Show Me* (*My Fair Lady*)

Timecode[259]	**English Subtitles**	**Italian Subtitles**
2:09:53	*Don't talk of stars burning above*	*Non mi parli di stelle e di cielo*
2:09:56	*If you're in love, show me*	*Se mi ama davvero, me lo provi*
2:10:00	*Tell me no dreams*	*Non mi parli di sogni e desideri*
2:10:01	*Filled with desire*	
2:10:04	*If you're on fire, show me*	*Se i tuoi sentimenti sono veri, me lo provi* (one line)

This example highlights how the Italian dubbed version prioritises performability by adapting rhyme, rhythm, and syllabic structure, often at the cost of semantic fidelity. The result is a fluent, musically coherent text, yet one that diverges significantly from the original meaning.

[259] Timecodes refer to the streamed version of the film on Amazon Prime Video.



Figure 2.3. Film still from *My Fair Lady* (dir. George Cukor, Warner Bros., 1964).

In contrast, the Italian subtitles offer a more literal rendering of the English lyrics. However, they do not match the sung Italian version and are not adapted for musical performance, confirming that the subtitling strategy pursues clarity over singability.

A particular relevant detail is the inconsistent use of register in the Italian subtitles. Figure 2.3 illustrates these differences, showing how the Italian subtitles prioritise semantic clarity over performability, while also revealing inconsistencies in register that affect coherence. The translation oscillates between formal (*Lei*) and informal (*Tu*) second person forms: for instance, "se mi ama" uses the formal *Lei*, whereas *se i tuoi sentimenti sono* veri and *me lo provi* involve shifts that create pragmatic incongruence. This inconsistency may suggest a lack of editorial attention or coherence in adapting interpersonal dynamics.

Ultimately, this case exemplifies Franzon's view that different translation modalities impose distinct constraints and require distinct strategies. The subtitled version pursues conceptual proximity; the dubbed version, by contrast, aims at performability. Neither achieves full equivalence, reinforcing the translator's need to negotiate priorities based on medium and purpose.

The dynamics observed in *My Fair Lady* are not isolated, but recur across other musicals examined in this study, where the tension between semantic fidelity and performability gives rise to distinct translational strategies. A comparable situation can be identified in *Once*, whose musical idiom is more naturalistic and closely aligned with spoken interaction. In this case, the Italian subtitles tend to preserve the conversational quality and semantic intention of the original lyrics, even when this results in a looser alignment with the musical structure. In contrast to the dubbed version of *My Fair Lady*,

which privileges formal coherence and musical regularity, the subtitling approach in *Once* appears to favour immediacy and authenticity, thus foregrounding the semantic-reflexive dimension described by Franzon while relegating prosodic constraints to a secondary role. In a different manner, this relationship is portrayed in *Six*, a contemporary musical that employs elements of pop music and performance-oriented aesthetics. Here, the relationship of lyrics and music is influenced by strong rhythmic patterns, rapid speech, and direct interaction with the audience. Translated into a different context, this implies that a more flexible and adaptive approach is employed, where rhyme, beat, and immediacy of style are central, even when this implies a partial change in meaning.

Overall, these examples imply that, in terms of a double-fidelity concept, Franzon's notion of double-fidelity should be seen as a flexible concept, where a hierarchy of priorities is employed. Translational choices are influenced by more than textual features, including genre, performance, and audience factors, all of which are central in determining which dimension of singability is prioritised in each context. This variability also provides the methodological basis for the comparative approach adopted in this study, where different musical genres are examined not as isolated cases, but as distinct configurations of translational priorities within a shared theoretical framework.

Building on Franzon's framework, recent studies have further emphasised the tension between semantic fidelity and performative effectiveness in song translation[260]. While Franzon identifies strategies ranging from singable translation to adaptation and replacement text, accessibility-oriented research highlights that these strategies must also account for audience diversity, including those who experience music through visual or tactile channels. The translator's task, therefore, involves not only choosing among Franzon's options but also adapting them to ensure that the translated text retains its expressive and performative force across different sensory modes of reception.

2.13.4 Song Translation as Transcreation (Małgorzata Kodura)

This focus on performative priorities is also central to the work of Małgorzata Kodura[261], who frames song translation as a fundamentally creative and transcreational process. She highlights how the interdependence between words and music, and the need

[260] Johan, Franzon, et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 25-42.
[261] Małgorzata Kodura, "Translating for the Stage. The Case of Song Translation", in Franzon Johan, Greenall Annjo K.,, Kvam Sigmund, Parianou Anastasia, *op. cit.*, pp.133-144.

to adapt lyrics for actual performance contexts, requires the translator to go beyond literal meaning and engage in what she terms a transcreational process. This involves not only rewriting for musical constraints, but also reconstructing the expressive and aesthetic impact of the original within a new linguistic and cultural frame.

Kodura insists that translating songs, especially for live performance or musical theatre, requires a negotiation between multiple semiotic layers: verbal content, musical rhythm and melody, prosody, gesture, and stage dynamics. In this view, the translator assumes a hybrid role: part linguist, part librettist, part dramaturge. Such a role demands both technical precision and artistic creativity, especially when translating pieces that carry cultural or historical specificity. Fidelity to meaning, therefore, must be reinterpreted as fidelity to function and performative effect rather than to the literal wording of the source text.

Moreover, Kodura argues that a successful song translation should aim to reproduce the performative resonance of the original: the emotional, rhetorical, and rhythmic qualities that make the song impactful in context. This may require radical departures from the source lyrics, particularly when the original is embedded in idiomatic language, complex rhyme schemes, or culturally marked references. The translator's task becomes one of functional recreation, aligning musical, semantic, and cultural vectors to generate a target version that can speak, sing, and move the new audience as the original did its own. Kodura's notion of functional recreation reinforces the translator's role as an adaptive artist, setting the stage for a closer examination of the individual constraints that shape the final product. These include rhythm, rhyme, and vocal articulation, which will be explored in the following section.

Several theoretical models offer useful tools for analysing musical narrative. Almén's[262] framework identifies archetypal musical narratives based on coherent meaning units (*isotipies*), unfolding in dynamics of "victory" or "defeat" through elements such as consonance, dissonance, intensity, or harmonic progressions. Paradiso Laurin[263] draws on the rhetoric of Baroque music, proposing four recurrent phases, *narration, probation, dubitation,* and *peroration*, that correspond to the introduction, development, contrast, and resolution of musical themes, a structure applicable well

[262] Almén Byron, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2017.
[263] Marisa Paradiso Laurin, "Rhetoric in Classical Music", *Music and Rhetoric Studies*, 12 (2012), pp. 45-62.

beyond classical genres. Schlenker's linguistic-based approach[264] further distinguishes between **cognitive factors** (instinctive associations, such as a flute evoking birdsong) and **tonal properties** that are culturally acquired (e.g. major scales perceived as "brighter" or "more joyful" than minor ones).

2.13.5 Constraints in Practice: Rhythm, Rhyme and Vocal Demands

The constraint of **rhythm** is particularly rigid in singable translation: every syllable must fit the intended musical phrase, and stressed syllables must generally align with strong musical beats. A mismatch between prosody and melody can render a line unperformable or awkward, especially in languages with different syllable-timing or stress patterns than the source[265].

Rhyme adds another layer of complexity. While not all songs require rhyme, in many traditions (including musical theatre and pop music) it is a defining feature. The translator must decide whether to replicate the original rhyme scheme, adapt it, or abandon it entirely. In cases where rhyme is central to a song's identity, such as comic or children's songs, reproducing rhyme is almost obligatory[266].

Finally, **singability** entails the practical **vocal demands** of the translation. Lyrics must be comfortable to pronounce, especially at high speeds or pitches. Vowel sounds, syllable clusters, and consonant articulation all affect performance. Translations that are awkward to sing, even if they are accurate, fail in one of their primary goals[267]. As Low argues, "singers need language that sings and dances"[268].

These constraints are unique to singable translation and distinguish it clearly from other types of audiovisual translation such as subtitling or dubbing, where textual synchrony is important, but performative feasibility is not a requirement[269]. In the context of musical theatre, where lyrics are central to character development and plot, ensuring that the translated text is *performable and expressive* is a core priority.

[264] Philippe Schlenker, "Outline of Music Semantics", *Music Perception* 36-4 (2019), pp. 329-365.
[265] Peter Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.
[266] Ivi, pp. 35-36.
[267] Ivi, p. 36.
[268] Ivi, pp. 64.
[269] Ivi, pp. 51-52.

2.14 Translational Strategies and Flexibility: From Pentathlon to Hexathlon

Peter Low's widely cited *Pentathlon Principle* provides a valuable framework for assessing the complex constraints involved in singable translation. As discussed earlier, the five criteria, Sense, Naturalness, Rhythm, Rhyme, and Singability, function as interconnected priorities, much like events in a sporting pentathlon[270]. The translator cannot aim for a perfect score in all five but must perform "well enough" in each, adapting according to the specific demands of the song, the language pair, and the performance context[271].

This model has proven both practical and pedagogically effective, encouraging translators to think in terms of compromise, rather than strict fidelity to one parameter. However, as Low himself later admits, the Pentathlon may understate one vital aspect of song translation in the context of music-drama genres such as opera and musical theatre[272]. In these forms, each song or aria does not stand in isolation, it must fit coherently into the broader dramatic and performative arc of the work.

Low therefore proposes a *sixth criterion*, which he names **stage effectiveness** or **dramatic performability**. This sixth factor calls attention to how a translated lyric functions within the fiction of the stage: how it supports characterisation, fits the narrative structure, and aligns with stage gestures, costuming, and audience perception[273]. He writes: "Perhaps we should identify a sixth criterion with a name like 'stage effectiveness' or 'dramatic performability' as a separate 'event' in what might be a 'hexathlon'?"[274].

This suggestion is particularly relevant to musical theatre, where lyrics frequently advance the plot, reveal inner thoughts, or convey shifts in character relationships. In these contexts, the translation must maintain not just verbal meaning and musical structure, but also theatrical coherence. A lyric that is metrically perfect and vocally performable may still fail if it disrupts the dramatic arc or appears incongruent with what is happening visually or narratively on stage[275].

Dramatic performability involves attention to the embodied dimension of singing: characters "live" their lyrics, often while moving, dancing, interacting with others, or executing stage directions[276]. This sixth criterion thus integrates staging, gesture, acting

[270] Ivi, pp.39-40.
[271] Ivi, pp. 40-41.
[272] Ivi, p. 56.
[273] *Ibidem*.
[274] *Ibidem*.
[275] Ivi, p. 57.
[276] Ivi, p. 110.

style, and emotional traits into the translator's decision-making process. It also opens a valuable path for considering inclusive performance and accessibility, especially in surtitled or captioned productions for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences, where visual clarity and synchrony become central to meaning[277].

Adopting the **Hexathlon Principle** therefore enhances the original framework by acknowledging that songs are not just texts to be sung, but performative acts within a multimedia whole. This view aligns with current trends in both translation studies and performance theory, inviting to consider how lyrics live and breathe on stage, in voice, gesture, body, and space.

2.15 Expanding the Role of the Translator: Context, Medium and Creative Function

Music translation extends far beyond the linguistic transfer of lyrics. It encompasses the adaptation, mediation, and reinterpretation of musical texts across contexts, media, and audiences. As Desblache argues[278], translators today engage in a creative process that balances fidelity with innovation, often shaping the way music circulates globally. This includes the localisation of songs for international productions, the adaptation of musical works for accessibility (e.g., for deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences)[279], and the negotiation of cultural references to ensure relevance and resonance in the target context. In this sense, the translator becomes a co-creator[280], contributing not only to the comprehension of the text but also to its performative and emotional impact.

2.15.1 Mapping the Field: Modalities, Areas, Types, Approaches

Useful models for translating music have developed mainly in the twenty-first century. Research strands once treated separately, song/opera translation, audiovisual translation, and multimodal communication, now converge, highlighting the need to account for verbal, non-verbal, auditory, and visual resources together.

[277] Ivi, pp. 54-55.
[278] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-118.
[279] Ivi, pp. 219-221.
[280] Ivi, p. 244.

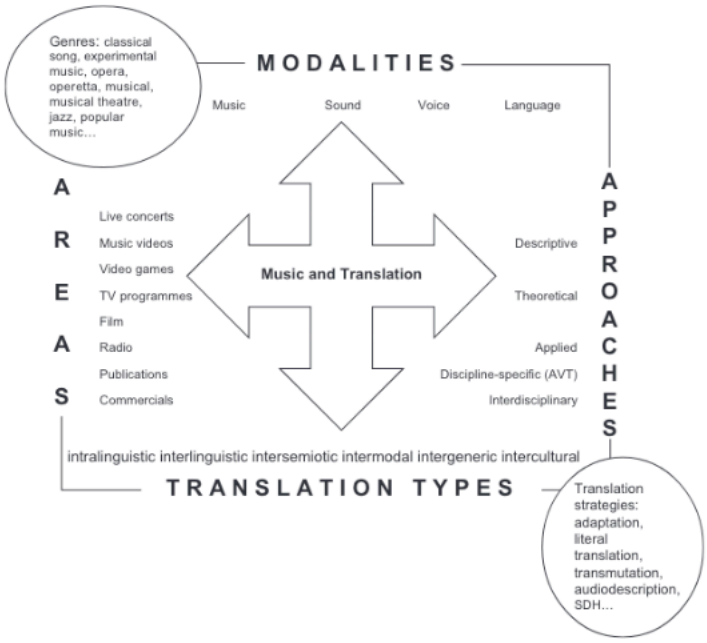


Figure 2.4. Music Translation Map[281].

The map outlines four complementary perspectives:

- **Modalities**: music, sound, voice quality, and language; each may carry meaning on its own and through other modes (e.g., visuals).
- **Areas/ platforms**: from live concerts and festivals to film, television, streaming, radio, publications, commercials, and video games.
- **Translation types**: intra-/interlingual, intersemiotic, intermodal, intergeneric, intercultural, and intersensorial transfers, which is crucial for accessibility.
- **Approaches**: descriptive/theoretical vs. applied (including AVT), often interdisciplinary; strategy bundles may hybridise (translation, adaptation, transmutation, audiodescription, SDH, etc.).

These viewpoints remind that choices in song translation are seldom purely linguistic. Instead, it is a strategic negotiation between media, modes, and audiences, requiring the translator to balance fidelity, creativity, and accessibility in every project. Before any line is rewritten, one must decide *what kind* of transfer is appropriate (e.g., interlingual

[281] Klaus Kaindl, Lucile Desblache, "Music Translation Map", *Translating Music* (2013), retrieved August 23, 2025, from http://www.translatingmusic.com/styled-6/ index.html

subtitles vs. a singable target lyric), *where* the text will live (stage, stream, cinema, radio), and *how* audiences will perceive it (hearing, reading, tactility/vibration, or combinations thereof).

Johan Franzon's work offers one of the most widely cited typologies of song translation strategies. In his 2008 article published in *The Translator*, he outlines five main *approaches*[282]:

1. Leaving the lyrics untranslated
2. Translating the lyrics without regard for the music
3. Writing new lyrics unrelated to the original
4. Adapting the music to fit a new translated text
5. Adapting the translated text to fit the existing music.

This schematic model has since been frequently used in the literature as a foundational framework for thinking about the variety of translational choices available.
These strategies also underline the continuum of translation practices and the necessity for flexibility across contexts and genres.

In a later reformulation, Franzon refines these categories in a discursive manner. He identifies *six approaches* that reflect practical combinations and creative adaptations, including *Hybrid forms* that combine elements of both original and new material. This broader classification highlights the complexity and flexibility required of song translators, especially when navigating different musical genres, cultural expectations, and performative constraints. These frameworks collectively underline the need for context-sensitive and genre-aware strategies. Translators must often move along a continuum, shifting their approach according to the specific demands of the project[283].

Additionally, Şebnem Susam-Saraeva[284] introduces the concept of the "interlingual cover", describing cases where translated lyrics prioritise performability and musical integrity over semantic equivalence[285]. In such instances, the new version functions as an artistic reinterpretation, aligned more with the spirit and mood of the source than with its

[282] Johan Franzon, "Choices in Song Translation: Singability in Print, Subtitles and Sung Performance", *The Translator*, 14-2 (2008), pp. 373-399.
[283] Johan Franzon, "When Lyrics and Music Meet: Six Strategies for Song Translation", in Johan Franzon, Annjo K. Greenall, Sigmund Kvam, Anastasia Parianou, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-134 (spec. p. 117).
[284] Şebnem Susam-Saraeva, "Performance and Socio-cultural Context in Interlingual Cover Songs. Translation as Inspiration", in Franzon et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 177-178.
[285] Johan Franzon et el., *op. cit.*, p.18.

literal meaning. This notion reframes singable translation as a creative, culturally embedded, and interpretive process.

Low further distinguishes between three main approaches to rendering lyrics in another language: *translation*, *adaptation* and *replacement text*. The first aims to preserve both the meaning and style of the original lyrics as closely as possible. The second allows for greater flexibility, enabling the translator to reshape phrases or concepts in order to suit linguistic or performative demands. The third involves creating new lyrics to fit the existing music, often with little or no semantic connection to the original. While these categories are analytically useful, Low stresses that in practice they exist on a continuum, and skilled translators may shift between them as needed to serve the artistic and contextual goals of each project[286].

Recent multimodal approaches expand this perspective by analysing verbal, auditory, and visual modes together[287]. This integrated model considers not only lyrics and vocal delivery, but also paralinguistic cues, gestures, stage design, and choreography. Such an approach underlines that singable translation is not purely linguistic but part of a complex semiotic ecosystem where all resources jointly shape meaning and performative coherence. This conceptualisation aligns with current trends in *multimodality and accessibility studies*, recognising that music is not only a linguistic artefact but a complex semiotic text, combining sound, lyrics, performance, and visual codes. In this sense, translation becomes both a *product* and a *process*, balancing fidelity and creativity while responding to cultural and commercial pressures[288].

Building on this perspective, Carpi proposes a *multimodal model of analysis* that considers the verbal, audio, and visual dimensions of stage musicals[289]. Table 2.10 summarises the main categories of this model. These parameters help identify how different semiotic resources interact to construct meaning and how these interactions should inform translation choices.

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[286] Peter Low, *Translating Song: Lyrics and* Texts, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 70-73.
[287] Beatrice Carpi, "I Am Not Throwing Away My Shot! (at Discussing Multimodality). How a Multimodal Analysis Can Support Song Translation – the case of Hamilton", *Studia Translatorica* 15 (2004), pp. 111-132.
[288] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.
[289] Beatrice Carpi, "I Am Not Throwing Away My Shot! (at Discussing Multimodality). How a Multimodal Analysis Can Support Song Translation – the case of Hamilton", *Studia Translatorica* 15 (2004), pp. 111-132.

Table 2.10. Categories of Carpi's Multimodal Model of Analysis[290].

Verbal mode	Audio mode	Visual mode
Repetitions	Music	Dancing
Evocative meaning	Interludes	Embodied behaviour
Key clusters	Pauses	Stage props
Expressive meaning	Sound effects	
Cultural background	Paralinguistic features	
Intratextuality		

The *verbal mode* includes textual aspects such as repetitions, key thematic clusters, and references to cultural background or intratextuality within the show. The *audio mode* focuses on musical and sound components, from melodies and interludes to paralinguistic features such as laughter or sighs that contribute to meaning. The *visual mode* captures embodied elements like dancing, gestures, or stage props that influence interpretation. Analysing these three modes in parallel allows translators to better understand how meaning is distributed across different channels and to produce target texts that remain coherent within the multimodal environment of a staged performance.

Beyond artistic and performative concerns, singable translation also carries a cultural and social dimension. Evidence from SLS studies shows that synchronised lyrics can democratise access to songs, turning them into shared cultural capital that transcends literacy barriers[291]. Similarly, singable translations and accessible captioning practices in musical theatre enable broader participation, reinforcing the role of the translator as a cultural mediator who not only adapts texts for performance but also fosters inclusivity and collective engagement.

While the Hexathlon model outlines the technical and performative constraints of singable translation, Peter Low also highlights broader considerations that shape the translator's role: the *medium of presentation*, the *target audience*, and the *function of the translated lyrics*[292]. One crucial distinction is between translations created for performance and those created for reading. Some translators aim to produce a version of the lyrics that closely reflects the original meaning and poetic structure but is not intended to be sung, typically for programs, libretti, or subtitles. Others prioritise performability,

[290] Beatrice Carpi, "I Am Not Throwing Away My Shot! (at Discussing Multimodality). How a Multimodal Analysis Can Support Song Translation – the case of Hamilton", *Studia Translatorica* 15 (2004), pp. 111-132.
[291] Brij Kothari, *op. cit.*, pp. 2507-2510.
[292] Peter Low, *Translating Song: Lyrics and* Texts, London and New York, Routledge, 2017*,* p. 58.

accepting greater divergence from the source text to ensure that the lyrics work on stage and in voice[293]. These differing aims require distinct strategies, and confusion between them can result in translations that serve neither purpose effectively.

In the context of audiovisual translation, the use of *captions* or *surtitles* introduces further complexity. Captions may be synchronised with the vocal delivery but do not always preserve singability. They must be concise, easy to read, and visually well-timed[294]. When subtitles accompany sung performance (as in opera or musical theatre), the temporal constraints and the need for visual coherence may override semantic or poetic fidelity. In these cases, the translator must consider not only what is said, but how it will be read, and by whom.

Low also highlights the importance of cultural context. Songs that reference specific traditions, social practices, or humour may be locally rooted, requiring not just linguistic translation but *cultural adaptation*[295]. In such cases, the translator often becomes an adapter, deciding whether to preserve the original reference, replace it with a culturally equivalent one, or omit it altogether. This process, while risky, can be essential for ensuring the effectiveness of the song in performance.

Another key concept is *creative compensation*. When it is impossible to retain a particular wordplay, rhyme, or rhythm from the source text, the translator may introduce a compensatory effect in the same song or in another line[296]. This strategic redistribution of expressive value preserves the overall impact of the song, even if individual elements are altered. As Low observes, compensation is not a sign of failure, but a marker of skilled adaptation. Finally, the translator must be aware of the invisible collaboration involved in theatrical production. Singable lyrics are only one part of a broader artistic system, which includes composers, stage directors, actors, and audiences. The translator's choices are shaped by the interpretative possibilities of the performance as a whole[297]. This collaborative, context-sensitive perspective underlines the translator's dual role as both interpreter and co-creator.

[293] Ivi, p. 59.
[294] Ivi, pp. 54-55.
[295] Ivi, pp. 61-62.
[296] Ivi, pp. 63-65.
[297] Ivi, pp. 66-68.

2.15.2 Platforms and Ecologies of Practice

Song translation practices vary across different platforms and modes of distribution, each of which presents distinct constraints, conventions, and degrees of accessibility. The following overview outlines some of the main contexts in which translated songs are produced, distributed and experienced.

Live performance. Since the 2000s, live music has grown markedly in attendance and revenue. Opera houses pioneered systematic *surtitling*, first interlingually, later also intralingually[298], making them the first degree of accessibility. Practices vary (one or two languages; projection vs. seat-back devices). Musicals increasingly opt for fully translated, sung versions on tour, with surtitles often reserved for access services[299]. Beyond opera and musical theatre, translation at concerts and festivals remains inconsistent: printed programmes and translations are common in classical contexts, but are rare in other settings, and live respeaking of song lyrics is still experimental.

Radio. Outputs are largely monolingual; song information (titles, performers) is now commonly displayed on receivers. Experiments with synchronised titles have been piloted but are not widespread[300].

Digital music on the move. Portable, networked listening has normalised a multiscreen culture where users expect on-demand metadata and lyrics. When translation is missing, fans routinely fill the gap through community platforms and apps (e.g., identification tools paired with crowd-provided transcriptions/translations). Quality and synchrony vary.

Physical formats and DVDs. In popular music, lyric provision, either transcription or translation, remains limited on CDs/DVDs; classical releases more often include multilingual texts or on-disc subtitles. Certain marketed genres (e.g., K-Pop/J-Pop) provide English subtitles strategically to grow overseas audiences[301].

Video games. Game music has become increasingly vocal and stylistically hybrid; songs may appear in English, Latin, or invented languages to build world-specific atmospheres and sometimes *deliberate untranslatability*. Official lyric translations are uncommon, leading to high-effort fan (re)versions do not last long.

[298] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-226.
[299] Ivi, p. 226.
[300] Ivi, pp. 227-228.
[301] Ivi, p. 229.

Television and internet streaming. Accessibility services (e.g., SDH) can include song transcription/translation on mainstream channels, but provision is inconsistent and often excludes songs. Children's programming is the major exception, where songs are commonly dubbed[302]. On UGC platforms, many music videos include fan-made subtitles; large SVOD catalogues rarely synchronise lyrics, leaving users to third-party apps for timed displays.

Cinema. Songs fulfil narrative and affective functions (diegetic/non-diegetic). Technical, legal and cultural constraints make dubbing songs costly; hence films often keep songs in the source language, sometimes subtitled, sometimes not[303]. Film musicals historically alternated among dubbing and subtitling strategies depending on market and budget; today English-language originals with local subtitles prevail, with audience tolerance for untranslated English especially high[304].

2.15.3 Accessibility: Intersemiotic and Intersensorial Transfers

The audiovisual turn reframes translation as a multimodal and multisensory practice. Beyond Jakobson's interlingual/intralingual/intersemiotic triad, contemporary practice recognises **intersensorial** mediation: conveying musical meaning through alternative sensory channels (captions, sign language interpreting, audio description, audio introductions, vibrotactile devices, visual rhythm representation). Captioning and surtitling may be minimalist in rules on stage (creative timing, kinetic typography, i.e. animated text synchronised with music and rhythm), but SDH for broadcast follows national norms. Opera/musical venues increasingly add touch tours and recorded introductions for blind and visually-impaired spectators. Festivals dedicated to inclusive arts illustrate a broader cultural push toward *access for all*, where measures designed for specific groups benefit wider audiences[305].

[302] Elena Di Giovanni, "Dubbing and Subtitling of Film Musicals in Europe", *inTralinea* (2008).
[303] Frederic Chaume, *Audiovisual Translation. Dubbing*, Manchester, St. Jerome, 2012.
[304] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 235.
[305] Gian Maria Greco, "On Accessibility as a Human Right", *Journal of Audiovisual Translation* 1-1 (2016), pp. 22-37)

2.15.4 Approaches and Strategies in Vocal Music Translation

As music operates across different contexts and forms, translation practices often combine multiple strategies rather than relying on a single approach. In practice, the following strategies can be observed:

- **Transcription** (often for SDH, programme notes, or apps), including transliteration for rehearsal.
- **Intralingual translation** (rewording, explicitation, removal of repetitions; historical/ideological reappropriations of familiar tunes).
- **Interlingual translation for reception** (summaries, libretti, subtitles/surtitles), constrained by readability and multimodal fit.
- **Singable translation** (for performance), guided by Low's Pentathlon, Sense, Naturalness, Rhythm, Rhyme, Singability, applied with context-sensitive compromises and, as argued in this chapter, extended by Stage Effectiveness within a Hexathlon perspective[306].
- **Adaptation/remediation and covers** (new lyrics or musical re-settings designed to speak to local cultures, identities, and markets), including deliberate departures from the source.
- **Intersensorial mediation** (SDH, sign performance, audio description, and introductions; vibro-tactile systems), where translation negotiates meaning across senses to support diverse modes of reception.

These practices cut across platforms and imply **hybrid** solutions (e.g., a touring musical with a fully translated libretto, creative surtitles, and SDH streams)[307]. The translator's brief must therefore specify function, medium, audience, and accessibility requirements from the outset.

Translators of songs operate at once as linguists, librettists, and dramaturges. Their decisions are embedded in collaborative production ecologies (composers, directors, performers, engineers, audiences) and in platform-specific affordances. A functional, performative, and inclusive approach, attentive to the map of modalities, areas, types and

[306] Peter Low, *Translating Song: Lyrics and* Texts, London and New York, Routledge, 2017*,* pp. 1-5.
[307] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-223, 252-253.

approaches sketched above, best supports translations that *sing* across languages and senses while remaining theatrically and culturally effective.

The interaction of music and language is relevant to the **cognitive neuroscience of music**, suggesting parallels between musical and prosodic structures[308]. Neuropsychological evidence suggests that the brain modules processing purely musical and purely linguistic structures occur in separate areas, but they share processing mechanisms for elements like rhythm, pitch contour, and temporal relationships[309].
From a performance perspective, acting in song is complicated because performers must respect musical constraints (rhythm, melody, dynamics) set by the composer, often leading to a carefully crafted illusion of spontaneity[310]. The singing context intensifies emotion, though whether this is inherently true or merely an expansion of existing expressive details is debated[311].

2.16 From Page to stage: Understanding the Multimodal Architecture of the Musical

Drawing on Kress's framework, multimodality is understood as the coexistence of multiple communicative resources, visual, verbal, auditory, digital, through which individuals express meaning. Kress emphasises how contemporary social and technological developments have reshaped communication practices, moving from print-based modes to digital, screen-centred environments. These shifts affect both how messages are produced and how they are perceived, reinforcing the increasing prominence of visual representation alongside traditional verbal language[312].

Kendrick's definition helps situate the musical as a hybrid narrative form in which songs, spoken dialogue, staging, and movement work together to tell a story or to showcase performers' abilities. A conventional musical comprises several interconnected components:

- **Music and Lyrics**, forming the expressive core
- **Book or Libretto**, which provides narrative structure and dialogue

[308] Isabelle Peretz and Robert J. Zatorre, *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Music*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 413.
[309] Isabelle Peretz and Robert J. Zatorre, *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Music*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 426.
[310] Matt Bean, "Why is Acting in Song so Different?", *Journal of Singing*, 64-2 (2007), pp. 167-173.
[311] *Ibidem*.
[312] Gunther Kress, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-60.

- **Choreography**, shaping movement and dance
- **Staging**, which organises spatial dynamics
- **Physical production**, including sets, costumes, and technical design.

Beyond these technical features, Kendrick argues that a successful musical must also embody deeper artistic qualities: intellectual coherence (*brain*), emotional resonance (*heart*), and creative daring (*courage*)[313].

Dyer adds that the musical genre is marked by an inherent ideological tension. Although historically associated with mainstream entertainment, musicals frequently reveal social conflicts, particularly regarding gender and race, beneath their conventional optimism. This dialectic between spectacle and critical commentary is central to understanding how musical theatre engages with cultural values[314].

Producing a singable translation for a musical requires careful coordination between linguistic choices and musical constraints. Theatrical productions vary significantly, from minimalistic school performances to fully orchestrated professional stagings, but all rely on a musical score whose rhythmic and melodic structure the translated lyrics must respect. Concord Theatricals facilitates this by offering flexible performance materials, though each staging may present its own ordering and adaptation of songs.

Singability refers to how easily lyrics can be sung, which depends on phonetic ease, articulation, breath patterns, vocal quality, and the emotional phrasing inherent in the music. Since songs in a musical advance character development and narrative action, translated lyrics must preserve both expressive intent and musical compatibility. Achieving this balance involves strategies such as aligning syllable counts, matching stress patterns, selecting vowel and consonant combinations that are comfortable to sing, and adjusting emotional tone to suit the melody and performance style.

Two main strategies guide the creation of singable translations:

- **Syllabic correspondence**, which evaluates the number of syllables and stresses in each line to ensure the Italian text fits the musical phrasing. A term, typically a number, must be selected that matches the syllable count and stress pattern of the line being translated, after which the most suitable rendering can be identified.

[313] John, Kendrick *Musical Theatre. A History*, London, Bloomsburry Publishing Plc, 2008, p. 14.
[314] Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia", *Only Entertainment* (2002), pp. 19-35.

Don't talk of stars → Seicentotre → *Tu sai parlar*
Don't talk of stars → Seventy-two → *Tu sai parlar*

- **Metric rephrasing**, which adapts entire clauses to match melodic rhythm, sometimes requiring condensation or reformulation to maintain fluency. It is necessary to trace a bar on each syllable and then rephrase the line in the target language.

/ / / / / / / /
Don't talk of stars → *Tu sai parlar*

The aim is to keep subtitles as similar to the spoken conversation as possible, using the same words when sustainable, but shortening them, when required, without affecting the meaning; this is difficult when translating songs in another language, because syllables are the first barrier, together with rhymes, idioms and puns. It is important to bear in mind, that the lyric may need to be changed, in order to maintain its length and intensity, without altering its meaning. Sometimes it could happen that we need to change the numbers of syllables, if we do not find anything suitable.

Song translation also demands flexibility with rhyme schemes and word choice. Because strict fidelity may hinder vocal naturalness, translators often prioritise what Peter Low calls *acceptable accuracy*[315], ensuring the text remains idiomatic, rhythmically coherent, and singable. Low's Pentathlon Principle, balancing sense, singability, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme, highlights the need to adapt rather than replicate. Techniques such as off-rhyme, alliteration, or the use of assonance can compensate when perfect rhymes are impracticable.

Ultimately, translating songs for dubbing involves reconciling semantic meaning with the physical realities of performance, including lip-synchronisation, vocal articulation, and melodic contour. A successful singable translation preserves the emotional and narrative force of the original while sounding natural and performable in the target language.

[315] Peter Low, *Translating Song: Lyrics and* Texts, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 70-73.

2.17 Conclusion: Towards a Functional and Performative Model of Singable Translation

The translation of songs, especially for live performance in musical theatre, requires a multidimensional approach that balances linguistic, musical, and dramatic concerns. Traditional models of translation, focused primarily on semantic equivalence or formal correspondence, are inadequate for capturing the hybrid nature of sung texts. Instead, as Peter Low's *Pentathlon Principle* demonstrates, singable translation operates within a field of interacting constraints, each of which demands careful negotiation.

The five original pillars of the Pentathlon, *Sense*, *Naturalness*, *Rhythm*, *Rhyme*, and *Singability*, remain essential. They offer a flexible yet structured model that allows for artistic decisions and compromises. However, as this chapter has argued, these five elements may not fully account for the complex demands of music-dramatic performance, particularly in genres such as opera and musical theatre. Low himself acknowledges this limitation and proposes a sixth criterion: *Dramatic Performability*, or *Stage Effectiveness*. This addition reframes the Pentathlon as a Hexathlon, incorporating the staging dimension and the performative ecology of sung texts.

This expanded framework encourages translators to adopt a functionalist mindset, attending not only to words and sounds, but also to narrative structure, character embodiment, gesture, and audience perception. Moreover, in contexts where accessibility is paramount, such as performances for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences, the translator must consider how lyrics will be experienced visually, through captions or surtitles, and how meaning can be conveyed clearly, expressively, and synchronously.

In sum, singable translation is not a purely linguistic activity but a multimodal and performative practice. It requires an understanding of translation as *interpretation*, as *adaptation*, and as *collaboration* with music, staging, and audience expectations. The Hexathlon Principle, as developed in this chapter, offers a valuable model for navigating this intricate terrain.

Importantly, music translation is not a marginal practice. From translated libretti in opera to localised versions of Disney songs and global musical theatre productions, translation enables audiences to engage deeply with music across languages and cultures.

Yet, as Desblache[316] notes, research on audience reception and the social dynamics of music translation remains limited, signalling a critical area for future study.

Importantly, music translation is not a marginal practice. From translated libretti in opera to localised versions of Disney songs and global musical theatre productions, translation enables audiences to engage deeply with music across languages and cultures. Furthermore, there is still limited research on audience reception and on the social dynamics of music translation, a gap that future scholarship should aim to address[317].

This conceptualisation aligns with current trends in multimodality and accessibility studies, recognising that music is not only a linguistic artefact but a complex semiotic text, combining sound, lyrics, performance, and visual codes. In this sense, translation becomes both a product and a process, balancing fidelity and creativity while responding to cultural and commercial pressures[318].

[316] Lucile Desblache, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.
[317] Ivi, pp. 101-104.
[318] Ivi, pp. 114-118.

Chapter 3 - The Global Evolution of Musical Theatre: Songs, Voices, Identities Across the Anglophone World

3.1 Introduction: Defining the Global Musical and its Forms

Musical theatre, as an art form combining song, dance, and dramatic text, presents a complex subject matter, complicated by the constant need to organise and investigate its fundamental elements[319]. Historically, the definition of musical theatre has often been focused on the commercial US American theatre, particularly Broadway[320]. When this definition is expanded, it generally only crosses the Atlantic to include London's West End[321]. However, contemporary scholarship recognises the musical as a growing global phenomenon, defined as a continuously emerging form of theatre that shows varying degrees of resistance and tolerance towards transmissions between "high" and "low" forms of art[322]. The study of musical theatre history must therefore fight with its complexity, establishing shared genealogies that connect the worlds of music and drama[323]. This chapter aims to detail the chronological and stylistic development of this global genre, emphasising the significant contributions of the British tradition and other Anglophone regions outside the United States.

3.2 Chronological History and Developmental Milestones

In musical theatre, this country has an extensive history in a European tradition that goes back even later, many years in time when Broadway or the West End show played as well. Britain's geographical and cultural proximity into continental Europe has long had an impact over its artistic landscape, particularly musical theatre. Its culture was significantly more influenced in some way by traditional European forms such as *opéra comique*, *Viennese operetta*, *revue* and *comédie musicale*, Berlin and Paris cabaret culture. These forms circulated more quickly between London and other European capitals than between Europe and New York on the basis of aesthetic and cultural cross-

[319] David Wiles, "Why Theatre History?", in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, ed. Wiles, David, Dymkowsky, Christine, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 3-14.
[320] Laura MacDonald, Ryan Donovan, *The Routledge Companion to Musical Theatre*, London, Routledge, 2022, p. 1.
[321] *Ibidem*.
[322] William A. Everett, Paul R. Laird, *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 270; David Wiles, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-14.
[323] David Wiles, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-14.

cultural exchange between them. However, while British and American audiences speak both English as a common language, the British and American theatrical cultures and traditions look very different according to culture, how people act and how performers conduct themselves in those forms of work[324].

3.2.1 Early Antecedents: Opera, Operetta, the Ballad Opera

The deepest root of staged music lies in the invention of *opera* by Renaissance humanists, viewed as the earliest formal attempt in modern European history to combine music and poetry in theatre[325]. Early antecedent genres prominent in Europe and America included *Singspiel*, *Opera Seria* and *Opera Buffa*[326].

The British tradition specifically developed the *Ballad Opera*[327]. Originating in the eighteenth century, the ballad opera utilised existing commercial songs adapted into an Enlightenment dramatic context. This form provided an early example of using song, or popular music, to advance the plot. *Satirical ballad operas* derived much of their appeal not from the narrative itself, but from their clever allusions to well-known public figures and current political affairs, as well as from the prominence of their star performers[328]. Women were frequently portrayed as morally negligent characters, lacking virtue and propriety.

Ballad opera fundamentally reshaped the London theatrical scene by making English popular song a key factor in the commercial viability of stage productions for the first time. Its output was remarkably prolific: between 1728 and 1737, playwrights created nearly 180 works that collectively featured around 2,500 "songs"[329]. The genre's influence extended well beyond Britain, as demonstrated by *Flora*, first staged in London in 1729 and later mounted in Charleston in 1735, one of the earliest documented musical performances in North America. Ballad opera relied on a sophisticated communicative system. Most of its melodies were newly texted "common tunes" that already circulated widely and evoked shared cultural associations. By using fresh lyrics with popular *airs*, the authors were able to deliver the moral message of the composition while at the same

[324] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *The Oxford Handbook of The British Musical*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 2.
[325] David Wiles, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-14.
[326] McLamore, Alyson, *Musical Theater. An Appreciation*, New York, Routledge, 2018, pp. 3.
[327] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[328] *Ibidem*.
[329] A "song" inside an opera was called *aria*.

time appealing to the popular tastes. Although these songs criticised the shortcomings of society, they tended to concentrate on even more provocative themes, with gender, politics, and the behaviour of the ruling elite receiving particular emphasis. The genre's *airs* also created opportunities for performers to blur the boundaries between character and commentator, appearing at times to voice the sentiments of the playwright or to satirise specific public figures. Prominent singers used these moments to shape their public image, while authors assigned well-known tunes to critique influential individuals[330]. Through this interplay of music, satire, and performance, ballad opera contributed to Britain's emerging culture of celebrity, helping to establish the nation's first star vocalists, ridiculing political and industrial leaders, and occasionally capitalising on high-profile scandals.

Some writers portrayed ballad opera as a genuinely English alternative to imported Italian opera, one capable of restoring the presumably degraded tastes of the London public. Authors working for non-patent theatres, or producing ballad operas not intended for performance, frequently used the genre as a vehicle for oppositional political commentary or for circulating rumours about the court, since, unlike patent theatre managers, they were not obliged to maintain good relations with official authorities. In fairground booths and in provincial playhouses, the use of widely recognisable tunes enabled ballad opera to speak directly to local concerns and to provide a platform for expressing social critique[331].

Figure 3.1 presents the number of ballads written between 1728 and 1760, with a marked peak in the early 1730s and a subsequent decrease over the following decades.

[330] Ivi, p. 32.
[331] *Ibidem*.

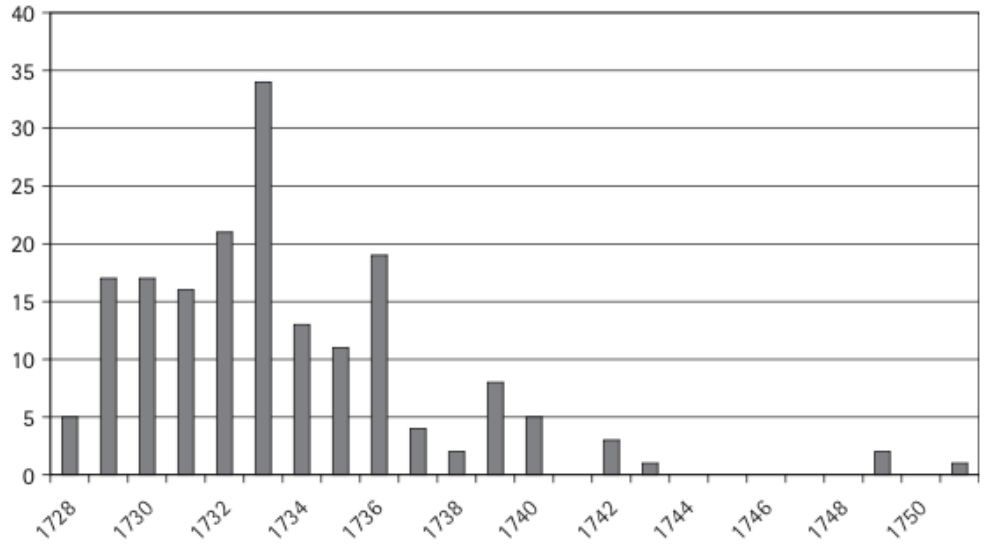


Figure 3.1. Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

As shown in Figure 3.2, ballad opera productions between 1728 and 1760 were concentrated in major London theatres, particularly Drury Lance, alongside performances in fairs and non-London venues.

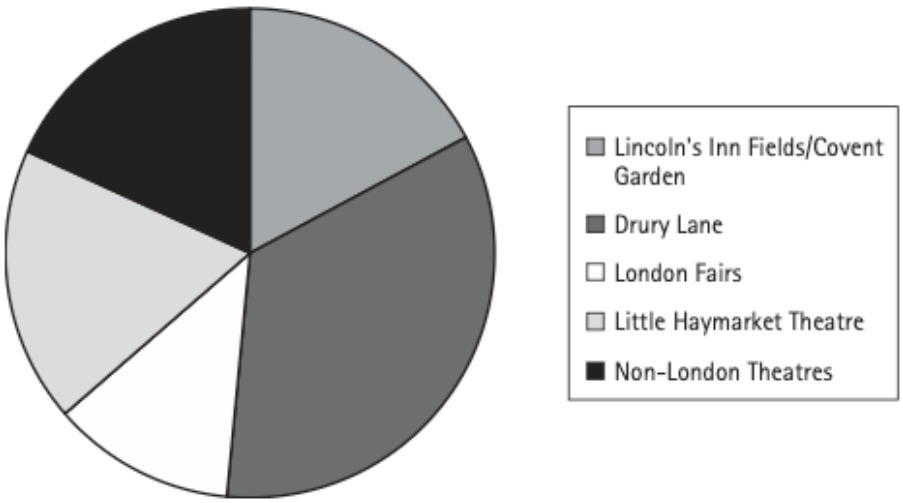


Figure 3.2. Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

Another key 19th-century British genre was *Comic Opera*, illustrated by Gilbert and Sullivan. Their works, such as *The Sorcerer (1877)*, often functioned as reflections of their own national culture, offering an astute account of popular conceptions of class,

gender, and nation, engaging in satires and parodies of Victorian society[332]. Their criticism goes beyond the clear injustice of the English class system, absurd rules about how men and women should act, and the excesses of patriotic feeling. They also look closely at how socialisation operates, how well-known institutions work, typical social stereotypes, and the cultural trends of the time. Their humour, closely linked to the context of the time and very clear, often focuses on, or describes in a lively way, the behaviour of people in late Victorian society[333].

It can be hard to determine the difference between satire and parody in Gilbert and Sullivan's works because they are so closely linked. Despite this, a practical distinction is useful: satire generally addresses the behaviours and weaknesses of social existence, whereas parody focuses its critique on artistic or literary works and their aesthetic or generic conventions. The operas combine these two styles in a very creative way, making fun of social types as if they were ordinary theatrical characters and using the parody of specific works or genres as a way to make sharp social criticism. Their characters include both real people (sailors, civil servants, and aristocrats) and fictional figures (magical creatures and fairies). They frequently set up extraordinary events in otherwise normal settings[334].

Any knowledgeable fan will understand that these operas are concerned with the absurdities that social constructs like class, gender, and nationality create. They reveal, question, and subvert the presuppositions that underlie such social constructs, providing a kind of critique that reflects and contributes to the process of social transformation. Moreover, Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas highlight the inherently theatrical character of everyday social behaviour itself[335].

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, *English Musical Comedy* (1890-1924) and English Operetta (1917-1951), flourished[336].

[332] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[333] Ivi, pp. 91-92.
[334] *Ibidem*.
[335] *Ibidem*.
[336] Ben Mac Pherson, *Cultural Identity in British Musical Theatre. 1890-1939. Knowing One's Place*, London, Palgrave Macmillian UK, 2018, pp. 206-207; Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *British Musical Theatre since 1950*, London, Bloomsbury, 2016, pp. 14-15

3.2.2 The Rise of the Integrated Musical and the American Influence

The musical theatre's path became significantly influenced by the United States, culminating in what is known as the *Golden Age*[337].

The *Golden Age* is the period from the early 1940s to the mid-1960s, when the American musical really developed. This period began with Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943) and set the standards for the book musical's style and structure, where songs, dialogue, and dance all work together to deliver a single story.

Golden Age musicals had rich orchestrated scores, catchy songs, and stories that focused on linear storytelling, emotional clarity, and positive themes. These were all things that were compatible with the cultural and ideological atmosphere of mid-century America. *My Fair Lady* (1956), *West Side Story* (1957), and *The Sound of Music* (1959) are all examples of how the period focused on character-driven plots, psychological motivation, and the smooth fusion of music and drama.

The influence of the Golden Age goes beyond Broadway and so does the current music of those days in time. The concept musical of the 1970s, megamusical of the 1980s and modern jukebox musical are in essence defined by the aesthetic values established then. The Golden Age is important to recognise how musical theatre evolved into an art form and a culture. The maturity of the American musical was largely a result of American artists, audiences and society[338]. Broadway itself is understood as an ever-adapting commercial entertainment form, constantly shaped by its shifting social, cultural, political and economic environment[339].

The success of the American integrated musical, such as *Oklahoma!* (1943), constituted an *American Invasion* in the UK, challenging British musical identity and domestic productions[340].

By 1950, Britain had become a profoundly impoverished nation. Having faced Germany in 1940, the country had, against extraordinary odds, endured the devastation of the Blitz and secured, with Allied support, an extraordinary victory over Nazi Germany in the Second World War. This military success was accompanied by what seemed a big economic collapse: six years of war had drained the nation's financial resources, leaving

[337] William A. Everett, Paul R. Laird, *op. cit.*, p. 270.
[338] *Ibidem*.
[339] Paul R. Laird, "A Critical Companion to the American Stage Musical", *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 40-1 (2020), pp. 115-116.
[340] William A. Everett, Paul R. Laird, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137; Ben Mac Pherson, *op. cit.*, p. 6; Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-244.

Britain not only effectively bankrupt but also forced to demolish the vast Empire it had built, the most extensive since ancient Rome. The British people had to deal with the fact that their country was no longer the most powerful in the world in the 20th century, and this, destabilised long-standing attitudes of confidence and cultural superiority that had reinforced the State since the mid-eighteenth century. Rationing of food and non-essential goods, originally imposed during the war, remained in place until 1954. In many ways, Britain had entered an era of austerity in 1939 unlike anything it had previously experienced. It is predictable that popular culture reflected this change in circumstances. The American male dancers were healthy and powerful, whereas British performers were seen as delicate or even effeminate. The physical differences between the men and women of Britain were not just symbolic; the average height of the men and women in Britain was smaller than that of their American counterparts, mainly because of nutritional limitations.

Even though several British musicals had very long runs in the West End, which is London's main commercial theatre area and which is generally considered to be the British equivalent of New York City's Broadway, they had difficulty competing with the artistic ambitions and production values of contemporary American musical theatre. British theatre people had difficulty creating a product that would compete with this new American blockbuster style. Instead, they continued to use the old forms of operetta and musical comedy from before the war.[341].

Although British popular culture readily embraced American ragtime, jazz, and swing as defining sounds of the twentieth century, interwar British musical theatre composers, such as Vivian Ellis, Ivor Novello, Noël Coward, and Noël Gay, continued to favour a nostalgic *Edwardian idiom*, lightly coloured by ragtime and swing[342]. This Edwardian musical idiom can be broadly characterised by:

- **A melodic and refined style**, rooted in pre-war operetta and light musical comedy.
- **Graceful orchestration and harmonically straightforward writing**, prioritising lyrical clarity over rhythmic innovation.
- **A romantic and genteel tone**, reflecting the theatrical aesthetics of the early twentieth century.

[341] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-8.
[342] Ivi, p. 13.

- **Influences from composers such as Franz Lehár and Edward German**, whose works shaped British musical taste prior to the 1920s.
- **A sharp contrast with the syncopation and modernity of American jazz**, which would not be fully embraced by British composers until the late 1950s.

Because of this stylistic conservatism, the modern musical language associated with George Gershwin, though appreciated by West End audiences attending imported Broadway productions, never became part of Britain's own theatrical vocabulary. Novello and Coward, whose musical preferences had been shaped before the end of the First World War, drew widely on the established traditions of operetta and musical comedy[343]. In this context, Sandy Wilson's work represented a deliberate return to the ragtime-inflected style of pre-Gershwin musical comedy, recalling the repertoire of Jerome Kern, Vincent Youmans, and DeSylva, Brown, and Henderson, rather than the jazz-oriented idioms of Gershwin, Arlen, or Cole Porter, or the big-band aesthetic favoured by Richard Rodgers[344].

Post-war cultural values did not remain trapped within the conformism of the 1950s; rather, they emerged in popular entertainment through the rise of British jazz and blues and through the first visible expressions of youth culture, such as the spread of rock 'n' roll. The arrival of rock 'n' roll in Britain, signalled by the 1956 release of *Rock Around the Clock*, coincided with the beginnings of a major theatrical renewal. American culture increasingly dominated mass entertainment, while British literature and theatre emphasised national issues, generating a creative fire in poetry and fiction [345].

For the first time, actors were able to show their working-class identities on stage without hiding them behind Received Pronunciation (RP), the accent that educated upper-middle-class people usually utilise. As increasingly new actors and playwrights came from working-class or regional backgrounds, British theatre began to show a much wider range of social backgrounds. After 1956, actors like Albert Finney, Tom Courtenay, Rita Tushingham, Barbara Windsor, Sean Connery, and Michael Caine quickly became famous. Many of them went on to become international movie stars[346].

[343] *Ibidem*.
[344] Ivi, pp. 13-15.
[345] Ivi, pp. 28-29.
[346] *Ibidem*.

Since the 1980s, the *family musical* has become a distinctive feature of West End theatre. From 1981 onwards, several productions achieved considerable success, including *Cats* (1981), *Starlight Express* (1984), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (2002), *Mary Poppins* (2004), *Matilda* (2011), *The Wizard of Oz* (2011), and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2013). Unlike children's theatre, the concept of the family musical derives from the long-standing British tradition of the Christmas pantomime, in which adults and children are entertained simultaneously through different layers of humour and meaning, and both participate in the familiar conventions of lively interaction between stage and audience.[347].

3.2.3 Technological Shifts: Scenography, Sound and the Megamusical

As community and fringe theatres began to present a wider range of musical styles, the West End remained mostly a Western musical environment, slowly changing as popular music evolved. Jazz, blues, and ragtime came first. Then, in the 1950s, rock and roll came along, and its loud sound became a sign of young people. Each new genre, rock, soul, punk, hip-hop, was adopted by specific generations or communities, and its meanings evolved as styles moved from innovation to familiarity[348]. Composers rely on these genres of music to convey time, place, and character, but these relationships depend heavily on the culture in question. Because of this, traditional musical theatre generally uses new styles only after they are widely understood. Technological developments such as microphones and amplification also reshaped vocal performance and enabled genres such as rock, soul, and, later, rap, which initially appealed to younger audiences[349].

Despite these changes, musical theatre continues to speak through contemporary popular idioms, drawing on features of pop music, concise melodies, clear harmonic movement, repetitive rhythms, and lyrics easy to remember, to create accessible and culturally resonant sound worlds[350].

A crucial chronological development was the advent of the *megamusical* in the 1980s[351]. Although the term has become widespread, it remains problematic: originally coined by American journalists during the so-called "British invasion" of Broadway, it

[347] Ivi, pp. 68-69.
[348] Ivi, pp. 115-120.
[349] *Ibidem*.
[350] *Ibidem*.
[351] William A. Everett, Paul R. Laird, *op. cit.*, p. 235; Grace Barnes, *National Identity and the British Musical. From Blood Brothers to Cinderella*, London, Methuen Drama, 2022, p. 7.

reflects a distinctly US-centric perspective and does not necessarily capture the diversity or intentions of the works it describes. Moreover, many of the broad features assigned to the category, such as scale, spectacle, and epic subject matter, can be found equally in earlier American classics, which complicates its usefulness as a precise genre label[352]. Megamusicals are defined by their creation, internationalisation, and massive impact as a genre. Despite its limitations, the term is useful for describing a set of large-scale, visually magnificent productions whose creation, internationalisation, and global impact marked a significant shift in musical theatre. These shows relied on intensive commercial marketing and a Fordist model of standardised replication, enabling identical versions to be staged across the globe and thus maximising their audience reach. This era also marked a shift towards technologically driven spectacle[353].

- **Staging and Scenography**: Megamusicals placed heavy emphasis on large-scale production, often leading to spectacular set designs. This tradition, sometimes described as "humming the sets" [354], uses scenography as a primary selling point. Notable examples of elaborate staging techniques include the use of lasers, dazzling light shows, and high-tech scenic elements.
- **Sound and Microphones**: The rise of the megamusical coincided with the adoption of sophisticated theatrical sound techniques[355]. The shift towards the rock musical demanded advanced sound technology, specifically microphones, to amplify the musical style. Many British megamusicals, such as *Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Cats*, which debuted in the West End, became global successes through this large-scale, technologically sophisticated approach[356].

At the same time, the American tendency to label these works as "megamusicals", while British critics simply called them *musicals*, raises questions about the term's cultural assumptions and its relevance beyond its original US context[357].

[352] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142.
[353] Grace Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
[354] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *op. cit.*, p. 411.
[355] Laura MacDonald, Ryan Donovan, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
[356] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
[357] Ivi, pp. 141-142.

For the sake of clarity, in this thesis, the term "musical number" will be used to refer to songs. A musical number is a song, often combined with dance or visual elements, that forms part of a larger work such as a musical, a film, or a television programme. Musical numbers can express the main themes of the show, help develop the plot, or introduce characters.

3.3 Typologies of Musical Theatre

The popular theatrical forms of the Victorian era, such as *music hall*, *burlesque*, and especially *pantomime*, provide an important background for understanding some developments in twentieth-century musical theatre[358]. These forms can be defined as follows:

- **Music hall**: a variety entertainment format that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, featuring a sequence of unrelated acts, including singers, comedians, dancers, speciality performers, and comic sketches, presented in a lively, informal environment where audience interaction and socialising were integral to the experience.
- **Burlesque**: a theatrical genre that parodied well-known literary, operatic, or dramatic works through exaggerated comedy, wordplay, musical numbers, and satirical imitation, often combining humorous irreverence with elements of spectacle.
- **Pantomime**: a uniquely British form of musical theatre that adapts familiar fairy tales or legends into productions combining song, dance, physical comedy, visual spectacle, audience participation, and stock characters, including cross-dressed performers, to gestures.

Although fundamentally a British genre, *pantomime* has been exported to parts of the former Empire, including Jamaica[359]. Contemporary pantomime continues to evolve, yet its underlying structure remains largely rooted in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century tradition. It invites audiences to take part in the performance, though within clearly established conventions, and typically features comic cross-dressing: men

[358] Ivi, p. 84.
[359] *Ibidem*.

performing exaggerated older female roles (the Dame) and women traditionally playing young male heroes (the principal boy), a role now often taken by a man and sometimes merged with a clowning comic character. Because pantomime remains one of the most widely attended theatrical forms in the UK, its characters, patterns, and interactive routines have become a shared cultural vocabulary. This has influenced the style, structure, and characterisation of other works within British musical theatre[360].

The key subgenres of British musical theatre over the past five decades can be broadly grouped into six principal formats, which frequently overlap or combine with one another:

- **Concept recordings** - *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1970), *Evita* (1976).
- **Sung-through musicals** - *Cats* (1981).
- **Stage adaptations of novels and other literary sources** - *Matilda* (2011), *Les Misérables* (1985), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986).
- **Original stories** – *Blondel* (1983), *Chess* (1984), *The Beautiful Game* (2000), *Love Never Dies* (2010).
- **Jukebox musicals**, which draw on pre-existing popular songs - *Mamma Mia!* (1999).
- **Stage adaptations of films** - *Mary Poppins* (2004), *Billy Elliot* (2005)[361].

These six formats capture the dominant narrative and structural tendencies of British musical theatre since the 1970s, while also allowing for hybrid forms that combine elements from more than one category[362]. Because these formats often overlap, musical theatre can also be understood through broader categories that operate across both stage and screen productions:

- **Book Musical**: The Traditional form built around a linear narrative in which songs and dances emerge organically in the plot (*Oklahoma*, *My Fair Lady*)[363]. It is important to note that *book musical* refers to a structural model, not the source material. It explains "how" the story is constructed and how it is integrated with

[360] *Ibidem*.
[361] Ivi, pp. 142-143.
[362] *Ibidem*.
[363] Laura MacDonald, Ryan Donovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 359-370.

the music, whether the story is original, based on a movie, or taken from another medium.

- **Rock Musical**: Emerging primarily from the 1960s and closely associated with the aesthetics of rock music[364]. Early British examples include *Expresso Bongo* (1958), which satirised the British rock'n'roll scene, as well as concept albums considered rock operas, such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1972) and *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973)[365].
- **Jukebox Musical**: Works that construct new narratives using previously recorded popular songs, often centred on a specific artist or band[366]. An example includes the highly successful British production *Mamma Mia!* (1999), based on the music of ABBA. Jukebox musicals are sometimes criticised but can offer disruptive potential, particularly through nostalgia[367].
- **Stage Adaptations of Films**: A major source of commercially successful productions, including *Mary Poppins* (2004) and *Billy Elliot* (2005)[368].
- **Film Musicals**: A category with its own history and theoretical frameworks[369]. Within this field, **Bollywood** constitutes a significant and influential tradition, defined by distinct musical, choreographic and visual aesthetics[370].

These overlapping formats and categories show how different British musical theatre is and how well it can absorb, adapt, and blend different musical, narrative, and intermedial traditions. The megamusical developed in the 1980s among a landscape of hybridisation and diversification, not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a consequence of a rapidly transforming theatrical ecology increasingly characterised by globalisation, spectacle, and novel modes of production and consumption. In this context, the megamusical can be characterised by a set of features that reflect industrial, cultural, and technological shifts in late-twentieth-century musical theatre:

[364] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *op. cit.*, p. 28; Joe Deer, Rocco Dal Vera, *Acting in Musical Theatre. A Comprehensive Course*, London, Routledge, 2008, p. 350.
[365] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11; p. 221; p. 146.
[366] Ivi, p. 195.
[367] Ivi, p. 197.
[368] Ivi, p. 160;
[369] William A. Everett, *The Musical. A Research and Information Guide*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 65.
[370] Ivi, p. 75.

- **Large-scale production values**, with scenography, lighting, and technical effects functioning as central elements of spectacle.
- **Advanced sound technologies**, including extensive amplification, which profoundly shape vocal performance and musical aesthetics.
- **A standardised and internationally replicable production model**, enabling identical versions of the same show to be staged across global markets.
- **Narratives oriented toward emotional immediacy and broad accessibility**, often favouring universal themes over locally specific concerns.
- **Intensive commercial marketing and branding**, positioning these works as global cultural commodities.
- **Continuities with other subgenres**, indicating that the megamusical is not a separate genre, but rather a trend in modern musical theatre that is growing in popularity and technology. Considered collectively, these characteristics position the megamusical as a defining expression of the industrial and aesthetic shifts that have reshaped British musical theatre since the late twentieth century.

3.3.1 Conceptual Overlaps and Multi-Level Categorisation in Musical Theatre

These categories operate on different analytical levels, narrative structure, musical language, source material, and medium, so they are not mutually exclusive. A single production may therefore belong to more than one category, reflecting the inherently hybrid nature of musical theatre.

Musical theatre scholarship typically presents these categories not as a rigid taxonomy but as a pragmatic mapping of functions. Rather than defining mutually exclusive genres, scholars use these labels to illustrate the principal ways in which musicals can be organised, produced, and received. The aim is not to establish "pure" or discrete groups, but to highlight the range of modalities through which musicals can be understood:

- **Narrative models** (e.g., *book musicals*)
- **Musical styles** (e.g., *rock musicals*)
- **Industrial** or **economic models** (e.g., *jukebox musicals*)
- **Narrative sources** (e.g., *stage adaptations*)
- **Media forms** (e.g., *film musicals*)

This is, therefore, a functional classification, not a fixed genre hierarchy. Because musical theatre is **hybrid**, its categories inevitably overlap. As scholars frequently observe, "musical theatre refuses absolute categorisation"[371]. Musicals may belong to multiple categories simultaneously because each label answers a different analytical question. To sum them up, as they were listed and explained above:

- **Book Musical**: How is the story constructed? (dramaturgical model)
- **Rock Musical**: What musical language does it employ?
- **Jukebox Musical**: From which repertoire do the songs originate?
- **Stage Adaptation of a Film**: What is the narrative source?
- **Film Musical**: Which medium shapes its form?

These categories are therefore *multidimensional* rather than hierarchical.

These overlapping logics ultimately reflect four distinct but interconnected analytical levels:

1. **Structural categories**: How the musical is built (book musical, sung-through musical, rock musical)
2. **Source-based categories**: Where the story originates (stage adaptation of a film or novel)
3. **Music-repertoire categories**: What material the score uses (jukebox musical)
4. **Media categories**: The artistic medium involved (film musical)

Because these categories describe different dimensions of analysis, they naturally overlap. Their coexistence is not contradictory; rather, it reflects the fundamental hybridity of the musical as a form.

[371] Philip Hider, Deborah Lee, "A Polyphony of Characteristics. An Analysis of the Categorisation of Music's Subgenres", *Journal of Information Science*, 0-0 (2023), pp. 1-17; Viktor Levchenko, Nina I. Kovalova, "The Boundaries of Funniness and the Dilution of Audience Identity in the Musical-Dramatic Art", *Galactica Media. Journal of Media Studies*, 3 (2021), pp. 61-82.

3.3.2 Multiple Categorisations Across the Musicals Under Study

There are several musicals that may be used to demonstrate the ways in which a single musical may function on several levels of categorisation at once. Instead of discussing individual musicals, the musicals that are discussed in what follows are intended to be presented as case studies, which will be discussed in detail in the chapters that follow.

The musicals which are discussed have been chosen not only because they represent intersecting models of categorisation, but also because they represent three different aesthetic/dramaturgical models in musical theatre[372]:

- ***My Fair Lady*** (1956)
  Book Musical + Stage Adaptation of a Play
    - integrates songs and narrative seamlessly
    - adapted from George Bernard Shaw's ***Pygmalion***

  My Fair Lady exemplifies the classical integrated book musical of the Golden Age, while at the same time constitutes a stage adaptation of a pre-existing text.
- ***Once*** (2011)
  Stage Adaptation of a Film + Book Musical
    - adapted from the 2007 film
    - uses diegetic folk music within an integrated narrative

  Once reflects a more *naturalistic* and *minimalist model*, combining adaptation from film with an actor-musician aesthetic and the use of diegetic music within the story.
- ***Six*** (2017)
  Concept Musical + Pop-Based Musical Style + Hybrid Stage Form
    - structured as a pop concert
    - non-linear, character-driven narrative
    - musically grounded in contemporary chart idioms

[372] The classifications provided here for *My Fair Lady*, *Once*, and *Six* derive from my own analytical interpretation of these works. They are not taken from a single external source but result from the comparative examination of narrative structure, musical language, dramaturgical construction and production history carried out throughout this research.

Six represents a *contemporary postmodern* and *hybrid form*, merging elements of the concept musical with pop-concert structures and non-linear character-driven storytelling.

These examples underline that musical theatre does not operate within fixed categorisation. A musical also provides a fertile ground for examining how language, identity, and power intersect within contexts of cultural contact. Recognising these overlapping frameworks clarifies the ways in which musicals are:

- **conceived** (as narratives, albums, adaptations)
- **produced** (industrially, commercially, or experimentally)
- **adapted** (across media and formats)
- **distributed** (on stage, on screen, or globally through touring productions).

For this reason, these three different musicals offer an ideal framework for the analysis developed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, where issues of linguistic variation, performative voice, and singable translation will be examined in relation to their specific aesthetic (musical, performative, and vocal) and cultural configurations. While all the musical numbers in each work will be taken into account in order to establish the linguistic, dramaturgical, and translational profile of the musical, the most detailed analytical focus will be reserved for one selected song from each case study. These three songs will serve as the core corpus for an in-depth examination of singable translation, including both the production of new singable translations and a close critical analysis of the strategies, constraints, and compromises involved in adapting lyrics for performance.

3.4 The British Tradition and Post-Colonial Musicals

The British musical tradition has long been defined by its interaction with the American model, particularly since World War II, simultaneously showcasing innovation and cultural specificity[373]. British musicals reflect changes in post-war society, addressing

[373] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11; pp. 33-43; Ethan Mordden, *Anything Goes. A History of American Musical Theatre*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 57; William A. Everett, Paul R. Laird, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

themes such as working-class culture (*Blood Brothers*) and political theatre (*Oh What a Lovely War*)[374].

While the contemporary British musical has taken inspiration from Broadway, it has developed in close dialogue with the United Kingdom's own theatrical heritage, social conventions, and historical trajectory. Consequently, any study of this tradition inevitably intersects with broader debates on **interculturalism**, **multiculturalism**, **social class**, **gender**, and **sexuality** issues that frame and contextualise the analysis of individual works. One of the most significant transformations in the UK after the Second World War, alongside the end of the British Empire (1945-67) and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Nations (1949), has been the large-scale migration of people from former colonies to Britain. This movement has brought a wide diversity of cultural influences to British musical theatre. The nation's multicultural policies, at least in principle, have created an environment that values cultural distinctiveness and encourages the expression of varied identities, rather than promoting assimilation into a uniform notion of "Britishness"[375].

Importantly, this configuration of cultural hybridity is rooted in Britain's singular colonial past. Within this framework, two key aspects are particularly relevant:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity**. The British stage has reflected increasing multiculturalism since 1950[376]. Furthermore, there are discussions on the need for increased diversity and addressing race within musical theatre, often contrasted with the immigrant influence that shaped the American scene[377].
- **Language and Linguistic Variety in the UK**. Linguistic differences and class distinctions are relevant in British musical theatre. For instance, "socialist theatre"[378] often used working-class culture and realistic settings to express political critiques. The language and dialect of characters are central to British narratives of class, notably explored in musicals like *My Fair Lady* (discussed below), which is explicitly concerned with phonetic transformation[379].

[374] Grace Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 7; p. 106; Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-428; Ivi, p. 463.
[375] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.
[376] Ivi, pp. 98-108.
[377] Grace Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.
[378] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-57.
[379] Aloysia Rousseau, "Where the Devil are My Slippers. My Fair Lady's Subversion of Pygmalion's Feminist Ending", *American Musicals. Stage and Screen*, ed. Martina, Anne, Vatain-Corfdir, Julie, Paris, Sorbonne Université Presses, 2019, pp. 111-129.

Influenced in part by British popular theatre traditions and responding to the demographic shifts produced by post-war immigration, new companies and performance practices began to emerge outside the mainstream musical theatre sector. From the 1970s onwards, small touring groups, community theatres, and companies rooted in minority ethnic communities created works that reflected the lived experiences of their audiences[380].

Black and Asian theatre often encouraged a more interactive relationship between performers and spectators than was typical of mainstream white theatre, drawing on African and Asian performance traditions in which movement, music, and visual imagery convey meaning alongside verbal text. These companies employ distinct systems of signification connected to their communities' cultural and social codes. This frequently includes non-standard forms of English and minority ethnic languages, leading to what Jatinder Verma has termed "Binglish"[381].

Key concepts referenced in this context include:

- **Binglish**. A hybrid linguistic practice combining elements of English with structures, rhythms, or lexical items drawn from British minority ethnic languages, used both expressively and symbolically in performance.
- **Carnival**. A performance tradition, particularly strong within Caribbean communities, blending music, dance, masquerade, and public festivity; it has significantly shaped black British theatrical aesthetics.
- **Fringe theatre**. The sector of small-scale, experimental, often politically or socially engaged theatre operating outside the commercial mainstream, providing a crucial platform for minority ethnic artists in the late twentieth century.

Although African and Caribbean performers had a long presence on British stages, it was only with the establishment of *Dark and Light* in 1969, later reorganised as the Black Theatre of Brixton, and subsequently giving rise to the Black Theatre Co-operative and the Black Theatre Forum, that black writers and performers began to move from the fringe into the theatrical mainstream. Early productions frequently included adaptations of

[380] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99.
[381] *Ibidem*.

Jamaican pantomime and Carnival, signalling a growing incorporation of diasporic performance traditions into British theatre[382].

By the mid- to late 1970s, South Asian theatre companies in the UK had begun to stage aspects of their cultural heritage, drawing on the visual exuberance of Bollywood cinema and on the anti-realist performance traditions of the Indian subcontinent[383]. Key elements of these traditions include:

- **Bollywood aesthetics**. A blend of melodrama, spectacle, song-and-dance sequences, and vibrant visual design.
- **Anti-realist traditions**: non-naturalistic staging, stylised gesture, and symbolic performance modes.
- **Melodic ornamentation**. Intricate, partially improvised melodic lines that shape the timbre and expressive quality of South Asian music.

The term "Bollywood" is also questionable because it reduces the cinematic traditions of the Indian subcontinent to a single category, a phenomenon also evident in the use of "Asian" in Britain, which often is used as a homogenising term for specific national, linguistic, religious, and migratory identities. "Asian" in Britain is often taken to refer to "Indian" in performance-related matters, a result of colonial legacies. These labels also require critical examination to understand how they have been absorbed into British cultural narratives, and how the very notion of "Britishness" is compelled to negotiate and redefine its boundaries in response[384].

While black music became highly influential in mainstream British charts, partly due to the global reach of African American artists, Asian music and language remained largely outside the mainstream for a long time. One factor is the contrast between popular music in Caribbean, African American, British, and American contexts, which is based on strong rhythmic patterns and prominent bass lines, and the more ornamented melodic structures typical of South Asian musical forms. This contrast has affected the audibility and cultural circulation of South Asian musical theatre within Western contexts[385].

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[382] *Ibidem*.
[383] Ivi, pp. 101-102.
[384] Jerri Daboo, *Staging British South Asian Culture. Bollywood and Bhangra in British Theatre*, New York, Routledge, 2018, p. 5.
[385] *Ibidem*.

For many years, Bollywood was also regarded as a derivative or kitsch counterpart to Hollywood musical cinema, rather than recognised as a popular form with its own narrative, musical, and choreographic conventions. These musical and cultural dynamics contributed to the earlier visibility of British African and Caribbean performers and companies compared with their South Asian equivalents[386].

In the mid-1970s, several South Asian theatre companies in the UK initially performed in a range of South Asian languages, as noted in Naseem Khan's 1976 report for the Arts Council and the Commission for Racial Equality. Soon afterwards, new companies, particularly in London, began to emerge, enabling minority communities to produce work that spoke directly to their own experiences. Because many artists grew up between British and diasporic cultural contexts, these early productions naturally incorporated influences from multiple traditions[387].

The first British Asian theatre company, Tara Arts, was founded in 1977 by Jatinder Verma in response to the racially motivated murder of a Sikh teenager in Southall in June 1976. By the early 1980s the company had become professional, supported by bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Greater London Arts Association (GLAA), and the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB), and soon secured a permanent venue. The group initially described itself as an "Asian community theatre" [388] producing original English-language plays about contemporary Asian life in Britain.
A defining feature of these early works was the move away from naturalism toward more expressive forms. Key elements included:

- **Stylisation**. The use of symbolic gesture, intensified performance modes, and non-naturalistic staging.
- **Music and dance**. Central components shaping rhythm, atmosphere, and cultural identity on stage.
- **Multilingual and culturally hybrid influence**. The blending of British and South Asian performance traditions in both form and content.

While the sources dedicate extensive attention to the relationship between the US and the UK, the global musical phenomenon is explored through a transnational lens, often

[386] *Ibidem*.
[387] Ivi, pp. 102-103.
[388] *Ibidem*.

focusing on the global mobility and licensing of shows[389]. The sources recognise that the musical should be viewed beyond its Anglophone origins to include multiple cultures and ethnicities[390].

As seen above, the influence of British colonialism and the subsequent dismantling of the Empire affected British cultural narratives and identities[391]. The musical form is shown adapting across international settings, particularly through megamusicals, which are widely toured[392]. The sources acknowledge the history of theatre in Anglophone regions outside England, noting references such as Irish drama, Scottish connections, and discussions of theatre in the Philippines (a Spanish and American colonial context) and generalised African theatre and performance studies[393].

However, the sources do not provide specific details regarding major musical productions or linguistic variety analysis concerning the national musical output of Canada, New Zealand or Ireland (other than the general context of British and Irish drama studies) or Africa (excluding general mentions of performance studies) that parallel the detailed discussion of UK or US works. The primary exception is the Irish setting for *Once***.**

3.5 Preliminary Overview of the Case Studies

In this section, the three case studies that are the basis of this research will be introduced. These case studies are *My Fair Lady*, *Once*, and *Six: The Musical*, which have been selected not only for their representation of different kinds of musical theatre, but also for their importance to the study of linguistic and cultural interaction. These musicals will be deeply examined for their vocality, linguistic variation, and singable translation in the next three chapters.

[389] Laura MacDonald, Ryan Donovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-24.
[390] Ivi, pp. 1-2.
[391] Robert Gordon, Olaf Jubin, Millie Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 8; p. 29; Ben Mac Pherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-125.
[392] Grace Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-156; pp. 215-217.
[393] Helen Freshwater, "Consuming Authenticities. Billy Elliot the Musical and the Performing Child", *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 36-2 (2012), pp. 154-173.

3.5.1 My Fair Lady

My Fair Lady (1956) is one of the most successful shows mentioned in the sources, recognised for its professionalism, memorable score, and influence. It holds a crucial place in the history of musical theatre and cinema[394].

- **Source Material and Adaptation**. The musical is an adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (1912)[395]. The score was composed by Frederick Loewe with lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner[396].
- **Themes of Language and Class**. *My Fair Lady* is focused on *language*, *phonetics*, and *social identity*. The plot rotates around Henry Higgins attempting to transform the Cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle into a lady by refining her speech[397]. This transformation speaks directly to the British class system and to the profound cultural significance of linguistic variety, in which dialect marks social standing.

3.5.2 Once

Once (2007 film; 2011 stage musical) is a contemporary Irish musical that stands out in the global musical-theatre landscape for its hybrid narrative mode, intimate aesthetic, and actor-musician performance style. Unlike traditional book musicals, *Once* employs a naturalistic approach in which music emerges organically from the characters' everyday lives.

- **Source Material and Adaptation.** The stage musical is based on John Carney's 2007 independent film, with songs written by Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová. The theatrical adaptation preserves the film's understated emotional atmosphere while expanding the score for ensemble participation and narrative cohesion. The actor-musician format, in which performers play instruments live onstage, creates a boundary between *diegetic* and *non-diegetic* music, redefining the relationships among character, performer, and musical expression. It is important to note that

[394] Ethan Mordden, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-175; p. 194; Adrian, *Must Close Saturday. The Decline and Fall of the British Musical Flop*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2017, p. 17; Ivi, pp. 122-135; Ivi, p. 160; Ivi, pp. 188-191; Ivi, p. 207.
[395] Aloysia Rousseau, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-129.
[396] Michael Buchler, Gregory John Decker, *Here for the Hearing. Analysing the Music in Musical Theatre*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2023, pp. 116-118.
[397] Aloysia Rousseau, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-129.

diegetic music is intended to be performed on stage, while *non-diegetic* music is intended to be heard only by the audience.

- **Themes of Migration, Identity, and Emotional Restraint.** *Once* explores themes of displacement, particularly as a condition of cultural and emotional dislocation associated with migration, artistic collaboration, and emotional ambivalence through the connection between a Dublin street musician and a Czech immigrant. The musical foregrounds the productive tension between personal desire and ethical responsibility, particularly in its soft description of the Girl's migrant identity and her attempt to balance between cultural belonging and individual aspiration. Issues of language, communication, and unspoken emotion play a central role, aligning the work with broader questions of transnational identity in twenty-first-century musical theatre.
- **Aesthetic Innovation.** The score blends folk, rock, and acoustic idioms to construct an atmosphere of fragility and sincerity. Staging conventions emphasise community over spectacle, with the ensemble visible onstage throughout, reinforcing the show's dramaturgy of shared creativity. *Once* exemplifies a minimalist yet emotionally resonant alternative to the high-production-value model often associated with Anglo-American musical theatre.

3.5.3 Six: The Musical

Six: The Musical (2017) is a recent British success that has achieved significant global recognition, having transitioned from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival to Broadway[398].

- **Content and Style**. *Six* is a biographical musical that focuses on the six wives of Henry VIII, presenting their "herstory" [399] through a modern, progressive feminist lens. It is highly notable for its exploration of how women are represented in musical theatre. The musical's style incorporates pop music aesthetics[400]. *Six* originated as a university project created by Cambridge undergraduates Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss for the University Musical Society. Moss has described the show as "feminist". British critics have insisted on reading *Six* as a step forward both for women onstage and for the British musical more broadly. This

[398] Grace Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116; p. 84.
[399] Leah Everquill, "Divorced, Beheaded, Defied. Solidarity in Individual and Collective Herstories in Six the Musical", *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 44-1 (2024), pp. 165-173.
[400] Grace Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116; p. 84; Leah Everquill, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-173.

celebratory reception reflects a desire among critics to appear aligned with current political sensibilities; few wish to be the dissenting voice questioning the integrity of an all-female musical. *Six* has been propelled to extraordinary success not because it is, despite what some commentators claim, the "British *Hamilton*," [401] but because it fulfils a political function at a moment when *Inclusion* and *Diversity* operate as key terms within the British theatrical establishment. With nine women onstage and Lucy Moss credited as co-writer and co-director, the show can be presented as evidence of gender equity and inclusive industry practices, although this narrative bears little resemblance to reality. *Six* moves the attention from a far more urgent concern: the continued exclusion of women from British musical theatre and the ongoing absence of an authentically female creative voice[402].

- **Theatrical Devices and Feminism**. The production uses various theatrical strategies, including double wordplay, satire, and a strong sense of camp, characterised by exaggerated, theatrical, and ironic performance[403]. It successfully gives agency to women. Its global triumph confirms its status as a "glorious musical meeting"[404].

3.6 The Interplay of Words, Music and Vocal Technique

Art, in all its forms, aspires to communicate an experience. Its effectiveness does not depend on specialist knowledge but on the capacity of both creator and audience to engage in an act of shared sensitivity. Artistic expression requires something meaningful to communicate, and its success lies in its ability to recreate the vitality of human life. When this occurs, art becomes a bridge: it carries emotional and experiential "news" from one world to another[405].

The popular song is a particularly direct mode of communication. It condenses fragments of life into accessible narratives, allowing listeners to recognise aspects of their own emotions within the stories it conveys. Because human beings share fundamental emotional patterns, songs often function as vehicles for collective identification. When a

[401] Grace Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116; p. 84.
[402] *Ibidem*.
[403] Leah Everquill, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
[404] Grace Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116; p. 84.
[405] Alfredo Rapetti Mogol (Cheope), Giuseppe Anastasi, *Scrivere una Canzone*, Bologna, Zanichelli Editore spa, 2012, pp. 15-23.

songwriter captures a sensation with clarity, listeners relive that sensation, even if they do not share the creator's linguistic or cultural background.

For this reason, translating, adapting, or subtitling a song, especially when the target version must preserve both semantic content and *singability*, presents significant challenges. Linguistic, metrical, cultural, and social constraints inevitably complicate the process, yet these complexities also make the work intellectually stimulating and artistically rich[406]. Effective artistic communication requires sincerity and the courage to express one's ideas without self-censorship. Different expressive forms impose different constraints, clarity, rhyme, metre, yet these constraints are also opportunities. They shape artistic intention, requiring authors to balance emotional immediacy with structural discipline[407].

3.6.1 The Pop Song as Form: Structure, Function and Aesthetic Logic

Although often perceived as simple, the pop song is a highly structured form governed by recognisable conventions. Its essential components include *duration*, *rhythm*, *harmony*, *melody*, and *lyrics*. These musical foundations share affinities with opera's *arias*.

The typical pop song alternates between *verse* and *chorus*, sometimes including transitional elements such as *bridge* and *special* sections.

- **Verses** establish the narrative or emotional background.
- **Chorus** delivers the central idea, often the *hook* or *title*.
- **Bridges** create tension and anticipation, leading back to the chorus.
- **Special** sections offer variation before the final refrain.

Additional elements such as *intro* and *outro* frame the song's architecture. Regardless of the specific configuration, the parts must form a coherent, fluid whole[408].

Writing song lyrics requires knowledge of *metre*, understood as the set of rules governing the length of *lines*, their grouping into *verses*, and the use of *rhyme*. Syllabification, stress patterns, and prosodic phenomena such as *sinalefe*, *dialefe*,

[406] *Ibidem*.
[407] Ivi, pp. 23-37.
[408] Ivi, pp. 81-87.

diphthongs, and *hiatuses* all influence how text aligns with melody, particularly in sung language, where vocalic combinations may merge or separate differently from spoken usage. In order to better understand how these elements function within sung language, it is useful to consider them individually:

- **Sinalefe** refers to the phonetic merging of two adjacent vowels belonging to different words into a single syllable in sung or poetic diction. In musical theatre, this process is frequently employed to preserve metrical regularity. For example, in *My Fair Lady*, phrases such as "I am" may be compressed in singing as "I-am", allowing them to function as a single rhythmic unit within the musical phrase.
- **Dialefe**, by contrast, involves the separation of adjacent vowels, producing two distinct syllables. In musical theatre, this may be used for emphasis or clarity, as when performers in *Six* emphasise sequences such as "the only one" by maintaining a clear boundary between the final vowel of "only" and the initial vowel of "one", rather than allowing them to merge.
- **Diphthongs** involve two vowels pronounced within a single syllable (e.g., *day*, *boy*), a feature frequently heard in *Once*, where folk-influenced vocal lines rely on English diphthongs as expressive colour.
- **Hiatus** arises when contiguous vowels are articulated separately. This can be observed in *Six*, for instance, in the line "the only one I've ever loved", where the final vowel of "only" and the initial vowel of "one" may be maintained as separate units in performance.

In vocal music these phenomena shape syllable count, prosody, and the alignment between text and melody, especially in works where rhythmic delivery and linguistic nuance directly affect musical phrasing.

Verse length (e.g., an eleven-syllable line, an eight-syllable line) and *rhyme schemes* (alternate, couplets, enclosed, chained) affect textual flow and shape poetic-musical phrasing. These features, far from being purely literary, become functional components of musical expression.[409] When words are put into music, they are no longer just a language, but also part of the music itself. As Susanne K. Langer[410] argues, once textual

[409] Ivi, pp. 37-40.
[410] Bruno Gallotta, *Manuale di Poesia e Musica. Il Testo Poetico e il Suo Rapporto Con la Musica. Analisi, Esercitazioi e Glossari*, Milano, Rugginenti Editore, 2007, pp. 25-40.

material is set to music, it becomes part of music's expressive system rather than literature's. Yet this transformation does not erase linguistic meaning. Instead, the text participates in a dual process: it becomes sound shaped by melody, rhythm, and phrasing, and it remains verbal communication that listeners decode alongside musical information.

The listener performs a simultaneous operation: perceiving the semantic content of the text while experiencing its integration within the musical structure.
Understanding vocal music requires attention to both linguistic and musical syntax. In spoken or written language, units such as *phrases*, *clauses,* and *periods* organise communication. Music exhibits analogous structures: *phrases*, *periods*, *sections*, and *patterns* articulate musical thought.

In the context of musical theatre, the concept of the *musical enunciation* becomes particularly relevant. An enunciation is not merely a syntactic unit but a communicative intention, a musical idea or elaboration thereof. Because musical theatre interlaces verbal and musical systems, textual segments (verses, syntagms, periods) interact with musical gestures (motifs, melodic lines, cadences), producing hybrid poetic-musical structures.
Melodic lines may align with or diverge from textual boundaries; repetition of words, shifts in melodic contour, and prosodic adjustments operate as rhetorical devices generated by the music itself. Identifying these textual- melodic relationships is essential for analysis, whether in traditional compositions or in contemporary musical theatre works where phrasing may be freer or more fragmented[411].

3.6.2 Integrating Technique and Expression in Musical-Theatre Singing

Training in musical-theatre singing requires a constant negotiation between technique and expression. The aim is not only to produce a healthy, sustainable sound but also to communicate meaning with clarity, emotional depth, and dramatic intention. Technical foundations, such as *posture*, *breathing*, *placement*, *register coordination* and a deep understanding of the *larynx* and of the multiple ways in which the individual laryngeal structures can be used, along with the ability to coordinate them effectively, form the physical base that allows the singer to work efficiently and consistently. These elements operate together. At the same time, expressive skills such as *phrasing*, *dynamics*, *rhythm*, and *emotions* shape the interpretative dimension of performance. These choices are guided by the "impression" the singer wishes to convey: an internal sense of character,

[411] *Ibidem*.

intention, and storytelling. Words, rhythm, and musicality therefore become expressive tools rather than isolated components[412].

The conceptual map included in this section illustrates how these skills interconnect. Rather than treating technique and artistry as separate domains, the map shows a web of reciprocal relationships, such as how musicianship depends on tuning, rhythm, dynamics and phrasing; how physical coordination supports vocal health; and how emotional expression emerges from the interaction between sound, language, and embodied gesture. Expert singing thus results from the integration of multiple layers of knowledge that reinforce one another over time.

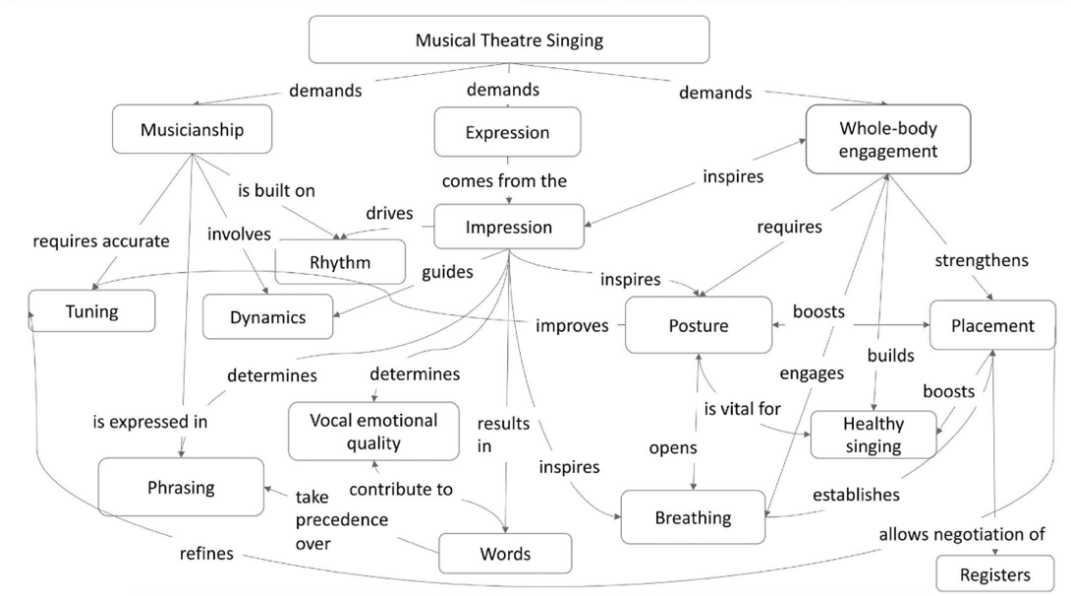


Figure 3.3. The Interplay of Musicianship, Expression and Physical Coordination in Musical Theatre Singing[413].

The discussion presented in this section is informed by the author's formal certification as an *Estill Master Trainer (EMT)*, which provides direct familiarity with the pedagogical and technical principles of *Estill Voice Training*®. This background supports, but does not determine, the analytical approach adopted here, which remains grounded in current research on vocal function and musical theatre singing.

Estill Voice Training® (EVT) offers a pedagogical framework grounded in the conscious control of individual anatomical structures involved in voice production. Developed by Jo Estill after decades of research in vocal physiology and acoustics, the

[412] Shaun Aquilina, *Musical Theatre for the Female Voice. The Sensation, Sound, and Science, of Singing*, New York, Routledge, 2022, pp. 1-4.
[413] Shaun Aquilina, *op. cit.*, pag. 3.

method deliberately separates vocal function from aesthetic expectations, asserting that all voice qualities are acceptable provided that vocal health is maintained.

This principle underpins EVT's inclusive philosophy, according to which every voice possesses inherent artistic potential. The training model operates across three interrelated domains:

- ***Craft***, which concerns the technical mastery of laryngeal and supralaryngeal structures.
- ***Artistry***, in which these technical skills are shaped into meaningful communicative choices.
- ***Performance Magic***, the experiential moment in which technique and artistic intention converge to create heightened performer–audience connection.

While the ultimate goal is expressive freedom, EVT emphasises that this freedom depends only on solid technical control and healthy coordination. For this reason, its pedagogy focuses on Craft, through the *Figures for Voice*™, as the foundation for developing artistry and performance[414].

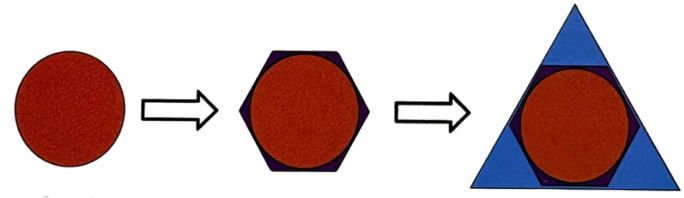


Figure 3.4. Domain of voice training[415].

[414] Kimberly Steinhauer, Mary McDonald Klimek, Jo Estill, *The Estill Voice Model. Theory and Translation*, Pittsburgh, Estill Voice International, 2017, pp. 2-30.
[415] Ivi, p. 27.

In the early 1980s, Jo Estill identified a clear divide between traditional vocal pedagogy and voice science. Pedagogical approaches prioritised breath control and imagined "placement," avoiding direct manipulation of the larynx, whereas scientific research focused on the behaviour of the vocal folds and vocal tract. Estill's work bridged these perspectives by proposing a model based on the conscious control of specific anatomical structures[416].

Drawing on *Source-Filter Theory*, Estill demonstrated that vocal quality results from the interaction of *breath*, *laryngeal vibration*, and *vocal-tract shaping*, all of which operate non-linearly: a change in one subsystem affects the others. In the Power-Source-Filter framework, *power* refers to *breath*: air from the lungs supplies the energy that sets the true vocal folds in motion. The *source* of the sound is produced by the *vibration of the true vocal folds* themselves. As air passes along their edges, variations in airflow and subglottal pressure make the elastic tissues open and close, generating a sound wave. On its own, this vibration would resemble a simple buzz; it becomes recognisably "voice" only after it is shaped by the resonances of the vocal tract. The *filter* consists of all the *spaces above the vocal folds*: the larynx, the pharynx, the mouth, and the nose. Each cavity contributes its own resonance, and any change in shape alters the acoustic characteristics of the sound. As the sound travels through the vocal tract, these resonances and formants reinforce or attenuate frequencies, shaping the distinctive quality of the voice as well as the vowels and consonants used for speech[417].

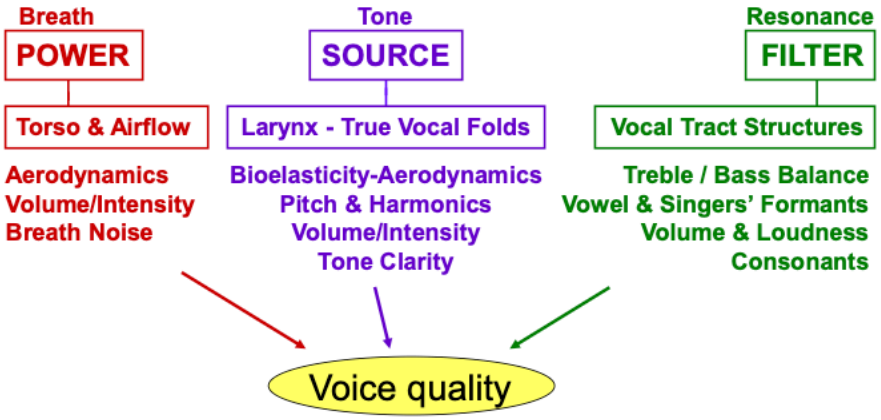


Figure 3.5. Estill's Model of the Contributions to Voice Quality[418].

[416] Ivi, pp. 24-26.
[417] Ivi, p. 35.
[418] Ivi, p. 25.

Because of this interdependence, Estill gradually abandoned the earlier Power-Source-Filter classification. In current Estill Voice Training, the Figures for Voice are no longer grouped into P-S-F categories but are named according to the anatomical structures they isolate and control (e.g., true vocal folds, false vocal folds, velum, tongue, aryepiglottic sphincter). This shift reflects the method's emphasis on functional specificity and scientifically grounded vocal autonomy.

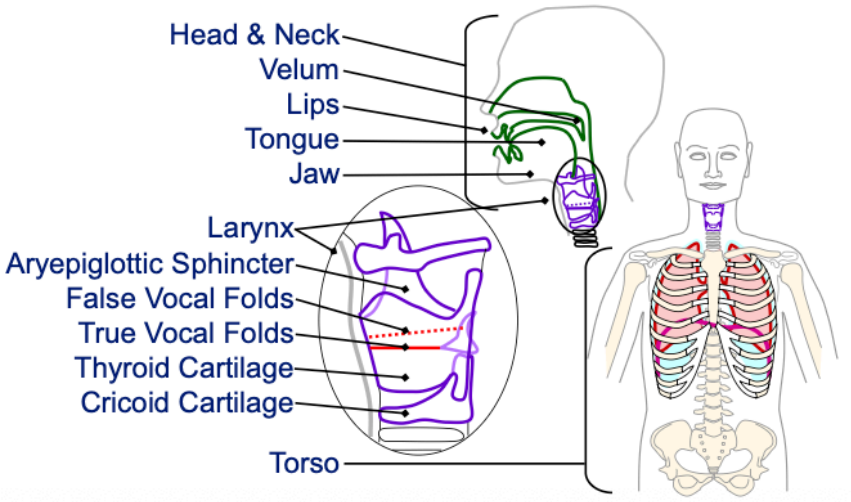


Figure 3.6. Structures Included in Estill Voice Training[419].

3.7 Conclusion: Global Dynamics of Musical Theatre and Performative Coherence

The relationship between British and American musical theatre is much like a sibling rivalry over a family inheritance. The European roots (Operetta, Ballad Opera) laid the foundation, but it was the American "sibling" (Broadway), that expanded and popularised it. The British "sibling" (West End) initially struggled after World War II, but later found its strength through technological innovation and large-scale production (the Megamusical). It is possible to affirm that global history of musical theatre involves the interaction between European traditions (opera, operetta, ballad opera) and the rise of the commercially dominant American Golden Age. The British tradition instead developed into comic opera (Gilbert and Sullivan) and operetta (Novello) and later drove the technological and commercial development of the megamusical (Lloyd Webber/Mackintosh). Through the megamusical, Britain exported some of the biggest

[419] Ivi, p. 26.

global hits, regaining a central role in the international market. This dynamic ensures that while the US sets stylistic trends, the UK remains essential.

The analysis of works like *My Fair Lady* highlights the cultural weight of language and class identity within the Anglophone world, while more recent musicals such as *Once* focus on themes of migration, linguistic and cultural contact, and emotional boundaries. At the same time, recent British productions like *Six* demonstrate how musical thatre is still evolving, by bringing in elements of pop culture and feminist stories, and reaching audiences far beyond the traditional West End stage.

Also, the discussion developed throughout this chapter demonstrates that musical-theatre performance emerges from the convergence of multiple communicative systems, verbal, musical, and physiological, each with its own structures, constraints, and expressive possibilities. Words gain new semantic and acoustic dimensions when shaped by melody; musical forms acquire narrative depth through linguistic rhythm and prosody; vocal technique provides the physical conditions through which both can be realised with clarity, emotional coherence, and artistic intention.

Contemporary pedagogical frameworks such as Estill Voice Training® further illuminate this interplay by revealing the anatomical specificity underpinning vocal choices and by recognising the non-linear interaction between breath, vocal-fold vibration, and vocal-tract shaping. The shift from earlier Power-Source-Filter categories to anatomically named Figures reinforces an understanding of vocal production as a dynamic coordination of structures rather than a hierarchy of subsystems.

Taken together, these perspectives highlight that expressive musical-theatre singing is neither a purely technical nor purely interpretative act, but the result of an integrated process in which physiology, sound, and language continually inform one another. The performer's task is therefore not merely to *execute* technique or *convey* meaning, but to negotiate their interdependence, transforming text into music, intention into sound, and craft into communication. Such a synthesis, together with the previous chapter, forms the conceptual foundation for the analytical work undertaken in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4 - My Fair Lady

4.1 Adapting *My Fair Lady*: Intersemiotic Transfer, Vocality, and Linguistic Performance across Media

Adaptations of stage musicals into films constitute one of the most interesting areas of research within musical theatre studies, media theory, and translation studies. For a long time, spoken drama and opera have been adapted into movie productions, but the twentieth-century integrated musical, which combines music, lyrics, spoken text, choreography, gesture, and visual spectacle, is particularly challenging to convert into other forms of media. In this genre, song is not ornamental but essential to narrative and emotional construction. Dance is not simply a decoration but crucial, and the singing voice operates as a central element of identity, responsibility and control. Any transformation of this multimodal ensemble into a different medium therefore entails not only technical adjustments but a profound reconfiguration of meaning.

Scholars such as Geoffrey Block have emphasised that the musical's hybrid semiotic structure magnifies the tensions inherent in adaptation: the synergy among music, text, and corporeal performance means that changes in one component inevitably reverberate across the whole[420]. This is particularly evident in *My Fair Lady* (1956), which is based on the idea that phonetics, social identity, and musical form all rely upon each other.
Since its *Broadway premiere* in 1956, *My Fair Lady* has been acknowledged, not only for its artistic coherence but also for its investigation of class, language and performativity. It is widely and repeatedly cited as one of the emblematic "Golden Age" musicals and as a paradigmatic case of a musical in which class, accent, and the politics of linguistic legitimacy are not mere background themes but the narrative engine; it is also noted for its exceptionally long original run of more than 2.000 performances on Broadway. The 1964 *film adaptation* directed by George Cukor, and released by Warner Bros, is frequently employed as an example of Broadway-to-Hollywood transfer; that is "faithful" in the sense that the score, scene structure and major musical numbers were kept to a degree that was not common for musicals of the time[421].

[420] See Geoffry Block, *Enchanted Evenings. The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 8-12.
[421] Dominic McHugh, *Loverly. The Life and Times of My Fair Lady*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 3-4.

Nevertheless, fidelity masks deep shift throughout the film, including changes in focus, visualisation of theatrical effects, a return to the vocal dubbing performance style, and the reinterpretation of linguistic identity.

According to Zabalbeascoa[422], translating humour in dubbed TV comedies requires dealing with changing priorities instead of trying to find exact correspondences. Translators have to deal with multiple limitations, such as cultural, linguistic, technical, and professional ones. They might need to change, adapt, or replace jokes in order to preserve comic effect.

For these reasons, *My Fair Lady* constitutes a perfect case study for the analysis of this work: intersemiotic translation, multimodality, the social importance of the voice and the representability of sociolects across media.

4.2 George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* as a Vehicle for Sociolinguistic Analysis: Social Critique through Theatre and its Musical Adaptation, *My Fair Lady*

George Bernard Shaw began his career by writing for newspapers and magazines as a critic of art, literature, music and drama. Born in Ireland, he moved to England as a teenager. This time in London shaped his views, especially observing the severe poverty throughout the city[423]. During the most active period of his career, from 1893 to 1939, he wrote forty-seven plays. Shaw is the only person to have received both the Nobel Prize for Literature (1925) and an Oscar (1939).

Shaw's deep commitment to social issues was reflected by his involvement in politics. He was shocked by the enormous disparities in wealth and poverty he noticed while walking around London, hence he contributed to creating the *Fabian Society*, a Socialist political group that later formed the basis for Britain's Labour Party. Shaw's works often reflect his intellectual, political, economic, or philosophical ideas.

This strong interest in language, phonetics, and systems of linguistic classification also underlies Shaw's sustained engagement with politics and society. Shaw considered speech not as a means of communication, but as an important indicator of social identity and exclusion, capable of reinforcing rigid class hierarchies. His well-documented interest in phonetics made him a strong supporter of spelling reform and the creation of a

[422] Patrick Zabalbeascoa, "Translating Jokes for Dubbed Television Situation Comedies", *The Translator*, 2-2 (1996), pp. 235-257.
[423] George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion. A Romance in Five Acts*, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1980, p. xi.

fully phonetic writing system designed to reflect spoken English more accurately. After his death, this dedication led to the creation of the Shavian Alphabet, a phonetic script of 48 characters, each corresponding to a different English phoneme. The Shavian system aimed to eliminate the irregular spelling, silent letters, and historical inconsistencies of standard English. Shaw believed these elements were socially unfair. He was convinced that language independence was a way to control society, and that it worked in the interest of the educated elite while leaving the lower classes and non-native speakers at a disadvantage. This linguistic issue is crucial in *Pygmalion*, where the ability to speak correctly, the phonetic competence, becomes a performative instrument that both help and restrict social mobility[424].

Table 4.1. Shavian alphabet for English[425].

Tall:	𐑐	𐑑	𐑒	𐑓	𐑔	𐑕	𐑖	𐑗	𐑙	𐑚
	/p/	/t/	/k/	/f/	/θ/	/s/	/ʃ/	/ʧ/	/j/	/ŋ/
	peep	tot	kick	fee	thigh	so	sure	church	yea	hung
Deep:	𐑩	𐑪	𐑫	𐑬	𐑭	𐑮	𐑯	𐑰	𐑱	𐑲
	/b/	/d/	/g/	/v/	/ð/	/z/	/ʒ/	/ʤ/	/w/	/h/
	bib	dead	gag	vow	they	zoo	measure	judge	woe	ha-ha
Short:	𐑳	𐑴	𐑵	𐑶	𐑷	𐑸	𐑹	𐑺	𐑻	𐑼
	/l/	/m/	/ɪ/~/i/	/ɛ/	/æ/	/ə/	/ɒ/	/ʊ/	/aʊ/	/ɑː/
	loll	mime	if	egg	ash	ado	on	wool	out	ah
	𐑽	𐑾	𐑿	𐑀	𐑁	𐑂	𐑃	𐑄	𐑅	𐑆
	/r/	/n/	/iː/	/eɪ/	/aɪ/	/ʌ/	/əʊ/	/u(ː)/	/ɔɪ/	/ɔː/
	roar	nun	eat	age	ice	up	oak	ooze	oil	awe
Compound:	𐑇	𐑈	𐑉	𐑊	𐑋	𐑌	𐑍	𐑎		
	/ɑː(r)/	/ɔː(r)/	/ɛə(r)/	/ɜː(r)/	/ə(r)/	/ɪə(r)/	/ɪə/	/ju(ː)/		
	are	or	air	err	array	ear	lan	yew		

The previous Table illustrates the Shavian Alphabet. In this alphabet there are no separate capital or lowercase letters and a namer dot (·) precedes proper names. This ideological view of phonetics is embodied most explicitly in the figure of Henry Higgins, whose scientific authority over speech positions him not just as a linguist, but as an agent of social regulation and symbolic power.

Pygmalion, formally subtitled *A Romance in Five Acts*, stands out as arguably Shaw's most popular stage work. Despite its popular success, Shaw wrote an extensive preface to articulate that the play was primarily concerned with phonetics[426]. He later appended

[424] See Frederick P.W. McDowell, "Shaw and the Problem of Language", *Modern Drama*, 6-3 (1963), pp. 289-300; Stephen Daniels, "The Politics of Phonetics in Pygmalion", *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 12-2 (1998), pp. 45-60.

[425] Source: "Shavian. An Alternative alphabet for English", Shavian, available at https://www.shavian.info/alphabet/ (accessed 18 June 2025).

[426] *Ibidem*.

an afterword (or "sequel") to detail Eliza's subsequent life and how she ends not with Higgins but with Freddy. This work is considered one of Shaw's most didactic plays, offering incisive social commentary.

The play centrally addresses the rigid social structure and prejudice prevalent in England during the early decades of the twentieth century. Traditionally, the status of an individual, whether a *lady* or a *gentleman*, depended upon birth, education, profession, and manner of dress. Although money was generally a prerequisite, status could be maintained simply by exhibiting the appropriate behaviour[427].

Shaw utilised *Pygmalion* to demonstrate that the single most important factor determining social caste or class is speech. He asserted that speech is the primary subject-theme of the institutions created by humanity to perpetuate the subordination of the poor and the privileges of the wealthy. The narrative shows that genuine status can be acquired through intelligence and character. Through education, the play illustrates the capability to transform a street vendor into a "duchess", thereby challenging and eliminating obsolete concepts of caste and class. Shaw employed Eliza Doolittle as a potent symbol of universal hope residing in the availability of education.

Further demonstrating his meticulous approach to presentation, Shaw held highly personal and strong opinions regarding spelling and punctuation. He believed apostrophes in common contractions (like "don't" or "haven't") were aesthetically displeasing in colloquial dialogue and often omitted them, writing "don't" or "havnt"[428].

A generation after its initial incarnation as a classic film, Shaw's play was successfully transformed into the musical *My Fair Lady*. This production consists of a Musical Play in Two Acts, adapted from Pygmalion, featuring lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner (1918-1986) and music by Frederick Loewe.

My Fair Lady premiered in New York on March 15, 1956, at the Mark Hellinger Theatre, featuring Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews in the lead roles. The musical adaptation, characterised by its appealing score and evocative portrayal of the period, eventually had the effect of "eclipsing" the visibility of Shaw's original drama.

The demands inherent in the musical comedy genre necessitated a simplification and conventionalization of the inherently complex and difficult relationship between Eliza and Henry Higgins.

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[427] Ivi, p. ix
[428] Ivi, p. xiii.

A critical difference between the two works lies in their respective conclusions. For the published version of *Pygmalion*, Shaw included a detailed epilogue (sequel) explaining that Eliza ultimately marries Freddy, rather than Higgins. In contrast, the ending of *My Fair Lady* is intentionally either inclusive or, more frequently interpreted, an unequivocally happy ending. Alan Jay Lerner[429] explicitly noted that he omitted Shaw's sequel because he was uncertain whether Eliza's fate truly lay with Freddy.
The musical's structure includes a comprehensive synopsis of musical numbers, listing twelve items in Act One and nine in Act Two.

In conclusion, while Shaw's *Pygmalion* functions as a vehicle for profound social criticism and phonetic analysis, *My Fair Lady* presents a more accessible and romanticised realisation of the core narrative, prioritising melodic appeal and sentimental resolution over the didactic severity central to Shaw's original intent. If Shaw's *Pygmalion* is regarded as an empirical social treatise disguised as comedy, using the mechanism of language to anatomize the British class system, then *My Fair Lady* represents an exquisitely crafted ornamental vessel that retains the foundational themes but renders the form more palatable for mass appeal, transforming the original phonetic lecture into an anthem of personal transformation and romance.

4.3 Theoretical Framework and Case Study: Intersemiotic Adaptation, Musical Remediation, and Multimodal Performability in *My Fair Lady*

Modern adaptation theory rejects the idea that adaptations should be judged by fidelity in a narrow sense. It is understood as an interpretive and transformative practice rather than a secondary, derivative one. Instead, theorists such as Linda Hutcheon argue that adaptation constitutes an act of creative interpretation, "repetition without replication"[430], that re-encodes a source text through the affordances of a different medium, context, and audience. Irina Rajewsky's work on intermediality further emphasises that adaptation involves a transposition of semiotic resources, not simply a transfer of content: linguistic, musical, gestural, and visual signs must be reorganised to meet the conditions of the

[429] Ivi, p. ix.
[430] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 7.

receiving medium[431]. Roman Jakobson's notion of intersemiotic translation[432], defined as the transmutation of verbal signs into non-verbal sign systems, provides a conceptual foundation for understanding Broadway-to-Hollywood adaptation as a form of translation in a broad, multimodal sense.

This process increases in the case of the musical. Since song, dialogue, gesture, staging and dance function as a single structure, changing one element, such as singing, camera framing or orchestration, affects the entire work. Based on such characteristics, a cinema adaptation must reinterpret the entire multimodal nature of the musical.

Musical theatre develops through a complex variety of semiotic modalities: sung lyrics, spoken dialogue, melodic structure, rhythm, physical performance, dance, costumes, set construction, and spatial relationships. Film reconfigures each of these. The camera isolates, enlarges, reframes, or conceals gestures; editing manipulates temporal flow and dramatic emphasis; underscoring creates affective atmospheres unavailable to the stage; and the sound mix separates or fuses voices in ways impossible in live performance.

Scholars of film musicals note that when a stage musical becomes a film, songs often undergo a shift in semiotic function: an introspective number may become a montage; a comic patter song may be reframed through visual slapstick or spatial expansion; an ensemble number may lose its theatrical polyphony in favour of cinematic spectacle[433].

A particularly delicate component of multimodal transfer is *vocality*. The singing voice in musical theatre is both sound and body. It comes from a body that is visible and has pitch, timbre, rhythmic phrasing, gestures, breathing, and phonetic articulations that are all part of the message it conveys. Film complicates this combination by introducing dubbing, post-synchronisation, and sound mixing. Changes to the voice, whether they the related to dubbing, post-synchronisation, or stylistic reinterpretation, are not optional; they are an important part of the adaptation process. Film theory on the disembodied voice and star performance has drawn attention to the phenomenon of the *split voice*, where the visible body of the performer and the audible singing voice belong to different individuals. This phenomenon, particularly evident in Marni Nixon's dubbing of Audrey

[431] Irina Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation. A Literary Perspective on Intermediality", *Intermediality History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies*, 6 (2005), pp. 43-64.
[432] Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", in *On Translation*, ed. Brower, Reuben Arthur, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1959, pp. 232-239.
[433] Geoffry Block, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-218.

Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*, will be crucial. Michel Chion calls this occurrence the "acousmatic voice", which means a voice that doesn't come from a visible source.[434].

In *My Fair Lady*, the film preserves the song order, principal musical materials, and major dramatic beats of the Broadway original[435]. Yet even when surface structures are preserved, the film transforms performability. What can be sung, spoken, or displayed changes according to the requirements of cinematic realism, rhythm and spectacle. The visual format introduces possibilities (big sets, location shooting, ensemble mobility, montage) but removes others (continuous vocal presence, live orchestral energy). These tensions reveal the deeper semiotic transformations that facilitate adaptation.

The Mark Hellinger Theatre hosted the first performance of *My Fair Lady* in 1956 and it soon became one of the biggest hits in the history of Broadway. Alan Jay Lerner wrote the book and lyrics and Frederick Loewe composed the music. They adapted George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and its 1938 film adaptation into a musical, in which songs and dialogues are connected in an incredibly complex way. The original Broadway production, starring Julie Andrews as Eliza Doolittle and Rex Harrison as Henry Higgins, quickly established itself as a "classic" in the world of musical theatre. With over 2700 performances, it achieved new records while making *My Fair Lady* a cultural reference about class mobility, language ideology, and social performance.

As a result, *My Fair Lady* stands as a unique Broadway musical and movie adaptation. Unlike works whose dramaturgy depend on romance, spectacle, or anecdotal plot development, *My Fair Lady* is based on a socio-linguistic idea, such as the relationship between accent, class, and identity in early twentieth-century Britain. This arises directly from its source text, George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, which illustrates how class hierarchies reinforced by linguistic discrimination lack any rational foundation. Shaw's play looks like a critique of the social authority associated with "proper" English, and the ideological violence that arises from prioritising one accent over others[436].

Lerner and Loewe's adaptation preserves Shaw's central critique while reorganising it within an integrated musical structure. As Dominic McHugh's archival research has shown[437], the team devoted exceptional attention to the phonetic and rhythmic properties of the lyrics, ensuring that Eliza's speech patterns remained dramaturgically essential.

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[434] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1999, pp. 19-23.
[435] Dominic McHugh, *op. cit.*, p. 44; Keith Garebian, *The Making of My Fair Lady*, Oakville, Mosaic Press, 1998, p. 63.
[436] See George Bernard Shaw, *op. cit.*, pp. vii-ix.
[437] Dominic McHugh, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-60.

The result is a musical in which accent functions both as plot mechanism and musical material.

In the stage version, Julie Andrews's dual command of spoken and sung registers facilitated a seamless portrayal of linguistic progression; the same voice that produces Cockney non-standard vowels in the opening scenes eventually articulates the "proper" diphthongs that mark Eliza's transformation. The voice thus becomes a site of narrative continuity and character coherence.

The 1964 film adaptation, while maintaining the structure and sequence of songs, introduces a significant departure from this dramaturgical logic through its use of dubbing. Audrey Hepburn's speaking voice charts Eliza's linguistic development, yet her singing voice, dubbed almost entirely by Marni Nixon, presents a fully formed, "cultivated" timbre even in moments where Eliza is still meant to sound linguistically unpolished[438]. This disjunction alters the narrative arc and raises fundamental questions about the representation of linguistic identity in musical cinema.

For these reasons, *My Fair Lady* represents an ideal case study for examining intersemiotic adaptation. It demonstrates how a musical's words and music can travel across media, while also showing how the singing voice, with its ideological impact and symbolic social force, may be reframed, moved, or replaced in film.

4.4 Structural and Musical Reconfiguration from Stage to Film: Vocality, Language, and the Acousmatic Voice in *My Fair Lady*

The 1964 movie version emerged at a time when Hollywood was investing heavily in large-scale musical films in order to capitalise on Broadway successes and to compensate for declining cinema attendance.

The casting of Audrey Hepburn in place of Julie Andrews, while retaining Harrison as Higgins, has been widely discussed. McHugh, among others, notes the industrial logic behind the decision, Hepburn's star status and perceived bankability for film audiences, while also documenting the tensions it created, particularly given that Hepburn's singing voice was largely replaced by that of soprano Marni Nixon.

The decision not to cast Julie Andrews as Eliza Doolittle in the 1964 film version of *My Fair Lady*, despite the fact that she had originated the role in both the West End and on Broadway, has been widely scrutinised in scholarship on the musical film. As several

[438] See Keith Garebian, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-87.

commentators have observed, Andrews was not excluded for artistic reasons, but on the basis of Hollywood's industrial logics. At the time, she was an acclaimed stage performer but lacked a consistent screen presence, while Audrey Hepburn had already achieved international fame and was considered a more commercial choice for a high-budget production aimed at global audiences[439].

This contrast becomes more evident when considered with the studio's decision to keep Rex Harrison as Henry Higgins, affirming the continuity of the male protagonist, while replacing the actress who had embodied the role of Eliza on stage. The casting of Audrey Hepburn caused tensions; her singing voice was dubbed by soprano Marni Nixon, highlighting the contrast between Julie Andrews's proven vocal competence in the role, and the film's desire to prioritise star power over musical ability.

The Warner's choice has frequently been questioned, especially considering Julie Andrews's later success in her film debut in *Mary Poppins* (1964), for which she won the Academy Award for Best Actress. This outcome has strongly influenced critical responses to the adaptation and its casting choices.

The structure of *My Fair Lady* is mostly stable in both stage and film versions, a characteristic that distinguishes it from many Golden Age musical interpretations. The 1964 film preserves the complete selection of major musical numbers, the majority of the dialogue, and the overall structural framework of the original script.

This fidelity is partly attributable to producer Jack L. Warner's strategy: with a property as commercially successful as *My Fair Lady*, Warner sought to preserve what audiences already recognised. McHugh notes that even orchestrations and time were frequently modelled on the original Broadway arrangements[440]. Yet this structural fidelity should not be mistaken for interpretative continuity. The film's visual grammar, cinematographic language, and vocal mediation transform the tone and function of several numbers, even when the words and notes remain unchanged.

The film preserves the original musical components while introducing a new orchestral sound typical of 1960s Hollywood studio productions. Orchestrator André Previn increased the number of the musicians, creating a rich symphonic sound distinct from the more contained Broadway theatre orchestra. Garebian notes that this Hollywood aesthetic

[439] Ivi, pp. 95-98.
[440] See Dominic McHugh, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

"romanticises" numbers that were originally sharper and more rhythmically defined, such as *I'm an Ordinary Man* and *Show Me*[441].

In addition to orchestral expansion, the film subtly modifies harmonic pacing and phrasing to accommodate cinematic needs. Tempi are sometimes slowed to allow for camera movements or actor positioning, while transitions between dialogue and music are often smoothed through underscore. These changes recalibrate how emotion is expressed: the stage's immediacy is replaced by the film's spatial and temporal fluidity.

The most consequential transformation lies in the film's treatment of vocality. In the Broadway production, Julie Andrews's vocal performance served as the audible signifier of Eliza's identity, allowing the audience to track her linguistic progression through sound. As discussed above, the film distributes this identity across two distinct bodies and vocal sources: Hepburn's for spoken dialogue and Nixon's for the musical numbers.

Scholars of musical cinema emphasise that such disjunctions produce what Chion calls a "vococentric rupture"[442], a break in the unity of body and voice that destabilises character embodiment. Nixon's voice, already aligned with cultivated vocal norms, rewrites Eliza's sonic identity from the outset, thereby modulating the ideological resonance of scenes such as *Wouldn't It Be Loverly?* And *I Could Have Danced All Night*.

Moreover, numbers that originally showcased Eliza's phonetic labour, considering *The Rain in Spain* as the most explicit example, are recoded in the film as displays of emotion rather than linguistic achievement. The reorchestration and dubbing shift the focus from process to result, reducing the evidence of Eliza's evolution.

The phenomenon of dubbing in *My Fair Lady*, Hepburn's on-screen presence combined with Nixon's off-screen singing, constitutes one of the most consequential semiotic transformations between the stage and film versions. The unified vocal identity that Andrews embodied in the Broadway production is replaced by a bifurcated structure in the film. Michel Chion's concept of the "acousmatic voice", a voice whose source is unseen, provides a theoretical framework for understanding this dislocation[443]. In the case of Eliza, the acousmatic voice becomes a manifestation of ideological tension: does the singing voice belong to the character, to the performer, or to the studio system that imposes vocal perfection? Rick Altman argues that such fractures expose the industrial

[441] Keith Garebian, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
[442] Michel Chion, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49.
[443] Ivi, pp. 19-22.

mechanisms behind cinematic musical performance, revealing how authenticity is constructed rather than genuinely represented[444].

Eliza's split voice thus reframes her transformation. In the stage version, linguistic mastery is *heard* as a process of gradual refinement; in the film, it is *presented* as an already achieved aesthetic condition. The film's vocality minimises the hearable struggle that originally coded Eliza's socio-economic and phonetic journey. Furthermore, the split voice reinforces the gendered dynamics of the narrative: Eliza's autonomy is undermined when her most expressive numbers are voiced by another woman whose presence remains invisible. Nixon becomes the sonic embodiment of Higgins's linguistic project, even as Hepburn enacts its emotional and visual consequences.

One of *My Fair Lady*'s most distinctive dramaturgical achievements is the transformation of phonetic training into musical spectacle. The musical does not merely depict Eliza's progress through dialogue; it stages the process in song, rhythm, and gesture. In this regard, *My Fair Lady* exemplifies what Rajewsky terms the *re-semiotisation* of communicative acts: phonetic correction becomes melody, physical discipline becomes choreography, and the acquisition of linguistic capital becomes a story that can be sung[445].

4.5 A Critical Analysis of Songs and Subtitling in *My Fair Lady*: Singability, Vocal Translation, Dialect, and the Split Voice

The language in *My Fair Lady* makes it hard to translate and adapt. This is especially true when the work is made for people who don't speak English or when it is changed for media that needs voice replacements, like dubbing. Cockney and Received Pronunciation (RP English) are not just different ways of speaking; they also have important ideological, social, and dramatic meanings. As a result, any adaptation must consider how this semiotic tension can be preserved, reshaped, or reinterpreted.

In dubbing, the translator must decide whether to render Cockney with some type of geographically or socially marked variety of the target language (e.g., Romanesco for Italian, or a regional German dialect), or to use indicators such as informal registers, prosodic changes, or slang. Díaz-Cintas and Remael[446] point out that replicating dialect

[444] Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 146-149.
[445] Irina Rajewsky, *op. ci.*, pp. 43-64.
[446] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*, Manchester, St. Jerome Pub, 2007, pp. 191-195.

one-to-one is seldom possible, because dialects carry local sociocultural meanings that may not align with the source[447]. Subtitling introduces further constraints. Because subtitles must be concise, much of the linguistic richness encoded in Eliza's Cockney is lost, producing what Titford calls "dialectal flattening" [448], the tendency of written constrained translation to reduce variation to standard forms.

For singable translation, the challenges intensify. Dialectal phonetics often conflict with the prosodic and melodic structures of existing musical numbers. Low's work on singability underscores the difficulty of representing sociolects within rigid constraints of rhythm, accentuation, rhyme, and vowel quality[449].

In *My Fair Lady*, where dialect is dramaturgically essential, the translator must choose between:

- **preserving contrast**, by using target-language dialects;
- **neutralising variation**, to maintain musical fluency;
- **creating new social contrasts**, aligned with the target culture.

Each strategy produces a different ideological interpretation. A German Eliza who speaks a Bavarian dialect does not convey the same social meaning as a London Eliza speaking Cockney; likewise, an Italian Eliza characterised by a regional dialect inevitably activates Italy's own class-based and geographical dynamics rather than those of Britain. Translation, in this sense, turns *My Fair Lady* into an act of socio-cultural reinterpretation. The film adaptation adds an additional layer: Eliza's voice is already split in the source. In film theory, the concept of the *acousmatic voice*, as described by Michael Chion, refers to a voice whose source is not seen on screen. The listener hears the voice without being able to find it in a visible body. This produces a particular effect: the voice appears separated from any physical presence and gain a sense of independence. Acousmatic voices often appear in film contexts such as voice-over narration or off-screen speech. They are also important in musical cinema when a sung voice cannot be visual attributed to the performer shown on screen. In such cases, vocal sound circulates independently of

[447] Ivi, pp. 184-187.
[448] Christopher Titford, "Subtitling. Constrained Translation", *Lebenda Sprachen*, 27 (1982), pp. 113-118.
[449] Peter Low, *Translating Song: Lyrics and Texts*. Translation Practice Explained, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 63-68.

the body, becoming a semiotic element whose meaning is shaped by absence as much as by presence.

The concept of the *split voice* operates on a different level. Rather than describing a perceptual effect, it designates a productive and performative condition in which the visible body of a performer and the audible singing voice belong to different individuals. This phenomenon is particularly characteristic of dubbing practices in musical film, where vocal performance may be reassigned for reasons of vocal quality, stylistic coherence, or industrial convention. In *My Fair Lady*, for instance, Audrey Hepburn plays Eliza Doolittle on screen, while Marni Nixon uses her singing voice off-screen. The resulting split voice creates an acousmatic effect. However, it is more than just a lack of vocals. It represents an important change in vocal identity, where character, voice, and performance come from different people and production processes.

In dubbing, the translator or dubbing director must decide whether to:

- **reproduce the split** (one actor for speech, one singer);
- **unify the voice** (removing the film's internal disjunction);
- **accentuate the split** as a feature of adaptation.

Each choice carries implications for character continuity and ideological meaning. If the dub uses one voice for both speech and song, the translator "corrects" the film's split voice; if two voices are used, the translator reproduces a phenomenon already ideologically marked in the Hollywood original.

The previous section examined the linguistic, vocal, and ideological implications of adapting *My Fair Lady* to different media and languages. However, the real effects of adaptation become fully visible when observing at how individual songs change when they go from stage to screen. The movie version doesn't just change the format of Lerner and Loewe's music. It also changes the order of events, the structure, the way characters sing, and the speed at which things happen. It changes how speech and song work together, showing both their good and bad sides. So, comparing the songs is an important link between these ideas and the more in-depth analysis that follows. It is possible to identify the main ways that music is used in stories by examining the songs that are kept, removed, added, or placed in a new context in the 1964 movie.

4.6 Accent Variation in *My Fair Lady*: Cockney, Received Pronunciation, Sociolinguistic Meaning, and Visual Representation

Accent is a key point of both the story and the ideas behind *My Fair Lady*. The distinction between Eliza Doolittle's working-class Cockney and Henry Higgins's refined upper-class pronunciation is more than just a phonetic difference, it is a strong sign of social identity, class boundaries and cultural norms. As the narrative shows, accent plays a role in how characters see each other, how they are placed within the social hierarchy and how linguistic behaviour becomes connected to ideas of legitimacy, respectability, and personal worth.

This section looks deeper into accent variation from a sociolinguistic standpoint and explores how it appears in text, visuals, and ideas in both the stage and film versions of *My Fair Lady*. The two following sections provide an overview of accent as a sociocultural and historical construct, drawing on linguistic scholarship to contextualise the varied forms of English pronunciation in the twentieth century. They then go on to look closer at the specific case of Cockney in the musical, examining how Higgins's transcriptions and the film's visual strategies turn phonetic difference into a semiotic device that drives the dramatic action.

Everyone speaks with an accent and each accent reflects aspects of a speaker's geographical, social, or occupational background. Among these dimensions, the regional one tends to attract the most immediate attention: when we hear someone speak, we instinctively attempt to figure out where they are from, often in an attempt to identify a singular region even when we do not fully understand each and every word. This intuitive ability, as Crystal notes, is part of what allows us to distinguish accents from languages: one may listen to French without comprehension, whereas unfamiliar English accents (from Glasgow, Newcastle, Brooklyn, or India) usually become intelligible after a period of exposure through a natural process of "tuning in"[450].

Crystal clarifies that accents are a result of languages changing at different time, space, and among various social groups. English did not develop as a uniform system; from its earliest stages, it absorbed linguistic influences from numerous populations and migrations, which led to marked local pronunciations. Even within England, dialectal differences reflect centuries of settlement patterns and limited mobility. Before the

[450] David Crystal, *Sound Appealing. The Passionate Story of English Pronunciation*, London, Profile Books Ltd, 2019, pp. 195-196.

eighteenth century, there was no single prestige standard; only with the rise of prescriptivism did an urban, upper-class pronunciation begin to be framed as "correct," thanks to figures such as Sheridan and Walker[451].

This elevation of one variety, the precursor to Received Pronunciation, not only privileged particular speakers but made pronunciation itself a potent social filter. The consolidation of RP through the BBC from the 1920s onwards redefined public expectations of "proper" English and intensified the social stigma attached to regional or working-class varieties. By mid-century, attitudes toward accents often reflected prejudice rather than linguistic reality. Crystal also dismantles persistent stereotypes: claims that accents arise from environmental causes, or that certain forms reflect laziness or lack of articulation, fall apart under phonetic scrutiny[452].

Cockney exemplifies these dynamics. As documented by Wells, Cockney is characterised by H-dropping (e.g., *'ouse* for *house*), glottalisation of medial /t/ (as in *wa'er* for *water*), monophthongisation of diphthongs (such as /aɪ/ becoming /ɑː/), non-rhoticity, and specific vowel shifts typical of London's working-class speech. These features have no phonetic justification for being labelled "incorrect"; they are simply different from the socially prestigious standard. Yet historically, they have been heavily stigmatised and associated with lack of education or refinement, precisely the ideological framework that *My Fair Lady* dramatises.

Accents are strong markers of cultural, regional, social and political identity. Their diversity reflects the complex historical and social forces that shape linguistic communities, while their emotional resonance derives from how they represent both belonging and difference. Dialects, with their singular vocabulary and grammatical structures, carry similar functions. However, accent is often the most immediate and recognisable sign of identity, influencing perception even before semantic content is processed. Understanding this interplay between phonetics, representation, and ideology is essential to the analysis of *My Fair Lady* and its adaptations, and provides the necessary foundation for the comparative work developed in Section 6.7.2.

One of the most distinctive semiotic strategies in *My Fair Lady* is indeed the visual representation of Eliza's Cockney accent through Henry Higgins's handwritten transcriptions. The following image offers a representative example drawn from the film.

[451] Ivi, pp. 197-199.
[452] Ivi, pp. 199-204.

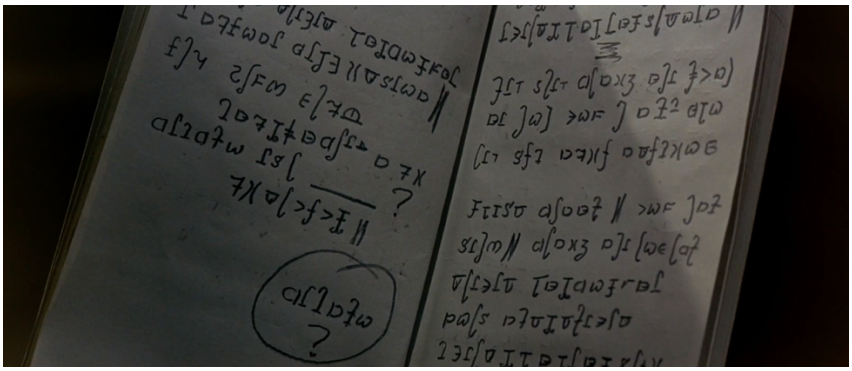


Figure 4.1. Film still from My Fair Lady (dir. George Cukor, Warner Bros., 1964).

The pages in the image below, briefly shown on screen and referenced throughout the stage script, function as a metalinguistic device that foregrounds the phonetic, social, and ideological dimensions of non-standard speech. Rather than serving as neutral linguistic notation, Higgins's sketches visually encode Cockney as chaotic, defective, and graphically irregular. In doing so, they not only dramatise his role as a phonetic expert but materially stage the class-based prejudices embedded in British language ideologies.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Cockney is a highly marked variety associated with London's working class, characterised by features such as H-dropping, glottalisation, monophthongisation, and non-rhoticity[453].

In the song *Why Can't the English?*, Higgins explicitly highlights the phenomenon of H-dropping when he mocks speakers who are "*dropping 'h's' everywhere*." H-dropping is a well-documented feature of many working-class accents in England. In these cases, the initial [h] found in standard varieties is generally omitted. As a result, words such as *hit, hammer, happy,* and *hedge* are pronounced as if they begin with a vowel. Despite being linguistically valid and attested, these features have often been interpreted through the lens of social prejudice. Because they differ from the standard accent, they have historically attracted stigma and have been associated with low levels of educational or social standing.

Higgins's notebook visually expresses this ideology in the film through distorted spellings, irregular symbols, and chaotic graphemes used to track Eliza's Cockney accent. The notebook transforms linguistic variation into a graphic representation of error. Higgins's transcriptions are not aimed at representing phonetic accuracy, but they can be explained with what Crystal identifies as the symbolic function of eye-dialect,

[453] John Christopher Wells, *Accents of English I. An Introduction*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 253-255; p. 37; pp. 141-146.

i.e., "A way of spelling words that suggests a regional or social way of talking[454]. The film literalises Higgins's phonetic gaze, presenting Cockney as something to be corrected, controlled, or erased, an attitude that aligns with long-standing British language ideologies[455].

Shaw briefly attempts to render Eliza Doolittle's Cockney pronunciation through conventional English spelling in the early pages of *Pygmalion*, but he quickly abandons the effort. He acknowledges that trying to represent a highly localised variety without resorting to a phonetic alphabet inevitably produces forms that are opaque or misleading for anyone outside London. As he states, such an approximation would be "unintelligible" to readers unfamiliar with the dialect, and therefore unsuitable for sustained use in the play.

These features have direct implications for translation and audiovisual adaptation. When Cockney appears in written form, whether in Higgins's transcriptions, the stage script, or the film subtitles, it must be rendered through orthographic strategies that raise accent without attempting to reproduce precise phonetic values. Subtitling, however, imposes stricter constraints: Cockney frequently undergoes a process of "dialect flattening,"[456] whereby non-standard pronunciations are neutralised in order to preserve readability and meet timing requirements. In dubbing, translators face the additional challenge of deciding whether to recreate the social contrast between Cockney and RP with target-language variants. Because accent is an immediate index of identity, its loss or transformation in translation reshapes characterisation and ideological meaning.

In the Italian dubbed version of *My Fair Lady* (1964), the character of Eliza Doolittle is voiced by Maria Pia Di Meo for the spoken dialogue and by Tina Centi for the musical numbers. The Italian dubbed version does not assign Eliza a clearly identifiable regional accent. Instead, her speech appears to draw on a range of non-standard phonetic features associated with informal or working-class varieties of Italian. Rather than indexing a specific geographical origin, this hybridised vocal register functions as a generalised marker of lower socio-economic status.

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[454] David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 338-348.
[455] Rosina Lippi-Green, *English with an Accent. Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*, New York, Routledge, 2012, p. 132.
[456] See Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper. The Rise and Fall of the English Accent as a Social Symbol*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 117.

The lack of documented linguistic metadata, such as a dubbing script, production notes, or phonetic transcription, makes it impossible to determine a precise regional affiliation for Eliza's Italian voice. Scholars of Italian dubbing generally agree that, in the mid-twentieth century, dubbing directors often prioritised socio-linguistic recognisability over dialectal authenticity: the aim was to signal a character's class position in a way that would be accessible to audiences nationwide, regardless of their regional background. Given this context, claims that the dub reflects a specific Italian dialect cannot be sustained. While the Italian version clearly attempts to convey Eliza's working-class identity through accent and register, it is methodologically inappropriate to attribute that voice to a concrete regional variety. Rather, it should be understood as a constructed vernacular designed for social indexicality, an "every-locale" accent crafted to denote class rather than place[457].

Its negative perception has deep cultural roots, often linked to prescriptivist discourses that position Received Pronunciation (RP) as the only socially legitimate form of English[458]. Mugglestone defines RP English as "the non-localised accent which was and is 'widely regarded as a model for correct pronunciation'"[459]. David Crystal likewise emphasises how RP historically functioned as a social gatekeeping tool and how regional or working-class accents were framed as "linguistic deficits" rather than legitimate varieties[460]. In *The Stories of English*, Crystal also details how non-standard varieties such as Cockney were marginalised in terms of their use in educational and theatrical spaces that imposed class distinctions via linguistic codes. His analysis is a crucial context for interpreting why Cockney comes to be treated as something that Higgins must "correct," rather than simply describe[461].

In the film version, the brief close-up on Higgins's notebook reinforces the connection between sound and class. The representation of non-standard speech correlates with a long tradition in British media of representing regional or working-class accents as

[457] The impression that Eliza's Italian voice incorporates features loosely reminiscent of Neapolitan, Apulian, and Romanesco arises from my own analysis of the dubbed soundtrack, based on auditory perception and familiarity with Italian dialects. This identification is necessarily interpretative and should not be taken as definitive. No archival dubbing records exist to confirm the linguistic intentions of the dubbing team, and the broader notion of a "mixed dialectal repertoire" in the Italian version appears mainly in retrospective fan commentary and informal dubbing-community discussions rather than in verifiable production sources. For this reason, any claim regarding the dialectal composition of the dub must be considered anecdotal and treated with appropriate methodological caution.
[458] Lynda Mugglestone, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[459] *Ibidem*.
[460] David Crystal, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-196.
[461] David Crystal, *The Stories of English*, New York, The Overlook Press, 2004, p. 472; p. 409.

"problems to be fixed"[462]. As Hodson observes, such representations perpetuate the association between accent, morality, and social mobility, an association that *My Fair Lady* makes both explicit and narratively central[463]. Crystal also highlights how attitudes toward British accents diverge sharply from linguistic reality, reflecting social prejudice more than phonetic difference[464].

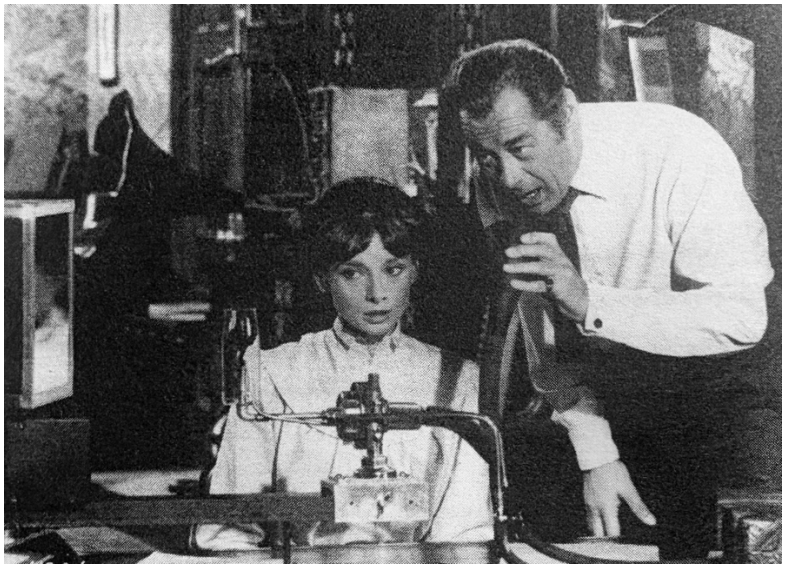


Figure 4.2. Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*[465].

For the purposes of this chapter, Higgins's transcriptions are significant for two reasons. First, they visually anticipate the systematic contrasts explored in the comparative song list below, where phonetic differences between Cockney and RP shape both spoken dialogue and sung delivery. Second, they underscore the extent to which linguistic variation becomes dramaturgically encoded in both versions of the work: in the stage production through extended phonetic routines, and in the film through selective visual cues and sound mixing.

[462] Rosina Lippi-Green, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 210.
[463] Jane Hodson, *Dialect in Film & Literature*, London, Red Globe Press, 2014, pp. 2-3.
[464] David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, p.298.
[465] Source: David Crystal, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

4.7 Stage and Film Versions of *My Fair Lady*: Comparative Song List and Analytical Commentary

The following section presents a comparative overview of the musical numbers included in the 1956 stage production of *My Fair Lady* and in its 1964 film version, combining a comparative song list with an analytical commentary on each number. The table highlights which songs appear in both versions, as well as those that were added, omitted, or modified for the screen.

Table 4.2. Comparative Overview of Musical Numbers in the Stage and Film Versions of *My Fair Lady*.

#	**Musical Number**	**1956 Stage Production**	**1964 Film Version**
		Act 1	
1	*Overture*	Included (instrumental)	Included (instrumental - with expanded orchestral scoring)
2	*Why Can't the English?*	Included	Included (With minor spoken/sung timing adjustments)
3	*Wouldn't It Be Loverly?*	Included	Included (Dubbed by Marni Nixon - Slightly lower tempo)
4	*With a Little Bit of Luck*	Included Often shortened in many productions	Included (With additional lyrics verses eventually omitted in some stage productions)
5	*I'm an Ordinary Man*	Included	Included (With more spoken-narrative passages)
6	*With a Little Bit of Luck (Reprise)*	Included	Omitted
7	*Just You Wait*	Included	Included (With the expanded dream sequence - "Henry Higgins, just you wait!")
8	*The Rain in Spain*	Included	Included (Nearly identical but with richer orchestration)
9	*I Could Have Danced All Night*	Included	Included

			(Same structural placement, fuller orchestration)
19	*Ascot Gavotte*	Included	Included (With enhanced scenic staging)
11	*On the Street Where You Live*	Included	Included (More lyrical due to the film arrangement)
12	*Eliza's Entrance (Promenade)*	Included (Instrumental)	Omitted
13	*The Embassy Waltz*	Included (Instrumental)	Included (Prominently featured)
Act 2			
14	*You Did It*	Included	Included (Shortened, with some dialogue parts removed)
15	*Just You Wait (Reprise)*	Included	Omitted
16	*On the Street Where You Live (Reprise)*	Included	Omitted
17	*Show Me*	Included	Included (Slightly cut and performed at a faster pace)
18	*Get Me to the Church on Time*	Included	Included (With expanded choreography and brighter orchestration)
19	*A Hymn to Him*	Included	Included (Nearly identical, dialogue sequences shortened before the song)
20	*Without You*	Included	Included (Very similar musically)
21	*I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face*	Included	Included (With expanded orchestration)
22	*Finale*	Included	Included (Slightly altered in pacing and dramatic dynamics)

To contextualise the comparative overview presented above, the following outline reproduces the sequence of scenes and musical numbers in the 1956 stage production, highlighting their original dramaturgical placement within the narrative[466].

Table 4.3. Scene Structure and Musical Numbers in the 1956 Stage Production of *My Fair Lady*[467].

***My Fair Lady* (1956)**	
Act 1	
Scene 1	Outside the Opera House, Covent Garden. A cold March night. *Overture* and Street Entertainers (The Three Buskers) *Why Can't the English?* (Higgins) *Wouldn't It Be Loverly* (Eliza and Costermongers)
Scene 2	A Tenement Section – Tottenham Court Road. Immediately following. *With a Little Bit of Luck* (Doolittle, Harry and Jamie)
Scene 3	Higgins's Study. The following morning. *I'm and Ordinary Man* (Higgins)
Scene 4	Tenement Section – Tottenham Court Road. Three days later. *With a Little Bit of Luck* (reprise) (Doolittle and Friends)
Scene 5	Higgins's Study. Later that day. *Just you wait* (Elia) *The Rain in Spain* (Higgins, Eliza and Pickering) *I Could Have Danced All Night* (Eliza, Mrs. Pearce and Maids)
Scene 6	Near the Race Meeting, Ascot. A July afternoon.
Scene 7	Inside a Club Ten, Ascot. Immediately following. *Ascot Gavotte* (Spectators at the Race)
Scene 8	Outside Higgins's House, Wimpole Street. Later that afternoon. *On the Street Where You Live* (Freddy)
Scene 9	Higgins's Study. Six weeks later.
Scene 10	The Promenade of the Embassy. Later that night. *Promenade* (underscoring)
Scene 11	The Ballroom of the Embassy. Immediately following. *The Embassy Waltz* (Higgins, Eliza, Karpathy and Guests)
Act 2	
Scene 1	Higgins's Study. 3:00 the following morning. *You Did It* (Higgins, Pickering, Mrs. Pearce and Servants) *Just You Wait* (reprise) (Eliza)
Scene 2	Outside Higgins's House, Wimpole Street. Immediately following.

[466] Geoffry Block, *op. cit.*, p. W60.
[467] Adapted from Geoffry Block, *op. cit.*, p. W60.

	On the Street Where You Live (reprise) (Freddy) *Show Me* (Eliza and Freddy)
Scene 3	Flower Market of Covent Garden. 5:00 that morning. *Wouldn't It Be Loverly* (reprise) (Elia and Costermorgens) *Get Me to the Church on Time* (Doolittle, Harry, Jamie and Costermongers)
Scene 4	Upstairs Hall of Higgins's House. 11:00 that morning. *A Hymn to Him* (Higgins)
Scene 5	The Conservatory of Mrs. Higgins's House. Later that day. *Without You* (Higgins and Eliza)
Scene 6	Outside Higgins's Housel, Wimpole Street. Immediately following. *I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face* (Higgins)
Scene 7	Higgins's Study. Immediately following.

When you compare the 1956 stage version of *My Fair Lady* to the 1964 film version, it is possible to see that the movie made some changes based on the needs of storytelling. The film keeps most of the songs, but it makes the overall structure simpler by removing some reprises (*With a Little Bit of Luck*, *Just You Wait*, *On the Street Where You Live*) that were meant to move the characters along in the stage production. The movie's focus on clear storytelling and visual continuity led to the removal of these songs, which cut down on musical repetition to speed up the pacing. In the movie, on the other hand, some numbers are longer. Notably *With a Little Bit of Luck*, *Just You Wait*, and *Get Me to the Church on Time* all have choreography, orchestration, and visual drama that make the show more exciting than it was on stage. The orchestral arrangements are an important part of the adaptation. The film's score employs richer textures and smoother transitions that make emotional signals stronger. The film remains faithful to the structure and themes of the stage score, but it changes some musical numbers to fit the Hollywood musical style.

In the excerpts that follow, all sung lines are presented in italics, while spoken dialogue appears in regular font. This distinction is applied to all musical works discussed in this chapter. The lyrics have been extracted from the stage libretto of *My Fair Lady* and not from the 1964 film version, which contains differences in lyrics, structure and wording. In the original stage script, however, all song lyrics were written in uppercase, whereas spoken dialogue appeared in small caps.

Multimodality concerns the ways in which meaning is created across a wide range of social activities, many of which are still commonly approached from the perspective of

separate academic disciplines. Following Kress and Van Leeuwen's social-semiotic account of multimodality[468], meaning is realised through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes, including speech, sound, gesture, gaze and movement. For analytical purposes, these resources may be grouped here into three broad categories: the linguistic mode, the audio-musical mode, and the gestural mode of performance.

4.7.1 *Overture*

The *Overture* serves as the audience's first introduction to the musical world of *My Fair Lady*. It presents a series of instrumental excerpts from the main themes of the score. It represents a musical "prelude" that prepares listeners for the story. In both the 1956 stage production and the 1964 film version, the *Overture* is instrumental. It mixes together the melodies of central musical numbers, including *I Could Have Danced All Night*, *Wouldn't It Be Loverly?*, *On the Street Where You Live*, and *The Rain in Spain*, into a medley. While the stage version includes a short orchestral introduction, the film version expands the *Overture*. The film arrangement features a richer number of instruments, smoother transitions between themes, and a cleaner orchestral sound, taking full advantage of studio recording and Hollywood scoring techniques.

4.7.2 *Why Can't the English?*

Why Can't the English? serves as Professor Higgins's musical introduction and gives the audience important insight into his character, beliefs and social prejudices. Through a mixture of sung lines and fast spoken sentences, the number highlights Higgins's obsession with phonetics, linguistic precision, and class-based judgments. This song sets the tone for his relationship with Eliza and frames language as a central theme of the story. The number blends brief melodic fragments with longer spoken passages delivered in rhythmic speech. This song relies on dramatic timing, rising tension and strong emphasis to show Higgins's intellectual arrogance. Both versions keep the piece's structure and way of speaking. In the theatrical production, the delivery appears more conversational utilising the immediacy of live performance and the dynamic energy of Higgins's interactions with the ensemble. The 1964 film adaptation recreates the song

[468] Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*, New York, Routledge, 2021, p. 40.

with high accuracy, with only a few changes to the timing and pacing to fit with the movie rules. The film's orchestration is quite fuller, even though it still remains simple to highlight Higgins's verbal skill.

From a multimodal social-semiotic point of view[469], this song can be considered as a complex interplay among three fundamental modes: the *Linguistic Mode*, the *Audio-Musical Mode*, and the *Gestural Mode* of performance. Each one of these modes contributes differently to the construction of character identity and social ideology throughout the scene.

- The *Linguistic Mode*: Higgins's speech is characterised by a high-register lexicon and syntactically controlled sentences. His speech defines linguistic competence as an indicator of social status, preserving the relationship between standard pronunciation and moral or intellectual superiority. This is very different from Eliza's way of speaking, especially her non-lexical utterance *A-o-o-o-w*, which is not considered proper language. In the social-semiotic framework, this contrast shows how linguistic form becomes a measure of social position, with Higgins representing institutional authority through standardised speech, and Eliza embodying a social outsider through phonetic resources.
- The *Audio-Musical Mode*: From an audio-musical point of view, the song uses a lot of *Sprechgesang* (spoken-singing) to blur the line between speech and sung melody in the vocal delivery, in which rhythmic speech is aligned with musical timing, while melodic variation remains limited.
- The *Gestural Mode*: The gestural mode intensifies the opposition between Higgins and Eliza through Higgins's behaviour. His visual focuses on the mouths and throats of speakers, defined as phonetic gaze, transforming the act of listening into one of observation. Within this process, he ranks speakers through phonetic attention, so that listening becomes an active practice through which linguistic deviance is categorised.

[469] *Ibidem*.

The song also includes several instances of humour that may be categorised according to Zabalbeascoa's typology of audiovisual jokes[470]. These humorous instances identified in the song are analysed using the AVT-oriented humour analysis grid introduced in Chapter 2, which is reproduced below for reference.

Table 4.4. Zabalbeascoa's AVT-Oriented Humour Analysis Grid[471].

Joke Type (Zabalbeascoa)	Source of Humour	Typical translation difficulty	Common solution paths (template)	AVT-specific risks to check
1. International/Bi-National jokes	Widely recognisable referents. Humour not dependent on wordplay or obscure cultural knowledge	Low to medium	Literal rendering. Light reformulation	Overestimating target familiarity. Space/time limits may force compression
2. National culture/Institutions jokes	Culture bound institutions, practices, "local" references	Medium to high	Substitution with target-culture equivalent. Generalisation. Selective explicitation	Incoherence with plot/world. Loss of specificity. Viewer confusion if referent is not clear
3. Community-based humour (sense of humour)	Insider traditions, stereotypes, intertextual community scripts	High	Functional substitution. Relocation of the humorous effect. Mitigation or neutralisation where necessary	Ethical sensitivity. Variable audience reception. Risk of misinterpretation or offence
4. Language-dependent jokes	Wordplay, polysemy, phonetic play, idioms, names, metalinguistic features	Very high	Replace with different wordplay. Creative rewriting. Compensation. Occasional sacrifice	Literal translation may create nonsense. Timing and reading speed. Register consistency
5. Visual jokes	Editing, sight gags, facial expression, gesture, viewer knows more than characters	Often low	Frequently no verbal intervention. Minimal anchoring if needed	Cultural limits of "universal" visuality.

[470] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-229.
[471] Source: Author's elaboration based on Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-229.

				Subtitle can distract from image if overloaded
6. Aural jokes	Non-verbal sounds/noises, paralinguistic cues not dependent on lexical meaning	Often low	Usually no translation. In accessibility contexts, descriptive labels	Missed cue if audience relies on text; subtitling for the d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH) may require sound description decisions
7. Complex jokes	Combination of two or more channels (verbal + visual; verbal + cultural; verbal + aural, etc.)	Very high	Prioritise coherence. Balance multiple semiotic priorities. Multimodal compensation	Inconsistencies with image or sound. Loss of timing. Repercussions for plot comprehension

The following table applies the AVT-oriented humour analysis grid introduced in Chapter 2 to the humorous lines identified in the present musical number. The original song lyrics are treated as the Source Text (ST), while the Italian subtitled and dubbed renderings are analysed as Target Texts, here referred to as TT_1 and TT_2 respectively. All the following tables in this Chapter are the author's own elaboration unless otherwise specified.

Table 4.5. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *Why Can't The English?*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
In France every Frenchman knows his language from 'A' to 'Zed'	Community-based humour	Stereotypical generalisation about French speakers and prescriptive attitudes toward pronunciation norms.	*I Francesi conoscono la loro lingua dall'A alla Z*	*In Francia i Francesi san parlare un buon français*
Hear them down in Soho square / Dropping 'h's' everywhere	Complex joke (verbally expressed humour + community based humour	Reference to class-marked pronunciation practices in London speech communities.	*Prenda quelli di Soho / Non pronunciano mai le "H"*	*Basta andar per la città / Per accorgersi che c'è*

No one taught him "take" instead of "tike"!	Language-dependent joke	Phonetic contrast between non-standard and standard pronunciation.	*Nessuno gli ha insegnato / A dire "ei" invece di "ai"*	*Parla male e non ne sa il perché*
Aoooow! Heavens, what a noise!	Complex (visual + aural) joke	Eliza's non-lexical vocalisation combined with Higgins's performative reaction.	*Santo cielo, che suono!*	*Senti che disastro!*

As shown in Table 4.5, the subtitled and dubbed versions adopt different strategies in rendering humour across modes. While the subtitled track tends to preserve referential meaning through minimal reformulation, the dubbed version frequently prioritises performability, singability and rhythmic coherence, resulting in a partial redistribution of the humorous effect across verbal and audiovisual channels.

The present section adopts a comparative mapping approach across the songs included in the corpus, providing representative examples of how humour is employed in subtitled and dubbed versions. A more detailed multimodal analysis of this number will be conducted in Section 4.8, where Italian subtitles and dubbing will be examined alongside the English performed and scripted versions.

4.7.3 *Wouldn't It Be Loverly?*

Wouldn't It Be Loverly? introduces Eliza Doolittle's aspirations. The song establishes her desires for comfort, stability, and dignity, showing a depth of character that contrasts with Higgins's initial perception of her as just a phonetic "case." The song is a lyrical ballad with a repeating refrain and a gentle rhythm that creates a feeling of warmth. Its melody is intentionally simple, allowing Eliza's working-class background to stay anchored while still conveying emotions.

In the 1956 stage production, the number is carried out by Eliza with a simple vocal performance that proves her accent and class identity. In the 1964 film, the melody and structure remain almost the same, but the performance is dubbed, which makes the voice sound smoother and the tempo a little slower. The orchestration in the movie presents a warmer and cleaner sound, reflecting the cinematic preference. Despite these

modifications, it remains a moment of introspection in which Eliza articulates her longing for a better life.

From the perspective of *humour theory*, the comic effect in this number may be related to what has been described as *incongruity*[472] (see Section 2.3.6). Rather than aspiring to a romantic fairytale, Eliza expresses her desires wishing not for princes or balls but for warmth, comfort, and physical security. This changing of the expected "Cinderella" narrative frame produces a sort of irony. At the *verbal level*, humour also emerges from Eliza's attempt to approximate a more formal register with limited success. The neologism *abs-bloomin'-lutely*, for instance, exemplifies a process of *infixation* that simultaneously conveys enthusiasm and reinforces her Cockney sociolect. Similarly, expressions such as *Someone's head restin' on my knee* or *I think I'll take me to Paree* (see Appendix A.2) reveal a big tension. In this sense, humour arises from the contrast between the semantic field of leisure and the associated with working-class speech.

From a *visual perspective*, spatial organisation contributes to meaning-making in ways described by Van Leeuwen's framework of compositional structure. Eliza is frequently positioned against the material environment of Covent Garden, while her upward gaze during the refrain gestures towards an imagined future space associated with comfort and stability. This configuration may be interpreted in terms of the Given/New distinction, where the urban setting represents the poor reality (Given), while the aspirational ideal is visually projected beyond the scenery (New).

Framing also plays a role in establishing social distance. Alternations between medium long shots, which emphasise Eliza's physical exposure to the cold environment, and closer shots that invite viewer to empathise with her create a dynamic oscillation between detachment and empathy. Considering the *gestural mode*, instead, Eliza's bodily orientation while saying *Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?*, directs attention away from her interlocutors and towards the future, reinforcing the forward-looking dimension of her aspirations.

Finally, at the *aural level*, the contrast between Eliza's rough vocal timbre and the smoother orchestral accompaniment creates a multimodal tension. While the orchestration brings harmonic coherence and emotional warmth, the vocal delivery keeps markers of social marginality. The resulting interplay between roughness and musical

[472] Jeroen Vandaele, "'Each Time We Laugh'. Translated Humour in Screen Comedy", *Translation and (Re)Location of Meaning. Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminars on Translation Studies 1994-1996*, ed. By Jeroen Vandaele, CETRA/KULeuven, 1999, pp. 237-272.

smoothness contributes to the song's affective complexity, suggesting that even within materially constrained conditions, aspirational discourse may find expressive form.

The humorous instances identified in this song are analysed using the AVT-oriented humour analysis grid introduced in Chapter 2 and reproduced in Section 4.7.2.

Table 4.6. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *Wouldn't It Be Loverly?*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
Someone's head restin' on my knee	Language-dependent joke	Aspirational semantic content expressed through socially marked Cockney pronunciation.	*Con la testa di qualcuno sul guanciale*	*Una mamma per farti amar*
I think I'll take me to Paree	Complex joke (international + language-dependent)	Phonetic marking of class identity through non-standard pronunciation.	*Penso che me ne andrò a Parigi*	*A Capri me ne andrò*
Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Recurrent Cockney vowel shift functioning as a sociolinguistic marker.	*Non sarebbe meraviglioso?*	*Uh, che bella favola!*
Oh, so loverly sittin' abs-bloomin'lutely still!	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Emphatic infixation combined with Cockney vowel shift functioning as a sociolinguistic marker.	*Me ne resterei seduta* *In una quiete che non sembra vera*	*So già che tutto ciò sarebbe la felicità*

As in the previous song, humour comes from sociophonetic marking and aspirational discourse, with the subtitled and dubbed versions adopting different strategies to negotiate class-indexical pronunciation across modalities.

4.7.4 *With a Little Bit of Luck*

With a Little Bit of Luck introduces the audience to Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father, and outlines his way of life. The song portrays him as a humorously unapologetic character

who enjoys a carefree and flexible moral view. This contrasts with Eliza's dreams in *Wouldn't It Be Loverly?* and brings humour to the story by celebrating the idea of avoiding responsibility. The song also showcases the resilience and irreverence of the working-class. The number features a catchy and repetitive refrain. Its lively rhythm and light orchestration create a cheerful atmosphere, while the simple harmonies support the comedic tone. In the 1956 stage production, the song maintains its structure and verses, though some performances introduce minor cuts for pacing. The 1964 film version, however, expands the number by adding back some lyrical verses that are sometimes shortened or omitted in stage productions. This allows the film to explore Doolittle's character more deeply. The stage version includes a reprise of the number, reinforcing Doolittle's worldview; this reprise is omitted in the 1964 film.

From a multimodal point of view, this song provides a case study for examining how humour emerges through the interaction of linguistic, visual, gestural and aural resources, rather than through verbal resource alone. In line with the methodological framework outlined in Chapter 2, humour is approached here as the result of multimodal incongruity, arising from tensions between discourse type, vocal delivery, performative embodiment and orchestral style.

The humour at the *linguistic level* is due to the interplay between the formal syntactic structures and the socially marked lexical choices. Doolittle often employs syntactic structures modelled on biblical or proverbial speech (e.g., *The Lord above made man to help his neighbor…*"), which are subverted by the colloquial continuation marked by the use of adversative conjunctions such as *but*. This is a kind of "discursive reversal," where moral authority is appropriate to justify social irresponsibility. The lexical items such as *bloomin'*, *blinkin'*, and *run amuck* (see Appendix A.3) are not errors in the speech of Doolittle but rather function as sociolinguistic markers of class affiliation. These lexical items reinforce Doolittle's position as one of the "undeserving poor," as identified by Shaw, and contribute to the humour.

From the *visual perspective*, Doolittle is not often depicted in solitude but is rather depicted as part of the working-class group in which Harry and Jamie, his friends, are also present. This is another way in which the visual modality reinforces the social component of his worldview. The industrial background would be the Given, referring to the material circumstances of the characters in Covent Garden, while the salience of the beer mugs or dancing figures would be the important feature.

At the *gestural level*, Doolittle's boily performance is characterised by a low-tension modality that is in contrast with the rigid posture associated with the upper-class. His leaning against walls and rhythmically swaying movements generate what may be described as gestural looseness, and for this reason, considered as moral flexibility. Circular and horizontal movement produced through ensemble choreography reinforce the metaphor of a life structured going around rather than moving in linear progression.

From the *aural mode*, the *oom-pah* rhythm of the song establishes a temporal structure that is often linked to the pub and the gathering of groups of people. However, the vocal delivery of the trio is somewhat rough in relation to the refined orchestral accompaniment, which establishes another modality of contrast.

As is appropriate to the AVT-based typology set out in Chapter 2, the chosen instances of humour in this number may be correlated in relation to their source of semiotic origination. Selected humorous instances in this song may be mapped according to the AVT-oriented typology introduced in Chapter 2, with particular attention to the interaction between sociolinguistic register, discursive framing and performative embodiment.

Table 4.7. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *With a Little Bit of Luck*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
With a little bit of luck, / Someone else'll do the blinkin' work!	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Use of colloquial slang (*blinking*) combined with ironic moral reasoning that reverses the value of the labour.	*Con un po' di fortuna / sarà qualcun altro a fare il lavoro*	*Basta un pizzico così / di fortuna e un altro lo farà*
Oh, you can walk the straight and narrow / But with a little bit of luck, You'll run amuck!	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Parodic reference to biblical moral discourse (*straight and narrow*) subverted by colloquial phrasing.	*Puoi restare sulla retta via / Ma con un po' di fortuna puoi smarrirla*	*Puoi combinare guai in serie / se di fortuna avrai un pizzico così*
The Lord above made man to help is neighbor / No matter where, on land, or sea, or	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Working-class reinterpretation of moral duty as a strategy of social avoidance.	*Iddio invita ad aiutare il prossimo / Per terra, mari e monti / Iddio invita ad aiutare il*	(Primo verso non comprensibile all'ascolto) / *E sei soltanto una nullità / se non hai i soldi*

foam. / The Lord above made man to help his neighbor, but, / With a little bit of luck, / With a little bit of luck, / When he comes around you won't be home!			*prossimo, ma / Con un po' di fortuna / Con un po' di fortuna / Quando ti cercano non sei in casa*	*tu rimani solo ma /* (ultimi due versi non comprensibili all'ascolto)

It is important to notice that not all the dubbed Italian lyrics are understandable. The actor who voices Eliza's father has a deep, completely different voice from the original, and unfortunately, in certain passages, it is hard to comprehend.

As in the previous song, humour here does not arise exclusively from lexical or phonetic manipulation, but from the multimodal interaction between discourse type, vocal delivery and embodied performance.

4.7.5 *I'm an Ordinary Man*

I'm an Ordinary Man provides a clear view of Professor Higgins's self-perception and his views on women and relationships. The song acts as a humorous yet charged monologue in which Higgins shares his preference for being alone, focused on intellectual activities, and emotional distance. The musical number mixes spoken passages with lyrical elements, allowing Higgins to maintain a mostly spoken style while still being musical. The melody is intentionally limited in range, supporting his character as someone who does not sing well and emphasising his skill with words rather than his vocal talent. The orchestration is light, adding short musical notes that enhance the humour. This interplay between speech and music underscores the contrast between Higgins's intellectual rigidity and the emotional depth he refuses to see. The structure of the song remains consistent in both the stage and film versions. However, the film introduces some changes in pacing, allowing for smoother shifts between spoken and sung parts. The orchestration in the 1964 version is slightly richer and more polished, though still restrained to preserve the conversational nature of the piece.

From the point of view of the theory of humour, the comic effect of this number can be explained as an instance of the phenomenon of *incongruity*. At the *linguistic level*, the humour appears to be generated by the discrepancy between Higgins's self-

characterisation as an "even-tempered" and "quiet" person, as opposed to the violent, hyperbolic imagery he uses to speak of women, as in the use of the expression *Spanish Inquisition*, *plunging in a knife*, or the image of a *Wagnerian mother*. His use of high-register words, as well as his references to literary figures such as Keats and Milton, adds to the image of intellectual superiority, which both supports and subverts his misogynistic views.

At the *visual mode*, the setting of Higgins's study, which is crowded with books, recording equipment, and photographs, situates the speaker as a man of science and intellectual control. Nevertheless, in his discussion of the disruptive power of women, he is physically in an environment of order and stability, which is in contrast to the increasing mobility and instability of his movements.

In the *Gestural* and *Audio-Visual Mode*, the humour is derived from the incongruity between the content and the performance. Higgins' behaviour and calmness contradict the increasing exaggeration of his movements, and this incongruity is intensified by the visual humour, which depicts the movements of the character as those of someone locked up in their own intellectual prison.

When the scene is viewed from the *auditory mode*, the use of the musical context results in a rhythm that is closer to speech patterns than to the natural rhythm of songs, which again emphasizes the character's position as the man of logic and not emotion. The final speech, *I shall never let a woman in my life!*, highlights the incongruity between his professed lack of emotion and his growing obsession with Eliza.

In the following table the song is analysed in the same way of the others before.

Table 4.8. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *I'm an ordinary man*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
I'm a very gentle man; / *even-temper'd and good natur'd, / whom you never hear complain; / Who has the milk of human kindness / by the quart in ev'ry vein.*	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Self-characterisation contradicted by subsequent hyperbolic and misogynistic discourse. The humour is partly language-dependent, since it	*Io sono un gentiluomo / con un carattere tranquillo / e che non si lamenta mai / nelle cui vene scorre / il dolce latte della gentilezza umana.*	*Sono un vero gentleman / non uccido le signore se le incontro in società / e quando son di buon umore / non c'è niente che non va.*

		draws on an explicit quotation from *Macbeth*, and partly community-based, as it relies on culturally shared assumptions surrounding the figure of the Victorian gentleman.		
You want to talk of Keats and Milton; / she only wants to talk of love.	National culture/Institutions joke	Contrast between intellectual elitism and stereotypically gendered interests.	*Tu vuoi parlare di Keats o Milton / Lei vuole parlare d'amore*	*Se a letto leggi un bel romanzo / la luce spegnere vorrà*
I'd prefer a new edition / of the Spanish Inquisition	International joke	Exaggerated historical reference used for comic overstatement.	*Preferisco una nuova versione / della Santa Inquisizione*	*Preferisco cucinare, fare i letti e rammendare*
She'll have a large Wagnerian mother / with a voice that shatters glass!	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Metaphorical hyperbole based on culturally loaded musical reference, which is both language-dependent and community-based, as it draws on the image of Wagner's Valkyrie.	*Una enorme madre wagneriana / Che con la voce frantuma i cristalli*	*Se a ribellarti tu ti provi / di strilli ti sommergerà*
I shall never let a woman in my life!	Complex (international + community-based humour) joke	The verbal claim weakened by narrative trajectory and performative delivery, generates a complex joke based on the interplay between a community-based stereotype, the misogynistic male figure, and an international joke, the ironic pattern whereby claims of	*Io non farò mai entrare una donna / Nella mia vita*	*Non vedrai mai una donna qui con me*

		self-sufficiency, such as living without female presence, are immediately disproved.		

As shown in Table 4.8, humour in *I'm an Ordinary Man* largely relies on incongruities between Higgins's verbal self-presentation and the exaggerated imagery throughout the song. The Italian subtitled and dubbed versions address these examples through different multimodal strategies, preserving or neutralising intertextual references and metaphorical overstatement.

4.7.6 *Just You Wait*

Just You Wait marks Eliza's first major expression of frustration toward Higgins and serves as an important moment in her early character development. This musical number gives voice to her anger, determination, and sense of injustice, revealing a fiery personality that contrasts with Higgins's arrogance. This song also positions her not as a passive pupil but as a character capable of emotional intensity. The number alternates between clearly articulated spoken-sung passages and more melodic parts, reflecting Eliza's back-and-forth between anger and fantasy. The rhythmic structure demonstrates how impulsive her reactions are. The orchestration changes accordingly, feeling lighter during the angry sections, and fuller and dreamlike during the imagined scenario where the King rewards her and punishes Higgins. This contrast highlights the dual purpose of the number: it serves as both an expression of real emotion and an ironic wish fulfilment. The 1956 stage version presents *Just You Wait* in a direct dramatic form. Eliza expresses her frustration and briefly transitions into a fantasy sequence before returning to her initial anger. The 1964 film expands the dream portion of the number, improving its theatricality through visual and more complex orchestration. The film version uses broader musical gestures and greater dynamic contrast to emphasise the shift between reality and fantasy. The stage version also includes a brief reprise of the song, which is omitted in the 1964 film.

From the point of view of the theory of humour, the comicality of the routine may be said to be rooted in the aforementioned notion of incongruity, in the distinction between the marked variety of speech and the aspirational variety that the character is attempting.

At the *linguistic level*, the ridiculousness of the routine may be said to derive from the phonology of the Cockney variety that is evidenced by the routine. The absence of the initial sound /h/ in words such as *'enry 'iggins* and *'ead* creates an incongruity between the form of the words and the intended meaning. The incongruity is especially evident in the fantasy routine, as evidenced by the aspirational variety of speech and the unusual pronunciation of words such as *the-a-tre*.

In terms of the *visual representation*, the film version develops the idea of the imagined execution scene in terms of stylised performance. The move from the interiority of the home to the exteriority of the public develops the idea of binary oppositions in terms of reality and fantasy.

As far as gestural representation concerns, the more expansive movement develops the humour in the scene as it develops the idea of the theatricality of the imagined revenge scenario, such as going up and down from the stairs.

In terms of the *aural representation*, the move from the spoken-sung to the more melodic sections develops the idea of the move from the immediacy of the anger to the fantasy. The more orchestral sound in the fantasy sequence develops the idea of the move in the narrative as well as the idea of the irony in the move from the linguistic performance to the social aspiration.

Table 4.9. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *Just you wait*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
Just you wait, 'enry 'iggins, just you wait!	Language-dependent joke	Non-standard phonetic realisation (h-dropping) signalling sociolectal identity.	*Aspetta, Higgings, e vedrai*	*Lo vedrai Signor Higgins lo vedrai*
I'll be off a second later / And go straight to the the-a-tre!	Language-dependent joke	Metalinguistic pronunciation humour through hyper-articulation.	*Invece di farti questo favore / Me ne andrò a teatro immediatamente*	*Io non chiamerò il dottore / ti lascerò morire*
One day I'll be famous! I'll be proper and prim!	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Aspirational discourse contrasted with marked pronunciation. Based on the idiomatic	*Un giorno sarò Famosa / Sarò una vera signora*	*Io lo so che un bel giorno tanto ricca sarò*

		expression “proper and prim”.		

The data, in Table 4.9 show how humour in the song emerges from the interaction between linguistic performance and character construction, and how this effect is only partially preserved in translation.

4.7.7 *The Rain in Spain*

The Rain in Spain represents a key turning point of Eliza’s phonetic training and one of the most iconic transformation moments in the musical. This scene marks the moment in which Eliza successfully produces the “proper” pronunciation that Higgins sees as crucial for her social change. It celebrates a moment of intellectual success rather than an emotional one. Still, its cheerful tone represents a shared excitement that brings Eliza, Higgins, and Pickering together in a rare moment of unity, despite their usually tense interactions. The song is built on a rhythmic, repetitive structure that reflects the teaching nature of the phonetic exercise. The melodic line is simple but memorable, with short, accentuated phrases that reinforce the articulation of important vowel sounds. Both the stage and film versions preserve the structure and role of the number. The 1964 film maintains the fast pace and lively energy of the original but adds a bit more depth to the orchestration to fit the film format.

On the *linguistic level*, the humour results from the transformation of a repetitive phonetic exercise into a celebratory performative act. The line *The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain* serves simultaneously as a teaching instrument and a measure of linguistic accomplishment. The humour results from the sudden shift from Eliza’s previous mispronunciations to her newly acquired vowel pronunciation, especially with reference to diphthongs characteristic of Received Pronunciation.

With regard to the *visual*, the setting appears to shift as the exercise progresses, from an instructional setting to a setting of shared celebration, with the positioning of the character of Eliza moving from the margins of the visual frame to the centre. The same happens with the movements inside the social hierarchy.

With regard to the *gestural*, the response of the characters of Higgins and Pickering shifts from an observational response to an enthusiastic response, as the gesture of the repetition of the phrase becomes more pronounced, moving the interaction from an

instructional setting to a ritualistic setting, with the humour being provided by the contrast between the two.

About the *aural*, the repetition of the phrase is accompanied by a rhythmic and melodic pattern that is more focused on the articulation of the words, with the orchestration building as the exercise progresses, aligning with the phonetic success of the character of Eliza.

Table 4.10. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *The Rain in Spain*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!	Language-dependent joke	Phonetic drill centred on vowel articulation and diphthong accuracy.	*La pioggia in Spagna bagna tutta la campagna*	*La rana in Spagna gracida in campagna*
By George, she's got it!	Community-based humour	Upper-class interjection signalling sociolectal identity. The meaning is *By God* as an euphemism.	*Perbacco, ce l'ha fatta*	*È portentoso*
In Hartford, Heresford, and Hampshire…	Complex joke (language-dependent + community-based humour)	Reference to geographically marked RP pronunciation contexts and to the pedagogical practice of teaching H-dropping.	*A Hartford, Hereford e Hampshire*	*Chi campa sopra quella panca?*
Hurricanes hardly happen.	Language-dependent joke	Alliterative phrase used as pronunciation exercise.	*Non ci sono mai uragani*	*Anche la capra campa*
"How kind of you to let me come!"	Community-based humour	Polite formula associated with upper-class speech conventions.	*È stata gentile a invitarmi*	*Che caro ragazzo è il mio amico*

In the dubbed version, the original geographically marked pronunciation sequence, *In Hartford, Hereford, and Hampshire / Hurricanes hardly happen,* is replaced by the Italian tongue-twister *Chi campa sopra quella panca? / Anche la capra campa*. This substitution

implies the loss of the cultural reference to place names but preserves the articulatory function of the exercise by introducing a phonetic pattern that face consonantal repetition within the target language. In this sense, humour is relocated from a culturally specific pronunciation drill to a performative speech-based challenge more accessible to the Italian audience.

4.7.8 *I Could Have Danced All Night*

I Could Have Danced All Night marks the emotional peak of Eliza's successful phonetic progress. Following the excitement of *The Rain in Spain*, this song expresses Eliza's new confidence, joy, and sense of possibility. While the lyrics do not directly mention romantic feelings, the song shows Eliza's growing emotional connection with Higgins, even though she does not recognise it. The number unfolds as a waltz-like ballad with a wide melodic range that reflects Eliza's emotional state. While the melody is simple, its repetition and intensification convey increasing emotional depth, turning what starts as a personal confession into an expression of joy. Both versions keep the essential structure and musical character of the song, but the tempo is slightly slower in the film production.

At the *linguistic level*, the humour is created by the juxtaposition of words that describe bodily exhaustion, such as *Bed! Bed! I couldn't go to bed!,* with the repetition of words that describe the need for activity, like *I could have danced all night*. This is an instance of situational irony, as the linguistic indicators of sleep are constantly subverted by the metaphors of flight, *I could have spread my wings*. The exaggeration of the intensity of the emotion is also an indicator of the humour.

In terms of the *visual mode*, the domestic space of Higgins' home reinforces the idea of rest and order, which is challenged by the movement of Eliza throughout the space. The lack of compliance on her part to the maids' attempts to impose normalised behaviour again highlights a spatial incongruity in the functional space of the bedroom and her emotional state. Regarding the *gestural mode*, the expansive movement of Eliza contrasts with the more contained movement of the other supporting characters. The attempts of the maids to direct her towards the bed are again challenged by her open and expressive movement, particularly in the gestures of her arms.

Considering the *aural mode* instead, the waltz-like rhythm reinforces a cyclical pattern that reflects the persistence of Eliza's emotion. The development in the phrasing of the

melody reflects the build in the excitement, transforming the emotion into a performance that is almost excessive.

Table 4.11. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *I Could Have Danced All Night*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
Bed! Bed! I couldn't go to bed!	Complex (International + language-dependent) joke	Behavioural incongruity between physical fatigue and emotional excitement. Repetition and performative exaggeration (*bed*) expressing Eliza's emotional excitement despite physical exhaustion. The humour operates both as international (euphoria and inability to sleep) and language-dependent (lexical repetition).	*A letto! Non posso andare a letto*	*No, no, a letto non andrò*

As illustrated by Table 4.11, the comic dimension of this song is closely tied to Eliza's emotional state. The Italian translations keep the same effect. Eliza is physically tired but emotionally excited. In the scene are used language, music, and gestures to make people laugh. From a translation point of view, both the Italian subtitles and the dubbed version keep this dynamic by keeping the original lyrics' repetitive and exaggerated patterns. The choice of certain words and the way the rhythm changes may be a little different, especially in the dubbed version, where the way the words are sung limits how they are phrased. But the funny effect is still very clear.

4.7.9 *Ascot Gavotte*

Ascot Gavotte interrupts the story to present a stylized image of high-society spectators at the Ascot Racecourse. It highlights their exaggerated elegance. This musical moment critiques society and contrasts with Eliza. The number is written in the style of a gavotte, not as a true historical dance, but as an ironic adaptation of its courtly elegance. The musical lines reflect the characters' stiff posture and polite indifference. The stage and film versions share the same core musical material and maintain the number's satirical purpose. However, the 1964 film uses visual style to improve the comedic effect. Costumes, movement and camera angles amplify the sense of aristocratic formality and detachment. Musically, the film employs a fuller orchestration.

On the *linguistic level*, the humour is provided by the over-formality of the speech used by the spectators. For example, *What a smashing, positively dashing spectacle* and *absolutely ripping moment* use the lexical register of upper-class British English. This overuse of adjectives in the expression of the spectators' excitement is hyperbolic and borders on parody.

On the *Visual Mode*, the song highlights the spatial arrangement and the stylisation of the costumes through the figure of the number itself. The spectators are dressed in monochrome and arranged symmetrically, which is static and highlights conformity and restraint in their behaviour. This is in sharp contrast to the excitement expressed in the lyrics.

As for the *Gestural Mode (Performance)*, humour is created by the restraint of the spectators' bodily movements. Although the text speaks of increased heart rate and emotional content *Pulses rushing! Faces flushing!*, the body movement is restricted. This is another form of contrast between the linguistic form and the physic performance, contributing to the satire of aristocratic behaviour.

From an *auditory* point of view, the musical form, inspired by the gavotte, creates an atmosphere of ceremony, resembling the strict behavioural codes of high-society etiquette.

In order to examine how humour is redistributed across audiovisual translation modes, the following table maps selected humorous lines from the song according to Zabalbeascoa's typology of audiovisual jokes. The original lyrics are treated as the Source Text (ST), while the Italian subtitles and the Italian dubbing are analysed as Target Texts (TT1 and TT2). The table illustrates how the humorous effect emerges not only from the

verbal text but also from performance, rhythm, and embodied expression, and how these elements are negotiated in subtitling and dubbing.

Table 4.12. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *Ascot Gavotte*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	Joke Type	Source of Humour	Italian Subtitles (TT_1)	Italian Dubbing (TT_2)
Pulses rushing! *Faces flushing!*	Language-dependent joke	Rhythmic repetition emphasising exaggerated emotional response	*Il polso non si arresta / Il sangue va alla testa*	*Dagli spalti / Vita, soldi*

This is not a key song for the narrative; it is just a way to show how aristocratic people lived. All the actors sing together and are static in the scene. There are few movements, and all of them happen at the same time.

4.7.10 *On the Street Where You Live*

On the Street Where You Live introduces Freddy Eynsford-Hill's emotional perspective and presents him as a romantic partner in the story. The song acts as a lyrical monologue in which Freddy expresses his infatuation with Eliza, raising her figure to an almost ideal level. The song is structured as a romantic ballad, characterised by long sentences and a harmonic progression that aims to bring great emotion. The vocal writing is more lyrical than many of the musical's other songs. The simplicity of the song's form emphasises Freddy's sincere feelings. In the 1964 film, the song remains structurally faithful to the original but benefits from a wider orchestration that enhances its romantic atmosphere. Additionally, the film places the song in an outdoor setting, allowing visual elements, such as movement through space and atmospheric lighting. A short reprise of the number appears in the stage production, but it is not included in the film adaptation.

At the *linguistic level*, the humour arises from Freddy's tendency to turn an ordinary urban setting into something idealised. The *phrases my heart went on a journey to the moon* or *all at once am I sev'ral stories high* reinterpret a familiar setting in romantic terms, resulting in contrast between Freddy's passionate tone and the simplicity of the situation. This is also echoed *visually* in the film version, where Freddy is placed in an urban setting that does not alter, so that while the lyrics suggest an idealised, almost dream-like quality of perception, the setting is still ordinary. Likewise, Freddy's *gestural performance* is relatively sober throughout the course of the performance. These gestures

are ironic contrasts between Freddy's declarations of love and the nature of his bodily performance.

From an *auditory* point of view, the extended melodic phrasing provides for the gradual progression of the emotional content of the performance. With the more elaborate instrumentation, Freddy's infatuation is treated with an air of ceremony, underscoring the contrast between the modest setting and the nature of the emotional experience through which it is perceived.

Table 4.13. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *On the Street Where You Live*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	Joke Type	Source of Humour	Italian Subtitles (TT_1)	Italian Dubbing (TT_2)
When she mentioned how her aunt bit off the spoon,	Language-dependent joke	Exaggerated imagery creating comic effect	*Quando ha detto che sua zia / Ha rotto il cucchiaio con un morso solo*	*Una splendida ragazza come lei*

As illustrated in Table 4.13, the Italian subtitled and dubbed versions differ in their treatment of Freddy's romantic imagery, with TT_1 remaining closer to the source text and TT2 introducing reformulations that alter the metaphorical framing. In musical dubbing, lines are often adapted in order to satisfy rhythmic, melodic, and performative constraints. The Italian dubbing may prioritise singability and musical phrasing over lexical correspondence with the source text.

4.7.11 *Eliza's Entrance (Promenade)*

Eliza's Entrance (Promenade) marks Eliza's official introduction into high society during the ball. Although it is brief, this part plays a crucial role in the story. It represents the peak of Higgins's experiment and indicates Eliza's temporary acceptance in the upper class. The song is built around elegant melodic lines that capture the grace associated with elite social gatherings. The song appears in the 1956 stage production as an instrumental song, but is omitted from the 1964 film. In the film, Eliza's entrance at the Embassy Ballroom is conveyed visually rather than musically, relying on visual spectacle, costume details and camera movement to chieve the same effect.

4.7.12 *The Embassy Waltz*

The Embassy Waltz plays a key role in *My Fair Lady* during Eliza's appearance at the Embassy Ball. Like the previous song, this piece represents the culmination of Higgins's linguistic experiment. It also serves as the setting for testing Eliza's transformation in public. The waltz captures both the elegance and formality of the occasion. It raises the tension around Eliza's ability to sustain her new social identity. The piece is a fully orchestrated, classically styled waltz built on graceful melodies. Its harmonic progressions reflect the magnificence of a formal ballroom setting. Unlike the vocal numbers, *The Embassy Waltz* mainly serves as atmospheric music. Both the stage and film versions feature the waltz as a vital part of the ballroom scene. In the stage production, the waltz supports stylised choreography and provides an elegant backdrop for Eliza's interactions with the aristocratic guests. The film has richer orchestration and sophisticated studio recordings with a deeper and more immersive sound.

4.7.13 *You Did It*

You Did It highlights the triumph felt by Higgins and Colonel Pickering after Eliza's successful performance in high society. While the two men congratulate each other for the perceived success of their "experiment", they overlook Eliza's agency and emotional experience. This discrepancy anticipates the conflict that will emerge between Eliza and Higgins, making the number a crucial turning point in their relationship. The song mixes fast-paced sections with lighter melodies, typical of Higgins's style. The quick rhythm and sharp beats reflect the character's excitement and self-pride. The music is lively but doesn't overpower the dialogue. In the stage version, *You Did It* is performed in full, featured rapid dialogue, ensemble interruptions, and an extended middle section. The 1964 film keeps the song but shortens it, eliminating some of the faster dialogue to improve the rhythm.

At the *linguistic level*, the humour is created by the affirmation of Higgins' success that is presented by the celebratory tone. The repetition of *You did it!* creates an ironic tension between the audience's understanding of the events that transpired, and the affirmation provided by the other characters. At the *visual level*, the collective placement of the household staff around Higgins creates an ironic tension between the distribution of agency that is presented by the story and the absence of Eliza, who is the focal point of the story, as the visual representation is dominated by Higgins. At the *gestural level*,

the enthusiastic delivery by Higgins creates an emphasis on the emotional investment that he has for the result of the "experiment." At the *aural level*, the fast-paced alternation between the spoken lines and the reaction of the ensemble creates an emphasis on the collective enthusiasm that is being expressed by the group, thus contributing to the affirmation of the individual's achievement.

Table 4.14. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *You Did It*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
Tonight, old man, you did it!	Complex (Verbal + Performative) joke	Attribution of Eliza's success to Higgins's intellectual authority. Playful celebratory tone expressed through performative delivery	*Stasera ce l'hai fatta / Vecchio mio*	*Hai vinto e puoi ben dirlo, puoi dirlo*
As sturdy as Gibraltar	International joke	Hyperbolic metaphor used for character praise	*E col tuo fare ostinato*	*Perché minimizzarlo*
They thought she was ecstatic And so damn'd aristocratic,	Language-dependent joke	Evaluative language reinforcing perceived class performance	*Per quella sua aria aristocratica / Sono stati presi dallo stupore*	*Perché minimizzarlo / Che motivo c'è di farlo*
"Her English is too good," he said, "Which clearly indicates that she is foreign."	Complex (Verbal + Ideological) joke	Logical paradox linking linguistic competence to foreignness	*Ha detto che il suo inglese era perfetto / E che quindi era una straniera*	*Ha detto che parlava troppo bene ed era certo una straniera*

As shown in Table 4.14, the Italian subtitled and dubbed versions differ not only in their lexical choices but also in the way they redistribute emphasis across participants, at times reinforcing or attenuating Higgins's role in Eliza's transformation.

4.7.14 *Show Me*

Show Me marks an emotional confrontation between Eliza and Freddy. It highlights her impatience with empty expressions of love. This moment contrasts with the romantic ideals expressed earlier in *On the Street Where You Live*. Here, Eliza chooses genuine

actions over empty words, showing her increasing confidence and maturity. This musical number shows her growing independence from Higgins and underscores a central theme of the story: language fails when it is not supported by genuine intention. The song has fast, rhythmically driven phrases and sharp dynamic accents that reflect Eliza's urgency and frustration. Its harmonic movements create a sense of forward motion, while the vocal line shifts between forceful singing and softer moments. The quick tempo adds to the feeling of confrontation, making *Show Me* one of the most direct challenges to traditional romantic musical theatre ballads. *Show Me* appears in both the stage and film versions with minimal structural changes. The 1964 film shortens the number, speeding up the rhythm. The film's orchestration is fuller.

From the *linguistic* point of view, the source of the comedic effect lies in the violation of the conventions of romantic discourse by Eliza. The elaborate metaphors used by Freddy, such as *Speak and the world is full of singing*, are immediately followed by the repetitive and insistent negation of the use of words by Eliza, *Words! Words! Words!* This produces the comedic effect by the interplay of the romantic clichés and the insistence on action. From the *aural* point of view, the quick tempo and the insistent emphasis on the words also underscore the impatience of Eliza with the idea of verbalising affection. This musical form violates the conventional romantic duet, which would normally feature the expansion of the melody, replacing it with the insistence of the rhythm. From the *gestural* point of view, the direct physical orientation of Eliza towards Freddy contrasts with the more sober physical orientation of Freddy towards Eliza.

Table 4.15. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *Show Me*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
Words! Words! Words! / I'm so sick of words!	Language-dependent joke	Repetitive rejection of romantic verbalisation	*Parole, parole, parole / Sono stufa delle parole*	*No no no tanto già lo so*
Don't talk of stars / Burning above. / If you're in love, / Show me!	Complex (Verbal + Performative) joke	Subversion of conventional romantic discourse through direct and pragmatic challenge	*Non mi parli di stelle e di cielo / Se mi ama davvero, me lo provi*	*Tu sai parlar solo d'amor / non sai che far / sogni*
Anyone who's ever been in love'll tell you that / This is no time for a chat!	Complex (Verbal + Performative) joke	Pragmatic mismatch between romantic situation and verbal delay	*Ogni Innamorato lo può confermare / Questo non è il momento di parlare*	*Cosa me ne importa di restare ad ascoltar / mi puoi soltanto annoiar*

Both the Italian subtitles and dubbing depart in different ways from the original script. TT_1 preserves Eliza's rejection of romantic verbalisation more closely, while TT_2 introduces reformulations that modify the tone and intensity of what she says. These differences highlight how subtitling and dubbing balance the tension between linguistic fidelity and performative immediacy in distinct ways.

4.7.15 *Get Me to the Church on Time*

Get Me to the Church on Time marks Alfred Doolittle's transition from bachelorhood to marriage. The song highlights the contrast between his previously beliefs as part of the "undeserving poor" and the new responsibilities that come his way. It acts as a lively ensemble piece and reflects Doolittle's unexpected rise in social status. The number is structured as a rhythm-driven ensemble piece with a strong emphasis on dance. It includes upbeat melodic lines, syncopated rhythms, and call-and-response moments between Doolittle and the group. The orchestration is vibrant and percussive, supporting the energetic atmosphere. In the 1956 stage version, the number is already a full of choreography and ensemble participation. The 1964 film amplifies these elements, transforming the song into one of the musical's most visually elaborate sequences. The film adaptation expands the choreography, uses a larger ensemble, and integrates more dynamic staging to emphasise the joyful atmosphere. The orchestration is brighter and fuller, benefiting from the broader sound afforded by studio recording.

Following the social semiotic model of humour as described by Kress and van Leeuwen, it is determined that humour is present in the *linguistic mode* of this song, primarily as a function of the exaggerated use of language, rhythm, and group performance. Doolittle attempts to come to terms with the inevitability of marriage and is reluctant to commit to it. The exaggerated scenarios of *Drug me or jail me, / Stamp me and mail me* portray marriage as something to be physically fought against.

The use of the *aural mode*, the energetic tempo, and the repetition of refrain all work to create the sense of cycle, celebration, and then obligation. The call and response exchange between Doolittle and the group emphasises the contrast between his personal reluctance and the collective pressure around him, turning hesitation into a rhythmic element of the song.

The use of the *gestural mode*, the participation of the ensemble in the scene, works to raise the reluctance of Doolittle as it is portrayed. The physicality of the scene is energetic, which contrasts with the semantic meaning of the reluctance, creating humour.

Table 4.16. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *Get Me to the Church on Time*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
Pull out the stopper, / Let's have a whopper,	Language-dependent joke	Playful rhyme and celebratory language	*Prendi il bicchiere tanto agognato / Tracannalo tutto d'un fiato.*	*Se l'è bevuta / se l'è goduta*
Drug me or jail me, / Stamp me and mail me	Language-dependent joke	Hyperbolic imagery expressing reluctance	*Chi può alzare le braccia / Lo faccia*	*Quindi non resta che fare festa*
If I am flyin' / Then shoot me down.	Complex (Verbal + Performative) joke	Verbal resistance contradicted by ongoing celebration	*Se volo in alto / Impallinatemi*	*Vorrei fuggire ma non si può*

As shown in Table 4.16, the Italian subtitles and dubbing move away from the original wording in different ways. The subtitles sometimes keep Doolittle's exaggerated way of pretending to resist marriage, while the dubbing often replaces it with lines that better fit the rhythm and festive atmosphere of the scene. As a result, the humour shifts from Doolittle's comic reluctance to a more general sense of celebration.

4.7.16 *A Hymn to Him*

A Hymn to Him is a humorous speech in which Higgins tries to explain his frustrations with women while simultaneously reinforcing his own biases. The song serves as a direct continuation of Higgins's misogynistic views previously expressed in *I'm an Ordinary Man*. It also deepens the contrast between Higgins's rigid intellectualism and the more emotionally complex viewpoints of those around him. Positioned late in the narrative, the number emphasises Higgins's unwillingness to change, even as Eliza's evolution becomes more evident. The number depends on a fast-paced delivery, allowing Higgins to express his complaints with quick verbal skill. The melodies are intentionally simple, reflecting Higgins's preference for speaking rather than singing. The orchestration

remains light, keeping the focus on the lyrics. Both the stage and film versions present the number almost the same way.

The humour in *A Hymn to Him* is seen mainly through linguistic exaggeration, rhythmic build-up, and performative confidence. In the *linguistic level*, the humour is seen through the use of generalisation and cumulative insult. Higgins creates the stereotype of women as "irrational" and describes them through an "exasperating, irritating, vacillating…" series of adjectives. The humour is not seen through any use of wordplay but through the overconfidence of the statements. The repetition of the rhetorical question *Why can't a woman be more like a man?* serves as a refrain that reveals the circularity of Higgins's logic. The humour derives from the discrepancy between Higgins's conviction and the audience's knowledge of his ignorance. From an *aural* point of view, Higgin's rapid speech reinforces his intellectual self-confidence. The repetition of the refrain gives this song a hymnic quality, ironically giving Higgins' personal bias the status of moral truth. For the *gestural mode*, Higgins' controlled behaviour and confident tone contrast with his view of women's emotional instability. The performance reinforces the irony: Higgins accuses women of being emotionally unstable, yet his own emotional rigidity becomes more and more apparent. The humour derives from the discrepancy between Higgins' verbal authority and his physical inflexibility.

Table 4.17. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *A Hymn to Him*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
Women are irrational, that's all there is to that!	Community-based humour	Sweeping generalisation framed as logical conclusion	*Le donne sono irrazionali e impetuose*	*Io l'ho sempre detto che le donne son così*
Why can't a woman be more like a man?	Complex (Verbal + Ideological) joke	Refrain built on circular and biased reasoning	*Perché le donne non sono come gli uomini?*	*Perché le donne non sono come noi?*
Men are so honest, so thoroughly square;	Community-based humour	Idealised self-representation of masculinity	*Gli uomini sono onesti, leali e veri*	*L'uomo è sincero, più onesto che può*
Would you complain if I took out another fellow?	Language-dependent joke	Comic inversion of romantic jealousy expectation	*Io non penso sempre ai fatti tuoi*	*Se con un altro uomo andassi a cena fuori?*

As shown in Table 4.17, the Italian subtitles tend to preserve the argumentative structure of Higgins's discourse, while the dubbing occasionally softens the misogynistic exaggeration in favour of smoother musical phrasing. This difference reduces the harshness of the original script while maintaining the satirical intent.

4.7.17 *Without You*

Without You is a crucial moment of emotional expression for Eliza. It arrives after the rising tensions between her and Higgins reach a breaking point. In this song, Eliza proves her independence and self-worth. She directly challenges Higgins's belief that she is just a result and the product of his efforts. Eliza declares that she is capable of living independently and that Higgins's world will continue without her. Meanwhile, she will continue growing. This makes the number a clear opposition to Higgins's earlier song, shifting the centre of control toward Eliza. The melodic structure of the song balances elegance and determination. The vocal line is expressive and carefully shaped, allowing Eliza to show both emotional clarity and strength. The song appears in both the stage and film versions with minimal changes. The rhythm in the film is a bit smoother, allowing the emotional progression of the number to become clearer.

Humour is used on the *linguistic mode* by reversal. Eliza uses Higgins' previous linguistic allusions, *Hartford, Hereford and Hampshire* and *The rain in Spain*, against Higgins to break his power. The repetition of *without you* provides a structural and semantic anchor which moves from the emotional to the ideological. When Eliza states that even the tides, clouds, and Earth's rotation exist without Higgins, she is making an exaggeration. For the *aural mode*, the musical theme used here is one of determination. The sudden reprise of *I did it!* by Higgins can be defined as an ironic intervention. The humour can be defined as *situational irony* because there is a clash between Eliza's musical declaration and Higgins' intervention. For the gestural mode, the contrast between Eliza's calm behaviour and Higgins' self-congratulatory gesticulation can be identified.

Table 4.18. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *Without You*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	Joke Type	Source of Humour	Italian Subtitles (TT_1)	Italian Dubbing (TT_2)

And there still will be rain / on that plain down in Spain, / even that will remain / without you.	Complex (Intertextual + Ideological) joke	Reuse of earlier phonetic exercise to diminish Higgins's centrality	*E la pioggia in Spagna / Continuerà a bagnare la campagna*	*Ed in Spagna ci sta quella rana che là (...)*
Without your pulling it, the tide comes in; / without your twirling it, the Earth can spin.	Language-dependent joke	Comparison between natural forces and Higgins's ego	*Le maree si alzeranno / Anche senza il suo aiuto / La Terra girerà lo stesso / Senza il suo contributo*	*L'autunno arriva non lo mandi tu / Il mondo gira, non lo giri tu*

The Italian subtitles tend to preserve the logical structure of Eliza's argument, maintaining the parallelism between natural phenomena and Higgins's presumed centrality. The dubbing, however, introduces more rhythm-driven reformulations, occasionally reshaping the imagery to fit musical constraints.

4.7.18 *I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face*

I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face constitutes one of the most emotional parts of *My Fair Lady*. It represents Higgins's first real moment of self-reflection and shows how his emotional distance slowly fades. The song exposes Higgins's inner conflict, as he oscillates between denial, irritation, confusion, and reluctant reliance on Eliza. It's the closest he gets to admitting his feelings. Musically, the number adopts a reflective and almost conversational tone. The melodies suggest vulnerability and uncertainty. Both versions capture the emotional essence of the number, but the 1964 film enriches its orchestration, giving the song a more polished and fuller sound. The film benefits from the greater control of vocal recording, which helps capture the nuances of Higgins's spoken-sung performance with precision.

The stages of *I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face* exhibit the development of humour, not through comedy, but through self-contradiction, irony, and emotional displacement. At the *linguistic level*, the source of humour stops from Higgins' shift between negation and attachment. Higgins' repetitive use of the phrase *I've grown accustomed….*, portrays emotional attachment as a form of habituation. The use of the linguistic routine, *like breathing out and breathing in*, portrays attachment as a physiological response. Comic irony is more apparent in the fantasy segment on Eliza's marriage with Freddy. Higgins'

fantasy portrays an exaggerated scenario on the couple's social degradation, *a wretched little flat above a store*, *a bill collector beating at the door*. The greatest contradiction can be found in the following lines: *I'm a most forgiving man…*, and then immediately: *But I shall never take her back!*. In the *aural mode*, the piece moves from contemplative phrasing to more forceful declaratory sections. The melodic line also follows Higgins' repressed emotional state. The accompaniment favours contemplation rather than conflict, with the pauses and inflections providing the emotional impact. In the *gestural mode*, the humour is sober and internalised. Higgins' body remains motionless, while the words he utters are emotionally moving. Higgins' fantasies are overacted, while his body remains stiff, which adds to the contrast. The humour here is not derived from the comedy itself, but from the ironic form, which the listener can understand, though Higgins cannot.

Table 4.19. Song-Level Humour Mapping Across Subtitling and Dubbing in *Without You*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT_1)**	**Italian Dubbing (TT_2)**
I've grown accustomed to her face.	Language-dependent joke	Emotional attachment reframed as ironic routine habit.	*Mi ero abituato ad averla intorno*	*Non so più stare senza lei*
I'm a most forgiving man, *The sort who never could, ever would,* *Take a position and staunchly never budge.* *Just a most forgiving man.*	Complex (language-dependent + community-based humour) joke	Self-contradiction between claimed tolerance and rigid refusal	*Sono un uomo indulgente / Il tipo di uomo che / Rimane fermo sui suoi principi / Un uomo indulgente*	*Sono un vero gentleman / e quindi non potrei forse mai / essere troppo scortese con costei / perché sono un gentleman*
Marry Freddy! Ha!	Language-dependent joke	Exclamation expressing jealousy masked as ridicule	*Sposare Freddy.*	*Sposare Freddy, Ah!*
Like breathing out and breathing in.	Language-dependent joke	Metaphor reducing love to involuntary habit	*Come una fragranza profumata*	*Senza quegli occhi dentro i miei*

The subtitles remain closer to the original balance between irony and restraint, while the dubbing makes Higgins's feelings more explicit and sentimental. This changing between subtitles and dubbing reduces the self-contradictory tone that shapes the humour of the original monologue.

4.7.19 *Finale*

The *Finale* brings Higgins and Eliza back into the same space after a period apart. While it offers an open-ended reconciliation, it avoids explicit romantic resolution and suggests a renewed connection. Eliza's return shows her independence rather than submission, and Higgins's reaction reveals a softening of his previous rigidity. The ambiguity of the ending has long been a central interpretive element of the work, inviting reflection on whether the characters have truly changed and what their reunion implies about independence, love and social norms. Musically, the *Finale* brings together themes from other songs, particularly *I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face*. The melodic lines are introspective, reflecting the emotional tone of the scene. The orchestration is delicate and reflects the intimate atmosphere developed throughout Higgins's introspective journey. Instead of a grand closing, the music resolves quietly, allowing the emotional ambiguity to persist. The broad dramatic shape of the *Finale* remains consistent across the stage and film versions, but the tone differs. In the stage production, the scene often feels more theatrical and open to interpretation. Directors may portray Eliza's return in various ways, from strong to tender, based on staging choices. The 1964 film create a more controlled and intimate atmosphere.

4.8 Textual Comparison between Stage Script (1956) and Film Subtitles (1964): Methodology and Transcription Criteria

As explained by Gottlieb[473], subtitling can be described along two main axes. From a linguistic perspective, it may be "intralingual", when subtitles operate within the same language (for instance, in captions for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing or for language learners), or "interlingual", when spoken dialogue in one language is rendered in written form in another. Interlingual subtitling is characterised by a *diagonal transfer* from spoken source language to written target language. From a technical perspective, subtitles may be "open", permanently integrated into the audiovisual product, or "closed", transmitted as an optional signal activated by the viewer, a format increasingly used in multilingual broadcasting.

[473] Henrik Gottlieb, "Subtitling. A New University Discipline", in *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 2. Insights, Aims, Visions. Papers from the Second Language International Conference. Elsinore. Denmark 4-6 June 1993*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994.

Building on Sperber and Wilson's "Relevance Theory", Kovačič[474] approaches subtitling as a practice governed by a balance between what the viewer is required to process and what they gain from that effort. Communication, in this view, does not aim at completeness, but at efficiency. This balance is often described in terms of the *mini-max effect*[475]: the attempt to achieve the greatest possible communicative effect with the least possible cognitive effort. Applied to subtitling, this principle helps explain why reduction and omission are not frequent, but often necessary. Relevance, in Kovačič account, therefore functions as a practical criterion guiding subtitle reduction: what matters is not the preservation of every linguistic detail, but the transmission of information that remains most accessible and meaningful to the viewer under audiovisual constraints. From this viewpoint, subtitle reduction cannot be explained in only linguistic terms. The decision to keep or omit an element is based upon the balance between the effort needed for its processing and its overall contribution to the narrative comprehension. This is the reason why apparently minor details may be retained, while more elaborate linguistic features are simplified or lost. The relevance-based logic becomes particularly clear when dealing with humour, accent variation, and phonetic play. Linguistic playfulness and dialectal markers often demand a relatively high level of processing, while subtitles operate under strict limits of space, time, and reading speed. As a result, humour may be toned down, accentual variation flattened, and phonetic complexity reduced in favour of elements that are more immediately intelligible.

In musical contexts such as *My Fair Lady*, these tendencies are made even stronger by limits related to rhythm, melody, and singing. The need for singability and audiovisual synchronisation often changes the balance towards semantic clarity and narrative function.

This section provides a comparison between the 1956 stage script of *My Fair Lady* and the subtitles of its 1964 film adaptation. While the previous sections offered an analytical discussion of how each musical number is reshaped in its transition from stage to screen, the tables included here present the textual data on which that analysis is based. Each table follows a clear structure. The **time-code** column refers to the exact moment in the film when the corresponding subtitle appears, allowing the reader to locate each excerpt

[474] Irena Kovačič, "Relevance as a Factor in Subtitling", in *Teaching Translating and Interpreting 2. Insights, Aims and Visions. Papers from the Second Language International Conference Elsinore, 1993*, ed. Dollerup, Cay, Lindegaard, Annette, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994.
[475] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-150.

within its audiovisual context. It is not referred to the script stage, but only to the film adaptation. The **character** column identifies the speaker, while the two textual columns present, respectively, the words found in the **Stage Script (1956)**[476] and in the **Film Subtitles (1964)**[477]. Since subtitles are a written version of spoken and often sung material, they differ from both the original script and the film's actual performed dialogue. These differences are important to the present comparison.

Throughout the chapter everything is in the same typographical style: sung lines are shown in italics, and spoken dialogue is presented in regular Roman type. This distinction is essential for determining how the film subtitles manage the transitions between speech and song, and for identifying how musical phrasing is kept, modified, or omitted in the subtitled version. However, in the English subtitles of *My Fair Lady*, the songs are not presented in *italics* but in regular Roman type. To indicate that a line is sung rather than spoken, this version uses a quaver symbol (♪) - eight note, at the beginning of the subtitle. Together, the tables provide a detailed textual map of the musical's two main versions. They serve both as a documentary resource and as an analytical tool, demonstrating how language and music interact in the adaptation process.

The following section examines the textual shifts that emerge across three parallel versions of the same musical number: the 1956 stage script, the English subtitles of the 1964 film, and the Italian subtitles. The analysis proceeds in two stages: an intra-lingual comparison (4.8.1) and an inter-lingual comparison (4.8.2), in order to highlight both medium-specific and cross-linguistic strategies of representation, condensation, and accessibility.

4.8.1 *Why Can't the English?* - Intra-Lingual Comparison (Stage Script 1956 vs English Subtitles)

The English subtitles analysed in this chapter were taken from the version of *My Fair Lady* currently available on Amazon Prime Video (last accessed 2025). Since streaming platforms routinely update or replace subtitle files for reasons of formatting, licensing, or error correction, it is not possible to determine whether these subtitles correspond to the

[476] Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe, *My Fair Lady*, New York, Chappel & Co., 1956.
[477] The subtitles used for the 1964 film version of *My Fair Lady* were transcribed from the official English subtitles available on Amazon Prime Video (last accessed 2025).

original 1964 subtitle track. The present analysis therefore reflects the version available at the time of viewing.

Table 4.20. Line-by-line Intra-Lingual Comparison Between the 1956 Stage Script and the English Subtitles of *Why Can't the English?*.

#	Time-Code	Character	Stage Script (1956)	Film Subtitles
1	00:10:17	Higgins	*Look at her,* *a prisoner of the gutter,*	♪ Look at her, a prisoner of the gutter
2	00:10:20		*Condemned by every syllable she utters.*	♪ Condemned by every syllable she utters
3	00:10:23		*By right she should be taken out and hung,*	♪ By right she should be taken out and hung
4	00:10:26		*For the cold-blooded murder of the English tongue.*	♪ For the cold-blooded murder of the English tongue
5	00:10:29	Eliza	A-o-o-o-w!	[EXCLAIMS]
6	00:10:30	Higgins	Aoooow!	
7	00:10:32		Heavens, what a noise!	♪ Heavens, what a sound
8	00:10:34		*This is what the British population,*	♪ This is what the British Population
9	00:10:36		*Calls an elementary education.*	♪ Calls an elementary Education
10	00:10:39	Pickering	Come, sir, I think you picked a poor example.	Come, sir, I think you picked a poor example.
11	00:10:41	Higgins	Did I?	Did I?
12	00:10:43		*Hear them down in Soho square,* *Dropping "h's" everywhere*	♪ Hear them down in Soho square, Dropping "H's" everywhere
13	00:10:47		*Speaking English anyway they like.*	♪ Speaking English anyway they like
14	00:10:50		*You sir, did you go to school?*	♪ Hey, you, sir, did you go to school?
15	00:10:52	Cockney	*Whatya tike me fer, a fool?*	♪ What do you take me for, a fool?
16	00:10:54	Higgins	*No one taught him "take" instead of "tike"!*	♪ Well, no one taught him "take" instead of "tike"
17	00:10:58		*Hear a Yorkshireman, or worse,* *Hear a Cornishman converse,*	♪ Hear a Yorkshireman or worse hear a Cornishman converse

18	00:11:02		*I'd rather hear a choir singing flat.*	♪ I'd rather hear a choir singing flat
19	00:11:05		*Chickens cackling in a barn,* *Just like this one*	♪ Chickens, cackling in a barn just like this one
20	00:11:09	Eliza	Garn!	[LAUGHS] Garn.
21	00:11:11	Higgins	Garn!	"Garn."
22	00:11:13		I ask you, sir, what sort of word is that?	I ask you, sir, what sort of word is that?
23	00:11:16		*It's "Aaoooww" and "Garn" that keep* *her in her place.*	♪ It's "ow" and "garn" that keep her in her place
24	00:11:19		*Not her wretched clothes and dirty face.*	♪ Not her wretched clothes and dirty face
25	00:11:23		*Why can't the English teach their* *children how to speak?*	♪ Why can't the English
26	00:11:24			♪ Teach their children how to speak?
27	00:11:26		*This verbal class distinction, by now,* *Should be antique.*	♪ This verbal class distinction, by now should be antique
28	00:11:30		*If you spoke as she does, sir,* *Instead of the way you do,*	♪ If you spoke as she does, sir instead of the way you do
29	00:11:34		*Why, you might be selling flowers, too!*	♪ Why, you might be selling flowers too
30	00:11:37	Pickering	I beg your pardon!	MAN: I beg your pardon.
31	00:11:38	Higgins	*An Englishman's way of speaking* *absolutely classifies him.*	♪ An Englishman's way of speaking
32	00:11:39			♪ Absolutely classifies him
33	00:11:41		*The moment he talks he makes some* *other Englishman despise him.*	♪ The moment he talks
34	00:11:43			♪ He makes some other Englishman despise him
35	00:11:45		*One common language I'm afraid we'll* *never get,*	♪ One common language I'm afraid we'll never get
36	00:11:49		*Oh, why can't the English learn to*	♪ Oh, why can't the English learn
37	00:11:52		*set a good example to people whose*	♪ To set a good example to people
38	00:11:55		*English is painful to your ears?*	♪ Whose English is painful to your ears
39	00:11:58		*The Scotch and the Irish leave you close* *to tears.*	♪ The Scotch and the Irish leave you close to tears

40	00:12:02		*There even are places where English completely disappears.*	♪ There even are places
41	00:12:04			♪ Where English completely disappears
42	00:12:07		In America, they haven't used it for years!	♪ Why, in America they haven't used it for years
43	00:12:11		*Why can't the English teach their children how to speak?*	♪ Why can't the English
44	00:12:12			♪ Teach their children how to speak?
45	00:12:14		*Norwegians learn Norwegian,*	♪ Norwegians learn Norwegians
46	00:12:16		*the Greeks are taught their Greek.*	♪ The Greeks are taught their Greek
47	00:12:18		*In France every Frenchman knows his language from "A" to "Zed"*	♪ In France every Frenchman knows his language from A to Zed
48	00:12:22		The French never care what they do, actually, as long as they pronounce it properly.	The French don't care what they do actually,
49	00:12:23			as long as they pronounce it properly.
50	00:12:26		*Arabians learn Arabian with the speed of summer lightning,*	♪ Arabians learn Arabian
51	00:12:28			♪ With the speed of summer lightning
52	00:12:30		*The Hebrews learn it backwards,*	♪ The Hebrews learn it backwards
53	00:12:32		*which is absolutely frightening.*	♪ Which is absolutely frightening
54	00:12:34		*But use proper English and you're regarded as a freak.*	♪ Use proper English you're regarded as a freak
55	00:12:37		*Why can't the English,*	♪ Oh, why can't the English…
56	00:12:41		*Why can't the English,*	♪ Oh, why can't the English learn to speak? ♪
57	00:12:44		*Learn To Speak?*	

A comparison between the original stage script of *My Fair Lady* and the English subtitles of the 1964 film reveals several important differences in how sung and spoken lines are represented. As previously noted, the script consistently employs *italics* for sung passages and regular Roman type for spoken dialogue.

By contrast, the film's English subtitles use only regular Roman type throughout, signalling sung lines by placing a **quaver symbol (♪)** at the beginning of each relevant subtitle. Significantly, the quaver also appears at the *end* of the final sung subtitle, e.g., "♪ Oh, why can't the English / learn to speak? ♪" in subtitle no. 56 (00:12:41), but not at the end of each individual subtitle unit, suggesting a deliberate attempt to mark the boundaries of the musical number rather than each separate line.

Additional discrepancies emerge in capitalisation practices. In the script, each verse begins with a capital letter, regardless of its syntactic position. The subtitles, however, follow the conventions of audiovisual translation: they capitalise only at the beginning of each subtitle block, not at the beginning of each line within multi-line subtitles. This is consistent with contemporary subtitling guidelines, which discourage three-line subtitles, of the kind present in this version, because they can obstruct the image and reduce readability, particularly when two lines would have sufficed.

Punctuation also differs between the two versions. The script maintains full punctuation, whereas the subtitles omit many commas, perhaps to ensure visual economy. Such omissions align with established subtitling practices that prioritise shortness and clarity.

More critically, there are clear issues concerning accessibility for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers. In subtitle no. 5, Eliza produces her characteristic non-lexical exclamation; although it is audible in the film and fully represented in the script, the subtitle renders it only as "[EXCLAIMS]", without specifying the quality or type of sound. In subtitle no. 6, Higgins's echo of Eliza's exclamation, also present in the audio movie and in the script, is not subtitled at all. As a result, viewers with hearing impairments receive neither Eliza's voice nor Higgins' answer. Both omissions constitute significant accessibility gaps, as they omit essential non-verbal and conversational signals needed to reconstruct the scene's dramatic and relational dynamics.

A number of additional issues emerge when comparing the original stage script with the English subtitles of the film. In subtitle no. 7, the scripted line *"Heavens, what a noise!"* appears in the subtitles as *"♪ Heavens, what a sound"*, with both a lexical substitution (*noise → sound*) and the omission of the final exclamation mark.

Other differences concern capitalisation. In subtitle no. 8, the word *Population* – which is lowercase in the script – capitalised. The same occurs in subtitle no. 9 with the word *Education* and in subtitle no. 12 with *H* in *"Dropping 'H's' everywhere"*.

Several subtitles also introduce small additions that the script does not include. For example, subtitle no. 14 inserts the interjection *Hey*, which does not exist in the original text. Subtitle no. 16 begins with *Well*, another element not found in the script. Similarly, the final two subtitles (nos. 55 and 56) add the interjection *Oh* before Higgins's concluding lines.

One important divergence is found in subtitle no. 15. The script intentionally reproduces Cockney orthography, *"Whatya tike me fer, a fool?"*, replicating the character's pronunciation and the performance in the film soundtrack. The subtitle, however, normalises this into standard English: *"♪ What do you take / me for, a fool?"*. On the one hand, this choice improves comprehension for hearing viewers by avoiding eye-dialect; on the other, it removes phonetic information that is central to the scene and to the story. From an accessibility perspective, this erasure makes it impossible for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers to experience the linguistic contrast that sustains both the song and the film's thematic structure. *Eye-dialect* refers to the use of non-standard spellings that visually mark a character's speech as socially or regionally non-prestigious, without automatically presenting an accurate phonetic representation. Its primary function is social indexicality rather than linguistic precision. It is used when writers change the spelling of words to *make* a character look uneducated or "non-standard", even if the pronunciation I actually the same (*sez* instead of *says*, *wuz* instead of *was*, *gonna* instead of *going to*)[478].

Other examples demonstrate varying degrees of expansion or reduction. In subtitle no. 20, Eliza's scripted exclamation *Garn!* is retained in written form, unlike earlier exclamations, but preceded by the paralinguistic marker *[LAUGHS]*. It also appears with a full stop rather than an exclamation point, thereby softening its pragmatic force. In subtitle no. 23, Eliza's characteristic cry *"Aaooowww"* is reduced to *"ow"*, most likely for reasons of spatial economy and screen legibility.

Structural segmentation also differs markedly. Scripted lines that appear as single verses are frequently divided across two separate subtitles for brevity and readability. A clear instance occurs with *"Why can't the English teach their children how to speak?"*, split into:

[478] Joan C. Beal, *English Dialects in the North of England*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2010, pp. 15-17; Jane Hodson, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-28; Rosina Lippi-Green, *op. cit.*, 2012, pp. 63-71; David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 286-288.

1. *"♪ Why can't the English"*
2. *"♪ Teach their children / how to speak?"*

   This type of division recurs throughout the song.

Semantic shifts also occur. Subtitle no. 42 turns a scripted declarative, *"In America, they haven't used it for years!"*, into an interrogative: *"♪ Why, in America / they haven't / used it for years"*. This changes sentence modality but also punctuation. Finally, subtitle no. 48 presents a perfect example of **condensation**, a common subtitling strategy. The scripted line *"The French never care what they do, actually"* becomes *"♪ The French don't care / what they do actually"*. By repositioning the adverb and reducing *never* to *don't*, the line is shortened, while still preserving its overall message, at the cost of losing some of Higgins's original emphasis.

The comparison between the 1956 stage script and the English subtitles of the 1964 film highlights several points, that may be summarised as follows:

- **Typographical conventions**:
  - The script uses *italics* for sung lines and regular Roman type for spoken dialogue.
  - The subtitles use only regular Roman type, identifying sung lines with a **quaver (♪)** symbol.
- **Musical boundary marking**:
  - The subtitles place a quaver at the beginning of each sung subtitle.
  - The subtitles also add a final quaver at the *end* of the last sung line to represent the end of the musical number.
- **Capitalisation differences**:
  - The script capitalises every verse-initial word.
  - The subtitles only capitalise the beginning of each subtitle block.
  - Unexpected capitalisation is seen occasionally in the subtitles (e.g., *Population*, *Education*, *H's*).
- **Punctuation reduction**:
  - Many commas and exclamation points from the script are omitted in the subtitles to ensure visual clarity.
- **Lexical substitutions and additions**:
  - Changes such as *noise* → *sound*.

    - Added interjections (e.g., *Hey*, *Well*, *Oh*).
    - Expressive cries (e.g., *Aaoooww* → *ow*).
- **Normalisation of non-standard speech**:
    - Eye-dialect Cockney spellings in the script (e.g., *Whatya tike me fer*) are standardised in subtitles (*What do you take me for?*). This increases intelligibility for hearing viewers but reduces access to phonetic information, essential for understanding characterisation.
- **Segmentation differences**:
    - Long verses in the script are split across multiple subtitles for readability or even multiple lines in the same subtitles (nos. 3, 12, 17, 19, 27, 28, 38, 42, 47).
    - Changes in sentence modality (e.g., declarative → interrogative).
- **Accessibility concerns**:
    - Non-lexical vocalisations are underspecified (e.g., *[EXCLAIMS]*).
    - Some audible lines are not subtitled at all (e.g., Higgins's echo of Eliza).
    - These kinds of omissions limit comprehension for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, especially in a musical where phonetic contrast is central.

Taken together, these differencies highlight the complex balance between music, language and visual constraints in subtitling, showing how the prioritisation of readability and synchronisation can impact both the representation of voice and the accessibility of meaning.

4.8.2 *Why Can't the English?* - Inter-Lingual Comparison (English Subtitles 1964 vs Italian Subtitles)

The comparison between the English subtitles of *My Fair Lady* and the Italian subtitles currently available on Amazon Prime Video reveals important differences not only in terms of lexical choice and syntactic restructuring, but also in the treatment of musical phrasing, register, linguistic humour, and cultural markedness. As with the intra-lingual comparison, the analysis highlights systematic patterns that illustrate both the constraints of subtitling and the translator's strategies for rendering Higgins's metalinguistic commentary in Italian.

Table 4.21. Line-by-line Inter-Lingual Comparison Between the English Subtitles and the Italian Subtitles of *Why Can't the English?*.

#	Time-Code	Character	Film Subtitles	Italian Subtitles
1	00:10:17	Higgins	♪ Look at her, a prisoner of the gutter	*Eccola là, la prigioniera dei trivi*
2	00:10:20		♪ Condemned by every syllable she utters	*Condannata da qualunque cosa gridi*
3	00:10:23		♪ By right she should be taken out and hung	*Quelle come lei dovrebbero* *Finir appese*
4	00:10:26		♪ For the cold-blooded murder of the English tongue	*Per aver assassinato la lingua inglese*
5	00:10:29	Eliza	[EXCLAIMS]	[EXCLAIMS]
6	00:10:30	Higgins		
7	00:10:32		♪ Heavens, what a sound	*Santo cielo, che suono!*
8	00:10:34		♪ This is what the British Population	*Questo è ciò che* *Noi abitanti d'oltremare*
9	00:10:36		♪ Calls an elementary Education	*Chiamiamo istruzione elementare*
10	00:10:39	Pickering	Come, sir, I think you picked a poor example.	Credo abbia scelto l'esempio sbagliato.
11	00:10:41	Higgins	Did I?	Ah sì?
12	00:10:43		♪ Hear them down in Soho square, Dropping "H's" everywhere	*Prenda quelli di Soho,* *Non pronunciano mai le "H"*
13	00:10:47		♪ Speaking English anyway they like	*Parlano l'inglese come gli pare*
14	00:10:50		♪ Hey, you, sir, did you go to school?	Ehi, lei, ha avuto un'istruzione?
15	00:10:52	Cockney	♪ What do you take me for, a fool?	Lei è davvero un buontempone!
16	00:10:54	Higgins	♪ Well, no one taught him "take" instead of "tike"	*Nessuno gli ha insegnato* *A dire "ei" invece di "ai"*
17	00:10:58		♪ Hear a Yorkshireman or worse hear a Cornishman converse	*Nello Yorkshire o in Cornovaglia* *Quella sì che è vera marmaglia*
18	00:11:02		♪ I'd rather hear a choir singing flat	*Preferisco ascoltare un coro stonato*
19	00:11:05		♪ Chickens,	*Sembrano polli starnazzanti*

			cackling in a barn just like this one	*In un fienile*
20	00:11:09	Eliza	[LAUGHS] Garn.	
21	00:11:11	Higgins	"Garn."	
22	00:11:13		I ask you, sir, what sort of word is that?	Che razza di parola è?
23	00:11:16		♪ It's "ow" and "garn" that keep her in her place	*Sono questi suoni che la avviliscono* *Questi suoni da orco*
24	00:11:19		♪ Not her wretched clothes and dirty face	*Non quegli stracci* *O il suo faccino sporco*
25	00:11:23		♪ Why can't the English	*Perché gli inglesi non insegnano* *Ai loro figli a parlare?*
26	00:11:24		♪ Teach their children how to speak?	
27	00:11:26		♪ This verbal class distinction, by now should be antique	*Non ci sarebbero più distinzioni* *Di classe sul modo di pronunciare*
28	00:11:30		♪ If you spoke as she does, sir instead of the way you do	*Se anche voi parlaste come lei, signori*
29	00:11:34		♪ Why, you might be selling flowers too	*Ora sareste al suo posto a vendere Fiori*
30	00:11:37	Pickering	MAN: I beg your pardon.	Con permesso.
31	00:11:38	Higgins	♪ An Englishman's way of speaking	*Un inglese viene classificato* *Per il modo in cui parla*
32	00:11:39		♪ Absolutely classifies him	
33	00:11:41		♪ The moment he talks	*Come uno apre bocca* *C'è un altro inglese che lo disprezza*
34	00:11:43		♪ He makes some other Englishman despise him	
35	00:11:45		♪ One common language I'm afraid we'll never get	*Non avremo mai* *Un'unica lingua comune*
36	00:11:49		♪ Oh, why can't the English learn	*Perché gli inglesi non imparano a*
37	00:11:52		♪ To set a good example to people	*Dare il buon esempio a quelli il cui* *Inglese è una pugnalata al cuore*
38	00:11:55		♪ Whose English is painful to your ears	
39	00:11:58		♪ The Scotch and the Irish leave you close to tears	*Scozzese e irlandese* *Fanno piangere dal dolore*
40	00:12:02		♪ There even are places	*Ci sono posti in cui ormai* *L'inglese è sparito*

41	00:12:04		♪ Where English completely disappears	
42	00:12:07		♪ Why, in America they haven't used it for years	*In America sono anni* *Che non viene più parlato*
43	00:12:11		♪ Why can't the English	*Perché gli inglesi non insegnano* *Ai loro figli come si parla?*
44	00:12:12		♪ Teach their children how to speak?	
45	00:12:14		♪ Norwegians learn Norwegians	*I norvegesi imparano il norvegese* *I greci il greco*
46	00:12:16		♪ The Greeks are taught their Greek	
47	00:12:18		♪ In France every Frenchman knows his language from A to Zed	*I Francesi conoscono a loro lingua* *Dall'A alla Z*
48	00:12:22		The French don't care what they do actually,	O meglio, a loro importa solo, che sia pronunciata correttamente.
49	00:12:23		as long as they pronounce it properly.	
50	00:12:26		♪ Arabians learn Arabian	*Gli Arabi imparano l'arabo* *Con la velocità del lampo*
51	00:12:28		♪ With the speed of summer lightning	
52	00:12:30		♪ The Hebrews learn it backwards	*Gli ebrei l'imparano anche al contrario* *E non ti lasciano scampo*
53	00:12:32		♪ Which is absolutely frightening	
54	00:12:34		♪ Use proper English you're regarded as a freak	*Usa un inglese corretto* *E ti guardano come un reietto*
55	00:12:37		♪ Oh, why can't the English…	*Perché gli inglesi…*
56	00:12:41		♪ Oh, why can't the English learn to speak? ♪	*Perché gli inglesi* *Non imparano a parlare?*

The comparison between the English and Italian subtitle tracks of *My Fair Lady* shows substantial differences in the rendering of linguistic meaning, musical phrasing, register, humour, and sociophonetic cues. While the English subtitles already represent a condensed version of the stage script, the Italian version constitutes a further layer of mediation, shaped both by the constraints of the subtitling medium and by the translator's interpretive choices.

To begin with, the two subtitle tracks differ significantly in their treatment of sung versus spoken lines. The English subtitles consistently use a quaver symbol (♪) to mark sung passages, a convention that helps viewers, especially hard-of-hearing users, distinguish musical numbers from dialogue. The Italian subtitles, however, adopt no such indicator: spoken lines, appear in regular Roman type, whilst songs appear in *italics*.

Lexical and semantic differences also emerge throughout the comparison. While some Italian renderings remain close to the English text, for instance, *"Condemned by every syllable she utters"* becomes *"Condannata da qualunque cosa gridi"*, many others depart from the source through reformulation or modulation. In several cases, the Italian subtitles adopt a more neutral or elevated register, transforming Higgins's irony or technical phrasing into standardised Italian. Cultural and pragmatic adaptation is likewise frequent: references to phonetic phenomena such as H-dropping are rendered denotatively (*"Non pronunciano mai le 'H'"*), with the result that the "humour" and sociolinguistic specificity of the original are partly lost.

Higgins's humour depends heavily on phonetics, dialect, and pronunciation jokes:

- "Dropping H's"
- "Whatya tike me fer, a fool" dello script, diventa "♪ What do you take me for, a fool?", che in italiano è reso con "Lei è davvero un buontempone"
- "It's 'ow' and 'garn' that keep her in her place".

The Italian version struggles to render this because Italian has no equivalent to H-dropping, Cockney-specific vowels, and London working-class slang. As a result, the subtitles sometimes neutralise the humour:

- "Dropping H's everywhere" → "Non pronunciano mai le 'H'"
  (a purely denotative explanation, with loss of comedic tone)
- "It's 'ow' and 'garn' that keep her in her place" → "Sono questi suoni che la avviliscono"
  (no eye-dialect, no humour, strong interpretive shift)

This reflects a general tendency toward loss of sociophonetic meaning, a predictable constraint in musical translation where jokes depend on English phonology.

One of the most striking patterns is the loss of phonetic and dialectal information. Many of Higgins's lines rely on wordplay based on English pronunciation, Cockney phonology, and eye-dialect spellings, elements that have no direct equivalent in Italian. The Italian subtitles tend to neutralise marked features, replacing them with standard forms or general

explanations. This choice improves readability but eliminates the sociophonetic contrast that lies at the heart of Higgins's metalinguistic critique and reduces the accessibility of the scene for d/Deaf or hard-of-hearing viewers who cannot rely on the audio to infer pronunciation differences.

Other differences are additions, omissions, and condensation strategies. In several instances, the Italian subtitles introduce lexical elements that are not included in the English version, such as evaluative expressions (*"Che buontempone!"*) or explanatory expansions. But also, the Italian subtitles omit paralinguistic markers, even when the English subtitles include them:

- [EXCLAIMS] preserved
- but some reactions or repetitions are not rendered at all.

Omissions are often due to space constraints, but they reduce accessibility for d/Deaf viewers.

Condensation also plays a significant role: longer lines are shortened, subordinating clauses are merged, and rhetorical structures are simplified in order to meet spatial and temporal constraints. This is evident in lines such as *"The French never care what they do, actually"*, which becomes *"O meglio, a loro importa solo che sia pronunciata correttamente"*, a rendering that both shortens and shifts the meaning of the original.
Segmentation choices also help in splitting the two subtitle tracks. Italian subtitles tend to have separated English many subtitle units to ensure readability, especially in fast-paced sung passages. This is consistent with standard subtitling, but changes the rhythm of the rhetorical arrangement of the musical number and, in some cases, the arrangement of sentence modality, for example, the transformation of a declarative statement into a question. These shifts highlight the complex interplay between linguistic adaptation and the temporal constraints imposed by music.

The Italian subtitles occasionally intensify emotional content: *"Absolutely classifies him"* becomes *"C'è un altro inglese che lo disprezza"*. Also, the Italian version often uses a more elevated or polite register:

- "Education" → "Istruzione elementare".

Finally, ideological softening appears in several points of the Italian subtitle track. Higgins's sharp remarks about nationalities, dialects, or linguistic habits, already stylised in the English subtitles, are sometimes rendered in less confrontational terms in Italian. The overall effect is a partial attenuation of the character's satirical tone, resulting in a

version of the song that appears comparatively more neutral. Furthermore, the Italian subtitles are not a singable translation, so they:

- Do not preserve rhyme schemes
- Do not follow the musical scansion
- Condense lines to fit reading speed
- Avoid long or metrically complex sentences.

This results in a version that prioritises comprehensibility over musicality.

The overall findings of this inter-lingual comparison may be outlined in the points below:

- **Lack of musical marking:**
  - English subtitles use a quaver (♪) to mark sung lines.
  - Italian subtitles use *italics* for the sung parts.
- **Register and tone shifts**:
  - Italian subtitles often adopt a more formal or polite tone.
  - Higgins's sarcasm and phonetic humour tend to be softened or neutralised.
- **Loss of sociophonetic information**:
  - English references to H-dropping, Cockney vowels, or eye-dialect are flattened into standard Italian.
  - Important linguistic contrasts are not represented visually.
- **Lexical substitutions and interpretive additions**:
  - The Italian subtitles frequently add interpretive elements (*buontempone*, *che razza di parola è?*) or rephrase content to fit cultural expectations.
- **Condensation and paraphrase**:
  - Several lines undergo semantic reduction for legibility.
  - Some rhetorical shifts occur, such as the softening of stereotypes.
- **Omissions of paralinguistic cues**:
  - Some reactions or vocalisations are not subtitled resulting in accessibility loss for hard-of-hearing viewers.
- **Segmentation differences**:
  - Italian subtitles often split a single English line into two subtitles; this alters pacing and musical timing.
- **Neutralisation of humour**:
  - Jokes based on English phonetics cannot be reproduced in Italian.

- Subtitles opt for direct explanation rather than humour.

- **Minimal attention to rhyme or rhythm**:
  - Italian subtitles prioritise semantic clarity over musicality with no attempt at preserving the song's prosodic features.

As in the previous section, these differences highlight the dual process of mediation involved in subtitling a musical number: the English subtitles already condense and reshape the stage text for audiovisual audiences, while the Italian subtitles introduce an additional layer of linguistic and cultural adaptation. The analysis clearly shows that subtitling not only translates words but also interprets tone, humour[479], sociolinguistic contrast, and musical timing, each of which contributes to the story and ideological composition of the work.

4.8.3 *Why Can't the English?* - Dubbing vs Subtitling in the Italian Adaptation

The comparison between the Italian dubbed version of *My Fair Lady* and the Italian subtitles available on Amazon Prime Video reveals two distinct, and often diverging, translation strategies. While both versions ultimately aim to render Higgins's metalinguistic criticism accessible to an Italian audience, they do so under radically different constraints. The dubbed version must remain synchronised with musical phrasing, melodic contour, and vocal performance, whereas the subtitles must ensure readability, temporal alignment with the speech rate, and visual economy. These competing priorities result in structural, lexical, and cultural choices that frequently diverge in significant ways.

Table 4.22. Line-by-line Intra-Lingual Comparison Between the Italian Dubbing and the Italian Subtitles of *Why Can't the English?*.

#	Time-Code	Character	Italian Dubbing	Italian Subtitles
1	00:10:17	Higgins	*Sentitela che razza di linguaggio*	*Eccola là, la prigioniera dei trivi*
2	00:10:20		*È donna ma ha qualcosa di Selvaggio*	*Condannata da qualunque cosa gridi*
3	00:10:23		*Davvero la dovrebbero impiccare*	*Quelle coe lei dovrebbero Finir appese*

[479] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-229.

4	00:10:26		*Perché quando apre bocca un linguicidio fa*	*Per aver assassinato la lingua inglese*
5	00:10:29	Eliza	*Ah!*	[EXCLAIMS]
6	00:10:30	Higgins		
7	00:10:32		*Senti che disastro!*	*Santo cielo, che suono!*
8	00:10:34		*Questo è ciò che la popolazione*	*Questo è ciò che* *Noi abitanti d'oltremare*
9	00:10:36		*Scambia per normale educazione*	*Chiamiamo istruzione elementare*
10	00:10:39	Pickering	Io credo però che abbiate scelto il campione peggiore	Credo abbia scelto l'esempio sbagliato.
11	00:10:41	Higgins	Davvero?	Ah sì?
12	00:10:43		*Basta andar per la città* *Per accorgersi che c'è*	*Prenda quelli di Soho,* *Non pronunciano mai le "H"*
13	00:10:47		*Tanta gente che parlar non sa*	*Parlano l'inglese come gli pare*
14	00:10:50		Siete andato a scuola voi?	Ehi, lei, ha avuto un'istruzione?
15	00:10:52	Cockney	Non ci avressi andato mai	Lei è davvero un buontempone!
16	00:10:54	Higgins	*Parla male e non ne sa il perché*	*Nessuno gli ha insegnato* *A dire "ei" invece di "ai"*
17	00:10:58		*Dice avressi per avrei* *E saressi per sarei*	*Nello Yorkshire o in Cornovaglia* *Quella sì che è vera marmaglia*
18	00:11:02		*Fastidio più terribile non c'è*	*Preferisco ascoltare un coro stonato*
19	00:11:05		*Con una brutta voce da trisavolo* *Sanno dire solo*	*Sembrano polli starnazzanti* *In un fienile*
20	00:11:09	Eliza	Cavolo!	
21	00:11:11	Higgins	Cavolo	
22	00:11:13		Ah, ecco una parola che sa pronunciare bene	Che razza di parola è?
23	00:11:16		*Se lei tanto ridicola vi appare*	*Sono questi suoni che la avviliscono* *Questi suoni da orco*
24	00:11:19		*È solo per il suo modo di parlare*	*Non quegli stracci* *O il suo faccino sporco*
25	00:11:23		Perché l'inglese in Inghilterra non si sa	*Perché gli inglesi non insegnano* *Ai loro figli a parlare?*
26	00:11:24			
27	00:11:26		*Si parla in tutto il mondo* *Ma non si parla qua*	*Non ci sarebbero più distinzioni* *Di classe sul modo di pronunciare*
28	00:11:30		*E se voi parlaste come adesso* *parla lei*	*Se anche voi parlaste come lei, signori*
29	00:11:34		*Fareste la fioraia pure voi*	*Ora sareste al suo posto a vendere Fiori*
30	00:11:37	Pickering	Per l'amore di Dio	Con permesso.
31	00:11:38	Higgins	*Parlando immediatamente si classifica la gente*	*Un inglese viene classificato* *Per il modo in cui parla*
32	00:11:39			

33	00:11:41		*Il modo che hai di parlare ti può far squalificare*	*Come uno apre bocca C'è un altro inglese che lo disprezza*
34	00:11:43			
35	00:11:45		*Sono curioso di conoscere il perché*	*Non avremo mai Un'unica lingua comune*
36	00:11:49		*Non c'è un inglese che sa*	*Perché gli inglesi non imparano a*
37	00:11:52		*Dire ciò che pensa usando la lingua con garbo e nobiltà*	*Dare il buon esempio a quelli il cui Inglese è una pugnalata al cuore*
38	00:11:55			
39	00:11:58		*Scozzesi ed irlandesi lo si sa*	*Scozzese e irlandese Fanno piangere dal dolore*
40	00:12:02		*Da tempo l'inglese perbacco non san parlare più*	*Ci sono posti in cui ormai L'inglese è sparito*
41	00:12:04			
42	00:12:07		Beh, in America questo succede da sempre	*In America sono anni Che non viene più parlato*
43	00:12:11		*Perché l'inglese in Inghilterra non si sa*	*Perché gli inglesi non insegnano Ai loro figli come si parla?*
44	00:12:12			
45	00:12:14		*Il russo parla il russo E il greco il greco sa*	*I norvegesi imparano il norvegese I greci il greco*
46	00:12:16			
47	00:12:18		*In Francia I Francesi san parlare un buon français*	*I Francesi conoscono a loro lingua Dall'A alla Z*
48	00:12:22		Mah, i Francesi non si preoccupano di ciò che dicono pur di pronunciarlo bene	O meglio, a loro importa solo, che sia pronunciata correttamente.
49	00:12:23			
50	00:12:26		*Gli Armeni il loro idioma già lo sanno da bambini*	*Gli Arabi imparano l'arabo Con la velocità del lampo*
51	00:12:28			
52	00:12:30		*I Cinesi molto fini san parlare contromano*	*Gli ebrei l'imparano anche al contrario E non ti lasciano scampo*
53	00:12:32			
54	00:12:34		*In Inghilterra tutto questo non si fa*	*Usa un inglese corretto E ti guardano come un reietto*
55	00:12:37		*Perché l'inglese…*	*Perché gli inglesi…*
56	00:12:41		*Perché l'inglese non si sa*	*Perché gli inglesi Non imparano a parlare?*

A first major difference concerns metrical constraints. In the Italian dub, entire lines are reshaped in order to fit the rhythm and melody of Frederick Loewe's score. This produces marked departures from the semantic content of the English original: for

example, the reference to *"Norwegians learn Norwegian"* becomes *"Il russo parla il russo / E il greco il greco sa"* (line 45), a shift motivated purely by syllable count and vowel distribution rather than by semantic fidelity. Similar processes occur with *"Arabians learn Arabian"*, which becomes *"Gli Armeni il loro idioma / già lo sanno da bambini"* (line 50), and *"The Hebrews learn it backwards"*, replaced with *"I Cinesi molto fini san parlare contromano"* (line 52). In each case, the dub opts for nationalities whose names and internal rhythmic patterns better accommodate the musical setting. The result is a culturally unfaithful but musically coherent line, an example of what Low defines as adaptive prioritisation in singable translation. By contrast, the Italian subtitles tend to remain semantically closer to the English original and to preserve the all the nationalities found in the source text (lines 45-52). In this case, the priority is keeping the meaning, not metrical fit: subtitles do not need to be sung, and therefore can maintain the cultural specificity of the original list (e.g., Norvegesi, Arabi, Ebrei). Nevertheless, this fidelity comes at the cost of other subtitling norms: segmentation occasionally breaks syntactic units not naturally, and slang- or dialect-related humour[480] is consistently neutralised.

Translating humour and jokes is challenging. According to Chiaro[481], jokes often depend on cultural specificity, intentional ambiguity, or require some kind of shared knowledge that people may not have in other countries. Certain jokes might be easier to translate if they are based on universally comprehensible cultural references. Many jokes have a strong connection to their originating culture, making it challenging for people from other cultures to understand them. The issue lies not in the words themselves, but in individuals' comprehension of the actual meaning of the joke. Jokes related to poetry frequently convey meanings that differ from their literal expressions. They play with language, making direct translation extremely challenging.

This tension is visible in *My Fair Lady*, and in particular in the song *Why Can't the English?*, whose humour is built on accent-based stereotypes, phonetic exaggeration, and culturally specific attitudes towards language and class. These elements bring substantial obstacles to translation, as they depend on shared sociolinguistic assumptions that cannot be directly reproduced in another linguistic and cultural context.

[480] Ivi, pp. 212-229.
[481] Delia Chiaro, *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, pp. 77-97; Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

Another key discrepancy relates to the treatment of Cockney features. The dubbed version, as expected, does not attempt to reproduce phonological traits such as H-dropping or glottalisation; instead, it employs a colloquial Italian register marked by lowered style, exclamations, and idiomatic expressions (e.g., *"Cavolo!", "Perbacco!", "Che razza di parola è?"*). This produces a socially recognisable but non-regional Italian vernacular. The subtitles, however, systematically avoid such colloquialisms, opting instead for standard Italian, even where this erases social nuance entirely. For instance, in line 21 the dubbed *"Cavolo!"* becomes the far more neutral *"Che razza di parola è?"* in the subtitles, stripping the utterance of its expressivity.

Humorous elements and idiomatic intensifiers present similar mismatches. In line 17, Higgins's sarcastic commentary in the dubbing (*"Dice avesse per averi / E sasses per sassi"*) is a creative rewriting designed to mimic English paronomasia through Italian homophony. The Italian subtitles, however, reduce this to a literal description of regional British speech patterns (*"Nello Yorkshire e in Cornovaglia…"*), favouring denotative clarity over performative humour. As Díaz-Cintas[482] notes, subtitling tends to "flatten" linguistic playfulness due to constraints on space and processing time, whereas dubbing can rely on vocal nuance and prosody to sustain humorous effects.

The two Italian versions also diverge in emphatic and expressive markers. The dubbing frequently inserts intensified exclamations (e.g., *"Per l'amor di Dio"*, *"C'è un altro inglese che lo disprezza"*), some of which have no equivalent in the subtitles. On the other hand, the subtitles sometimes include emphasis through the use of italics or punctuation (e.g., *mai*, *solo*) that are absent in the performed version. These differences highlight the multimodal nature of audiovisual translation: dubbing operates through performance, while subtitling is a matter of text condensation.

Finally, the Italian subtitles never match the dubbing in terms of musical segmentation. Even when the dubbed Italian line offers a close semantic equivalent, the subtitle often rewrites the line completely, following its own logic of concision and clarity. This dual system, one for singing and one for reading, reflects long-standing industrial practice in Italian AVT, where subtitles are prepared independently from dubbed scripts and may follow different translation briefs, or none at all.

[482] Ivi, pp. 81-87.

4.9 Conclusion: Reconfiguring Voice, Language, and Performance Across Media

In this chapter, *My Fair Lady* has been explored deeply. The musical does not simply translate *Pygmalion* in a different form, but re-articulates the relationship between language, class, and identity, through the combined resources of song, rhythm, and performance. Phonetics is not only a theme but also a musical and performance device.

The transition from stage to screen has also demonstrated that the process of adaptation is not limited to the structure of the work. Although the 1964 screen version of *My Fair Lady* keeps much of the original score and structure, but it also incorporates a series of significant changes to the visual language, orchestration, and vocality. The split between the vocality of the screen star Audrey Hepburn and the singing voice of Marni Nixon, which is a constant feature of the screen version, discards the unity of character and vocality that was a key feature of the stage version.

From the point of view of translation studies, *My Fair Lady* underlines the complexity of the translation of dialect, humour, and vocal performance. The difference between Cockney and Received Pronunciation cannot be translated into the target language. Strategies of adaptation, neutralisation, and socio-cultural substitution must be employed. The translation of songs must also keep a balance between semantic and musical constraints. From this point of view, humour, especially when it is connected to linguistic variety, appears as one of the main areas of instability.

Finally, *My Fair Lady* shows that musical theatre is a complex system where language, music, and bodily expression cannot be separated. The transformation of *My Fair Lady* into a film and its subsequent translation into other languages highlights the complexity of meaning transfer.

The methodological foundation for this analysis, will be further developed in the following chapters.

Chapter 5 - The Unsung Duet: Music, Migration, and Authentic Dublin in John Carney's *Once*

5.1 *Once* as a Naturalistic Musical: Context, Form, and Genre

John Carney's 2007 film *Once*, which later inspired a successful stage musical, marks a critical departure from the conventions of the classical film musical, establishing itself as a defining text within modern Irish cinema and the genre itself[483]. Produced on a remarkably small budget, estimated around €130,000, and shot quickly in 17 days on digital video (HDV), *Once* achieved global acclaim, including the Academy Award for Best Original Song for "Falling Slowly", cowritten by the two main actors, Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová[484] at the 2008 Oscars. It premiered at the Galway Film Fleadh, an international film festival, in July 2006. In this occasion, the Sundance programmer John Nein noticed the film; it was later selected for the 2007 Sundance Festival[485].



[483] Simon Vozick-Levinson, "Glen Hansard", *Rolling Stone*, 1160/1161 (2012), p. 28; Christopher Wallenberg, *Christian Science Monitor*, The Culture (2012); Steven Cohan, *The Sound of Musicals*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2010, pp. 176-187; Matthew J. Fee, "'A Musical Dressed Up in a Different Way'. Urban Ireland and the Possible Spaces of John Carney's *Once*", in *The Sound of Musicals* ed. Cohan, Steven, London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2010, pp. 176-187; Nessa Johnston, "The Celtic Tiger 'Unplugged': DV Realism, Liverness, and Sonic Authenticity in Once (2007), 7-1 (2014), pp. 25-38; Alison Rowat, "Irish Charms Sing in Perfect Harmony Once Once 3/5: [Final Edition], *The Herald* (2007), p. 21.

[484] Carlos Menéndez-Otero, "The Musical That Pretended It Wasn't a Musical: Genre and Narrative Style in *Once*", *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 36-8 (2019), pp. 666-689; Sarah Kuhn, "'Once' Upon a Song", *Back Stage East*, 48-21 (2007), p. 10; John Meagher, "Busking to Bond. Lightning strikes twice for 'Once'", *Irish Independent*, (2012); Marita Ryan, "Sounding Different Notes: Approaching the Other Through Music in John Carney's film *Once*", *Otherness. Essays and Studies*, 1-1 (2010), pp. 1-16; Steve Knopper, "How 'Once' Won Its Unlikely Oscar", *Rolling Stone*, 1048 (2008), pp. 17-18.

[485] Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689.

Figure 5.1. Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova[486].

From a methodological point of view, the analysis developed in this chapter follows the same used in Chapter 4, in order to maintain coherence across the comparative structure of the thesis.

The approach is based on a multimodal perspective. As in *My Fair Lady,* the focus is on the interaction among the different modes of communication (language, visual, auditory) through which it is analysed. Both the linguistic level of pronunciation (words, lyrics, dialogue) and the visual level are addressed in terms of singable translation, and the balance in terms of natural and performable language. The visual mode includes staging, gesture, and stage presence. Finally, melody, rhythm, and vocal delivery are the basis of the translation mode.

Carney explicitly characterised the film as a "modern day musical" or a "naturalistic musical", endeavouring to utilise songs in a manner palatable to a modern audience that might otherwise be sceptical of traditional musical tropes[487]. His goal was an "unselfconscious musical" [488], where the musical sequences were seamlessly "stitched into the drama of the piece" and justified by the characters' emotional state or ongoing events. The narrative revolves around a Dublin busker (Guy/Glen Hansard) and a Czech immigrant (Girl/Markéta Irglová), whose relationship develops over the course of a single week as they collaborate to record a demo tape[489].

In the case of the movie *Once*, the concept of the "naturalistic musical" refers to the idea of the musical narration, where the songs that are included in the film are not performed as spectacle, but rather as actions that take place in the natural flow of the event of the film. Music is included as a performance, motivated by busking, rehearsing, composing or recording, which are integral to the story. Music, also, does not interrupt the realism of the film, but rather extends it, particularly through the idea that the characters express their feelings through the music, which remain unsaid, without

[486] Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova attend the *Once* Broadway opening night at The Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre on March 18, 2012 in New York City. Photo by Brad Barket/Getty Images/Irish Independent.
[487] See Nessa Johnston, "The Celtic Tiger 'Unplugged'. DV Realism, Liverness, and Sonic Authenticity in Once (2007), 7-1 (2014), pp. 25-38; Steve Dougherty, "'Sing Street'. A Movie Musical in Disguise. Writer-Director John Carney, of 'Once' and 'Begin Again', Makes a New Movie About Making Music", *Wall Street Journal* (2016).
[488] See Matthew J. Fee, "'A Musical Dressed Up in a Different Way'. Urban Ireland and the Possible Spaces of John Carney's *Once*", in *The Sound of Musicals* ed. Cohan, Steven, London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2010, pp. 176-187.
[489] *Ibidem*; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689; Michael Schulman, "Once Again. Recording Session", *The New Yorker* (2012).

anything that could create an excess. The film, according to the critics, was made with the idea of "shedding the generic dressings of the musical", with performances that were "honest and convincing"[490]. Nevertheless, the work substantially engages with established subgenres, particularly the backstage musical and the integrated musical format, but subtly reframes them through a distinctly Irish, post-economic-boom lens.

In *Once*, the protagonists' romantic feelings are directed toward absent partners: the Guy sings of his ex-girlfriend who emigrated to London, while the Girl's songs invoke her distant husband in the Czech Republic.



Figure 5.2. Actors Cristin Milioti and Steve Kazee, portraying the main roles on Broadway[491].

Carney's cinematic style utilizes DV realism and a "lo-fi" aesthetic to enhance a sense of documentary authenticity, a major contrast to the visual excess often associated with Hollywood musicals[492]. The camerawork and framing emphasize that the musical performances are grounded in real, identifiable locations in and around Dublin, rather than expanding into the fantastical or "unreal" spaces typical of Busby Berkeley's

[490] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
[491] Illustration by Tom Bachtell/The New Yorker.
[492] See Nessa Johnston, "The Celtic Tiger 'Unplugged'. DV Realism, Liverness, and Sonic Authenticity in Once (2007), 7-1 (2014), pp. 25-38.

choreography[493]. The integration of musical numbers is logical and organic, arising from the Guy's job as a street musician, moments of composition, or rehearsal needs[494].
The following stage adaptation, written by Enda Walsh, transports the story's intimacy to the theatre by setting the action within what appears to be an ordinary Irish pub, where the audience is sometimes invited onto the stage[495].



Figure 5.3. Patrick Lonergan, "*Once. The Musical* by Enda Walsh, Gayety Theatre", Source: Irish Theatre Magazine (2013).

This setting carries the Irish tradition of the *seisiún* (session), requiring that the cast function as their own orchestra, playing instruments live on stage[496]. Although the stage version develops the characters and adds humour, reducing some of the emotional impact of the film, it maintains the essence of the film's theme: the power of music to express feelings that speech cannot capture[497].

[493] Matthew J. Fee, Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit*., pp. 176-187; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit*., pp. 666-689.
[494] Alison Rowat, *op. cit*., p. 21; Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit*., pp. 176-187.
[495] Patrick Lonergan, "Once. The Musical by Enda Walsh, Gayety Theatre", *Irish Theatre Magazine* (2013); Sara Keating, "Smooth Transition for Once from Screen to Stage", *Sunday Business Post* (2016).
[496] Nessa Johnston, *op. cit*., pp. 25-38; John O'Flynn, *The Irishness of Irish Music*, New York, Routledge, 2016, pp. 67-70; Ivi, pp. 94-100.
[497] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit*., pp. 176-187.



Figure 5.4. Patrick Lonergan, "*Once. The Musical* by Enda Walsh, Gayety Theatre",
Source: Irish Theatre Magazine (2013).

The transfer of *Once* from a "lo-fi" indie film (made for about €130,000) to a Broadway musical that won eight Tony Awards, necessitated several changes in style, narrative focus, and performance[498]. To clarify the connection between the original work, *Once* (Carney, 2007), and its later stage adaption, it is possible to look at the following table, which lists some of the main aesthetic, narrative and performance-related features of both productions. Moving from screen to stage means big changes in how the audience is involved, how the music is performed, and how the story is told.

[498] Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit*., pp. 666-689; Christopher Wallenberg, "Once" more, as best musical?", *The Christian Science Monitor*, The Culture (2012); Simon Vozick-Levinson, *op. cit*., p. 28.

Table 5.1. Comparative Overview of the Film *Once* (2007) and its Stage Musical Adaptation.

Feature	Film (*Once*, 2007)	Stage Musical (e.g., Broadway/Dublin Production)
Aesthetic/Style	**"Lo-fi" DV realism**, shot in 17 days. Performances were deliberately "honest and convincing" to avoid the stilted feel of classical musicals. Sound was primarily sync location recorded ("lo-fi live").	Utilises a theatrical language to harness the film's purity and honesty. The staging is set in what looks like an ordinary Irish pub.
Audience Engagement	Spectators (passers-by) are often included in the frame, acting as surrogates for the audience.	The production extends a participatory gesture by inviting audience members onto the stage before and during the interval to have a drink and join a *seisiún* (sing-song).
Music Execution	Songs arise organically from the narrative (busking, writing, rehearsing).	The cast members serve as their own orchestra, playing instruments live on stage (mandolin, cello, guitar, accordion, etc.), maintaining an emphasis on authenticity and musicianship.
Narrative/Script	Restrained in dialogue. The Guy is emotionally inarticulate in speech, contrasting with his eloquence in music. Emotional conflicts remain often unspoken, conveyed through musical interludes.	The book, written by Enda Walsh, fleshes out the central characters. Walsh adds humour and substantially develops the supporting roles and subplots, bringing many previously unexpressed feelings to the surface.
Climax and Ending	Adheres to the backstage musical structure (producing a demo tape) but subverts the romantic climax; the collaboration succeeds, but the couple immediately parts ways.	Maintains the subversion of the romantic climax.

The comparison point out how the transition from film to stage involves not only formal and stylistic adjustments, but also a reconfiguration of narrative depth, performative strategies and audience engagement, while still preserving the authenticity that defines *Once* across both mediums.

5.2 Migration, Language, and Urban Identity in Post-Celtic Tiger Dublin

Once provides a complex portrayal of contemporary Dublin, functioning as a cultural document articulating the realities of what Matthew J. Fee calls "post-Celtic Tiger Ireland"[499]. The film contrasts sharply with earlier depictions of the city focusing solely on either hedonistic prosperity or social pathology (such as crime or addiction)[500]. Instead, Once focuses on the marginalised: the struggling musician and the immigrant worker[501].

The geographical and economic backdrop is integral to the narrative. The Guy works in his father's failing Hoover repair shop and busks on Grafton Street, while the Girl earns a living through multiple precarious jobs, including selling flowers and cleaning houses[502]. City spaces are also metaphorically used as stages[503].

The film is described as providing a "snapshot of modern Dublin" [504] characterised by contradictions. Ireland is a country that has struggled with massive emigration. However, during the economic boom (1990s up to 2007), it has also become home to many immigrants, especially from Eastern Europe[505]. The last movement of the film reinforces this new reality: the native Dubliner (Guy) leaves for London, chasing his girlfriend and seeking success in the music industry, while the Czech migrant (Girl) remains in Dublin, having started a new life there[506]. This inversion challenges the idea that Ireland has a homogeneous culture, suggesting that the immigrant is now an integral part of Dublin life and its artistic scene[507].

The co-protagonist's identity as a Czech immigrant introduces a crucial linguistic and cultural dimension, central to the film's exploration of globalization and identity[508].

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[499] Matthew J. Fee, *op cit*., pp. 176-187; Miriam Mara, "Just This Once. Urban Ireland in Film", *Irish Studies Review*, 18-4 (2010), pp. 427-438.
[500] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187; Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-438.
[501] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187.
[502] *Ibidem*; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689; Maggie Armstrong, "Stage. Falling Slowly for the Myriad Charms of "Once", *Irish Independent* (2015).
[503] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187; Mary Gallagher, "Multilingual Europeans: Contemporary Ireland and John Carney's Film 'Once'", in *European Studies 29*, ed. Marácz, László, Rosello, Mireille, Brill, 2012, pp. 285-306.
[504] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187.
[505] Nessa Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-38; Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187; Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306; Bettina Migge, Máire Ní Chiosáin, *New Perspectives on Irish English*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2012, pp. 252-258; Ivi, pp. 266-270; Ivi, pp. 311-312.
[506] Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, 18-4 (2010), pp. 427-438; Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689.
[507] Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-438; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689.
[508] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306; Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187; Marita Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16.

Markéta Irglová's character (the Girl) is a classically trained pianist whose father, an orchestra violinist, committed suicide in the Czech Republic due to arthritis.

The film uses various forms of English and communication styles. The opening scene, involving the Guy and a junkie, immediately puts listeners on the spot, using Dublinese, that has its own accent and specific Irish expressions (Irishisms), such as "our oul' fella", that might not be easily understood by non-Irish/English-speaking people. Conversely, the Guy uses a "globally comprehensible mid-Atlantic accent" [509] when singing popular music.

The linguistic dynamic between the Guy and the Girl frequently highlights misunderstanding and the complexity of communicating across cultural fault lines[510]. The Girl's use of English is technically effective, yet minor syntactic and grammatical variations betray her foreign origins ("I come with you then")[511].

The experience of the immigrant community is vividly rendered in the Girl's apartment, located on Dublin's northside. She lives with her mother and daughter, and the apartment serves as a communal space for other non-Anglophone migrants. In one scene, three men from next door come in to watch the Irish soap opera *Fair City* to practice and acquire colloquial English (Dublinese), demonstrating their efforts to assimilate socially[512]. However, the analysis suggests these migrants may be learning only "phrase-book English", parroting dialogue without true contextual communication, implying a potential for social "ghettoes" in contemporary Dublin[513].

Despite the linguistic challenges, the Czech protagonist often exhibits a greater depth of communicative and emotional fluency than her native counterpart. She is able to keenly read and mobilise language contextually, notably when interpreting the Guy's song lyrics as reflecting his ongoing emotional attachment to his ex-girlfriend[514].

The Girl's interaction with the Bank Manager during the loan scene (a sequence developed specifically for the stage adaptation, involving the comic song *Abandoned in Bandon*, performed by the Bank Manager to demonstrate his own musical ambitions)

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[509] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306; Joe Morgenstern, "Magical 'Once' Is Pitch-Perfect Rock Love Story. Thirteen Eloquent Songs And a Battered Guitar; Shrek's Welcome Return", *The Wall Street Journal* (2007).
[510] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306; Marita Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16.
[511] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.
[512] See on this topic Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-438; Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187; Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306; Enda Walsh, *Once. The Musical*, London, Nick Hern Books, 2013, p. 17.
[513] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.
[514] *Ibidem*.

explicitly frames the national conversation around culture and economy[515] (see Section 5.7.9 for a detailed discussion; see also Appendix B for the full lyrics). When questioned if he is proud to be Irish, the Bank Manager instantly replies, "Our culture"[516]. The Girl then gives a powerful defence of Irish culture and its economic value, citing Irish writers, poets, and musicians, like Yeats, Joyce, Van Morrison, Enya, and *Riverdance*. She tells him that investors in culture are important for showing the world that "Ireland is open for business!" [517]. In this exchange, the immigrant is both the mediator and the defender of native culture.

The film adheres to the philosophy that music acts as the idiom of universal feeling, transcending the limits of verbal language[518]. The director stated that music was intended to be "the chief way the characters were communicating"[519]. This notion aligns with a well-established principle in musical theatre studies, according to which song functions as the moment in which emotions that cannot be expressed through ordinary speech find their fullest articulation. As Scott McMillin observes, characters in musicals tend to sing "when the emotional pressure of the moment exceeds the limits of ordinary speech"[520]. In *Once*, the characters' most significant moments of revelation and emotional honesty occur precisely through song. A clear example is provided by *Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy*[521], in which Guy expresses his pain and unresolved feelings for his ex-girlfriend through music rather than dialogue (see Section 5.7.7 for a detailed discussion of the song; see Appendix B for the full lyrics).

5.3 The Significance of Naming the Protagonist as "Guy" and "Girl"

The main characters in *Once* are intentionally left without names and are just identified as the "Guy" (played by Glen Hansard) and the "Girl" (played by Markéta Irglová) in the film's final credits[522].

This structural choice by writer-director John Carney achieves several academic and thematic purposes:

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[515] See on this topic Enda Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 26; Ivi, p. 24.
[516] Enda Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
[517] Enda Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.
[518] Multilingual Europeans: Contemporary Ireland and John Carney's Film 'Once'", in *European Studies 29*, ed. Marácz, László, Rosello, Mireille, Brill, 2012, pp. 285-306; Marita Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16.
[519] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187.
[520] Scott McMillin, *The Musical as Drama. A Study of the Principles and Conventions Behind Musical Shows from Kern to Sondheim*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 6.
[521] *Ibidem*; Marita Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16; Enda Walsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.
[522] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187.

- **A Focus on Universality and Authenticity**: The absence of proper names highlights the themes of exemplarity or authenticity, positioning the characters less as specific individuals with conventional fictional histories and more as archetypes of the Dublin busker and the Czech immigrant musician.
  Carney wanted to make a film where the audience would feel like they were "watching these characters on a long lens across the street" [523] and should be kind to them, as if they were real people.
- **Subversion of Genre Conventions**: By referring to them simply as "Guy" and "Girl", the film indicates a subversion of the traditional "Guy meets Girl" narrative that usually ends in a conventional romantic "Happy End" [524]. The simplicity contrasts with the complex conflicts they embody.
- **Challenging Paternal Genealogy**: Critically, the non-attribution of invented names to the protagonists, particularly the Girl, is viewed as challenging the "power of paternal genealogy", the premise upon which Western society traditionally operates. Here, *genealogy* is not intended in a strictly biological sense, but as the symbolic system through which subjects are named, located, and legitimised within a cultural and patriarchal order. By refusing the conventional naming process, the Girl maintains distance from a highly signifying aspect of Western culture. Their relationship develops primarily through music, rather than through conventional verbal communication, as the characters often express their deepest emotions through song rather than dialogue[525].
- **Real-Life Conflation**: The real-life casting of professional musicians (Hansard and Irglová) contributed to this sense of raw reality. Carney wanted "singers who could act". Hansard asserted that many elements of the film were drawn directly from his own experience as a Dublin busker, blurring the line between his reality and the character's[526].

The theatrical adaptation, with a book written by Enda Walsh, retains this naming convention. The central characters are universally referred to and cast as the *Guy* and the

[523] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.
[524] *Ibidem*; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689.
[525] Marita Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16.
[526] Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, p. 176-187; Chris Neal, "Once Upon a Time", *Performing Songwriter* (2008), pp. 82-86.

Girl. This approach preserves the humility and simplicity (humble and delicate show) and the archetypal nature established in the low-budget film[527].



Figure 5.5. Chris Neal, "Once Upon a Time". Source: Performing Songwriter (2008).
(Photo by Pamela Littky/Retna).

5.4 Irish Music, Authenticity and the Art of Bricolage

The music in *Once* is very important to the film's structure and themes. The main actors, who are also professional musicians (Hansard from *The Frames* and Irglová a classical pianist), wrote and performed it[528]. Carney's method emphasises capturing the sound of the songs "live" on location, incorporating background noise as a feature of the "liveness" and textural quality of the soundtrack, distinguishing it as "lo-fi live". This technical approach works synergistically with the film's narrative to communicate a textured notion of authenticity[529].

In this film, elements of traditional Irish music, such as folk and busking, are combined with modern popular music and classical elements. While the Guy's background in music

[527] Enda Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
[528] Marita Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16; Nessa Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-38.
[529] Nessa Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-38.

is in folk/indie, the Girl's background is in classical piano[530]. Their "non-appropriation of the other" [531], as seen in their winning performance of *Falling Slowly*, creates a new piece of art. In this sense, the film builds what Mary Gallagher defines as a form of "linguistic and artistic bricolage"[532], that is, a creative practice through which heterogeneous musical, linguistic and cultural elements are brought into relation without being included into a standardised whole. The song's lyrics reflect the beginning of a personal connection between the main characters and, in a less explicit way, Dublin's relationship with its newcomers. These words encourage immigrants to "raise your hopeful voice"[533]. Gallagher's use of the term is productive because it allows *Once* to be read not simply as a story of musical collaboration, but as a reflection on contemporary Irish identity in a period marked by migration, multilingualism, and the consequence of the Celtic Tiger. The meeting between the Irish Guy and the Czech Girl does not culminate in assimilation and does not reproduce a homogeneous national model. Instead, the film imagines Irishness as something formed through interaction, not fixed, and continuously reshaped through contact with newcomers. In this sense, bricolage becomes political as well as artistic: it suggests that modern Irish identity is no longer grounded in cultural purity or linguistic uniformity, but in negotiated forms of coexistence, translation, and exchange.

The film illustrates the difference between music that has been turned into a product, and music that is performed spontaneously by a group. At first, the Guy only plays covers of "established" songs because that is what people expect. He is challenged by the Girl, who asks if he only performs for money, urging him toward originality.

The importance of communal music is showcased during the in-house party scene, reminiscent of traditional Irish social gathering known as a *seisiún*[534]. In this environment, the apartment's guests, who are "postmodern urbanites" [535], take turns singing traditional Irish songs *a cappella*. This scene nostalgically expresses the loss of community during the peak of economic consumerism. It connects the contemporary Dublin's musical life to the past sharing of cultural traditions. Within this shared musical space, cultural

[530] Steven Cohan, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187; Matthew J. Fee, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689.
[531] Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689; Marita Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16.
[532] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.
[533] Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-430.
[534] John O'Flynn, *The Irishness of Irish Music*, New York, Routledge, 2016, pp. 67-70; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689.
[535] Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, pp. 430-438; Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689.

transmission is not spontaneous, but is often facilitated by those who are able to move between traditions, sensibilities, and modes of expression.

The Girl acts as a *passeur*, which means she translates or acts as a go-between. She moves through both the language and the emotional and artistic space[536]. In this context, the term *passeur* is used to describe a mediating figure who enables movement and exchange between cultural and artistic fields, facilitating collaboration without imposing assimilation or erasing difference. Markéta Irglová's role in the movie reflects a cultural hybridity: a young Czech woman influencing the development of modern Irish art[537]. While the indigenous Irish character eventually leaves, Irglová's character remains in Dublin, representing the continuous influence of immigration on Irish artistic development, a process of *bricolage* that ultimately critiques the blank global culture of commercial exchange and disposability associated with the Celtic Tiger[538].

The linguistic context of the film also points to a history of cultural and linguistic contact. Irish English, or Hiberno-English as it is often referred, is itself the product of a long history of contact between English and Irish Gaelic. This long history of contact between the languages has given rise to a particular form of English that reflects the influence of particular features of Irish Gaelic syntax, such as the preference for *it-cleft* constructions (e.g., *It's him that did it*), a feature often associated with the influence of Irish Gaelic on English in Ireland[539]. As Michael Cronin[540] explains, the linguistic history of Ireland could rather be thought of in terms of a continuous process of contact, translation, hybridisation.

In this understanding of the matter, the linguistic hybridity in which the character of the Girl finds herself puts the acquisition of the English language by the Girl into a particular context. She is not a native speaker of the English language, but it is also made clear that the character of the Girl is a competent speaker with respect to the usage of the English language in a communicative situation[541]. The character of the Girl is even more competent with respect to the usage of the English language than the character of the Guy himself. It becomes obvious that communication has nothing to do with the status of the

[536] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.
[537] Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689; Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-438.
[538] Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-438; Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.
[539] Raymond Hickey, *Irish English. History and Present-Day Forms*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 414-420.
[540] Michael Cronin, *Translation and Globalization*, London/New York, Routledge, 2003, pp. 83-86.
[541] Bettina Migge, Máire Ní Chiosáin, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139; Ivi, p. 153; Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.

native speaker of a certain language, but also with the ability to understand the context, emotions, and intentions behind the words and actions of the other person. It is therefore evident that she is the character in the movie who can connect people, cultures, and practices most successfully[542].

Once successfully utilises the framework of the musical genre, particularly the integrated musical tradition and the backstage plot structure, while intentionally subverting its romantic conventions. The ultimate artistic collaboration (the demo tape recording) and individual empowerment achieved by the main characters do not result in a romantic union[543]. Instead, the film presents an ending where boundaries are maintained: the Guy returns to his Irish girlfriend in London, and the Girl is reunited with her Czech husband in Dublin. This bittersweet conclusion reflects the reality that while music can erase boundaries and provide a language for intimacy, assimilation into a "United States-like melting pot" is unlikely in contemporary Ireland[544].



Figure 5.6. Actors Tom Parsons as Guy and Megan Riordan as Girl in *Once*[545].

In essence, *Once* transforms the musical narrative from a tale of romantic destiny into a story of fleeting artistic collaboration and personal transformation. In its focus on budget realism, sonic authenticity (the perception of sound as natural and unprocessed, often

[542] Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.
[543] Carlos Menéndez-Otero, *op. cit.*, pp. 666-689; Steven Cohan, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187.
[544] Marita Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16; Kyle Smith, "Arts in Review. Film Review. John Carney's Moving Irish Musical", *Wall Street Journal* (2023), p. 14.
[545] Source: Maggie Armstrong, "Stage. *Falling Slowly* for the Myriad Charms of *Once*", *Irish Independent*, 2015. Photo by Matt Crockett.

achieved through live recording, the presence of ambient noise, and performances that preserve the immediacy of real musical interaction), and the multifaceted reality of the urban Irish identity in the era of global migration, *Once* is important for the social and cultural dimensions of the post-Celtic Tiger era, that consider immigrant as an integral part of the emerging Irish narrative[546].

In the narrative form, even though the romantic relationship at the end does not develop, the artistic and cultural synergy between the native and the immigrant, the bricolage of Irish folk music and Czech classical music, the intermixture of Dublinese and non-Irish accents serves to leave an permanent mark on the modern Dublin's art, as embodied by the piano the Guy acquires for the Girl at the film's conclusion[547].

While the traditional Hollywood musical represents an elaborate and perfect wedding cake, promising a perfect union, *Once* represents a spontaneous and unplugged performance in a local pub, messy, intimate, and profoundly authentic, revealing profound truths through the shared music even as the performers go their separate ways. The music, not the marriage, is the genuine bond.

5.5 Musical Corpus and Translation Context in *Once*

The musical and cinematic versions of *Once* share a repertoire that is central to both the narrative structure and the emotional landscape of the work. While the 2007 film presents an intimate collection of songs written and performed by Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová, the later stage adaptation expands this core material by integrating additional numbers and ensemble contributions, thus reshaping the musical dramaturgy without compromising its original aesthetic. This chapter provides an overview of the songs featured in the film and in the stage musical, highlighting points of convergence and divergence in their respective repertoires.

Particular attention is devoted to the presence of non-English material, most notably the Czech traditional song *Ej Padá, Padá Rosička*, and to the question of translation, with a focus on the absence of attested Italian adaptations of the lyrics.

By outlining the musical corpus prior to the analytical chapters, this section establishes the textual basis on which subsequent discussions of singability, performance constraints, and translation strategies will build. The methodological framework outlined above in

[546] Miriam Mara, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-438.
[547] *Ibidem*; Mary Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-306.

Section 5.1 becomes particularly relevant in the analysis of the musical corpus and its translational dimension.

5.5.1 Mapping the Songs of both Film and Musical

The stage musical faithfully reproduces the core musical output of the film, which was composed by Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová. The stage version includes all the songs from the original film, including the Oscar-winning duet *Falling Slowly*[548].
However, the stage production features additional elements and songs to expand the narrative and integrate the ensemble:

- **New Songs**: The most notable addition for the stage musical is *Abandoned in Bandon*, a country-western song performed by the Bank Manager during the loan scene[549].
- **Existing Core Songs**: The list of songs for the musical includes *Falling Slowly*, *Leave*, *The Moon*, *If You Want Me*, *Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy*, *Say It to Me Now*, *Gold*, *Sleeping*, *When Your Mind's Made Up*, and *The Hill*.
- **Non-English Song (Czech)**: Crucially, the musical includes the performance of the traditional Czech song *Ej Padá, Padá Rosička*, sung by the Girl's mother (Baruška) and the ensemble in the apartment scene.

The sources do not provide any information confirming that the songs from *Once* have been translated into Italian or performed in an Italian production.
While international performance rights for the stage adaptation exist "in any language throughout the world", the copyrights for the music and lyrics are registered under Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová in English, and there is no mention in the provided texts of a specific Italian translation or performance[550].

5.6 Stage Production (2011-2012) and Film (2007): Comparative Song List

The song repertoire of *Once* serves as the narrative and emotional backbone of the 2007 film as well as the subsequent stage musical. Although the film version features a collection of songs written and performed by Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová, the stage

[548] Laura Butler, "Home Once More. Hansard's Hit Musical Makes European Debut" (2013), p. 3.
[549] Enda Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
[550] Ivi, p. 3.

musical builds upon the film's song repertoire with ensemble pieces and additional songs intended to enrich the narrative and character development.

The following table (Table 5.2) offers a comprehensive overview of the entire set of songs from the film version and the stage musical, comparing the similarities between them with the additional pieces and culturally marked songs such as the traditional Czech song *Ej Padá, Padá Rosička*. The songs are not discussed in the order in which they appear in the 2007 film; the original movie sequence is indicated in Table 5.3.

The order of the musical numbers differs a lot between the 2007 film *Once* and its 2011-2012 stage adaptation. In the film, songs follow the spontaneous rhythm of everyday interactions, resulting in a sequence shaped by narrative realism rather than formal structure. By contrast, the stage version reorganises the songs according to the conventions of a two-act musical, redistributing songs to support character, emotions, and ensemble integration. This restructuring explains not only the altered placement of several numbers, such as *Leave*, *If You Want Me*, and *The Hill*, but also the omission of songs there are just inside the movie, whose narrative function overlaps with existing material. New songs and reprises were added to reinforce thematic cohesion and to satisfy theatrical requirements for act finales and collective musical expression.

All musical numbers are discussed according to their narrative position within the two-act structure of the stage musical. Film-only songs, which do not appear in the stage adaptation, are analysed in a separate concluding part, where their narrative and musical functions are examined in relation to the cinematic medium.

Table 5.2. Comparative Overview of Musical Numbers in the 2007 Film Version and the 2011-2012 Stage Musical of *Once*.

#	**Musical Number**	**2007 Film Version**	**2011-2012 Stage Musical**
		Act 1	
1	*Leave*	Not Included	Included With additional lyrics verses eventually omitted in some stage productions
2	*Falling Slowly*	Included	Included
3	*North Strand*	Not Included	Included (instrumental)
4	*The Moon*	Included	Included
5	*Ej Padá, Padá Rosička*	Not Included	Included

	(traditional Czech)		(performed by Girl's family)
6	*If You Want Me*	Included	Included (with added ensemble vocalisation)
7	*Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy*	Included	Included (expanded ensemble energy)
8	*Say It to Me Now*	Included	Included
9	*Abandoned in Bandon*	Not Included	Included (new comic number for Bank Manager)
10	*Gold*	Included	Included (expanded ensemble version)
Act 2			
11	*Sleeping*	Not included	Included
12	*When Your Mind's Made Up*	Included	Included (restructured for rehearsal scene)
13	*The Hill*	Included	Included (faithfully reproduced)
14	*Gold (A Cappella Reprise)*	Not Included	Included (final ensemble moment)
15	*The Moon (Reprise)*	Included	Included
16	*Falling Slowly (Reprise)*	Not Included	Included (structural reprise)
15	*Trying to Pull Myself Away*	Included	Omitted
16	*All the Way Down*	Included	Omitted
17	*Fallen From the Sky*	Included	Omitted
18	*Lies*	Included	Omitted

The exclusion of several songs from the 2007 film, such as *Trying to Pull Myself Away*, *All the Way Down*, *Fallen from the Sky*, and *Lies*, responds to the dramaturgical requirements of the stage medium. Critical reviews of the first theatrical production underline that the adaptation focuses on a more concise song-list, privileging songs that sustain dramatic pacing and character development across a two-act structure. Isherwood observes that the musical version "streamlines the material to maintain a coherent emotional arc" [551], emphasising the need for narrative economy in a live performance

[551] Charles Isherwood, "A Dublin Love Story With Songs as Scar Tissue", *The New York Times* (2011).

context. The omission of certain film tracks can be seen as a deliberate compositional strategy rather than a loss of essential material.

Conversely, the inclusion of the Czech folk song *Ej Padá, Padá Rosička*, absent from the film, strengthens the cultural identity of the Girl and expands the dimension of the stage adaptation. Spencer notes that this particular song functions as a cultural moment, providing "a vivid sense of the character's origins" [552] while simultaneously enriching sounds.

5.7 Analytical Commentary on the Musical Numbers in *Once*

A comparison of the 2007 film *Once* and its later 2011-2012 stage adaptation reveals an adaptive process driven by contrasting narrative priorities and medium-specific constraints. While both versions share a core repertoire shaped by the songwriting of Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová, the stage musical restructures this material to support ensemble performance, two-act pacing, and a broader sense of community. As already said, several film songs are omitted to maintain dramatic economy, whereas new numbers, most notably *Abandoned in Bandon* and the Czech folk song *Ej Padá, Padá Rosička*, are added to expand characterisation and cultural context.

The following commentaries analyse each musical number individually, focusing on its narrative function, musical language, and adaptive relevance. For ease of reference, the full lyrics of the songs discussed in this chapter are provided in **Appendix B**. In the present section, the discussion focuses on analytical commentary rather than full transcription, as the complete lyrics are provided in Appendix B, where sung lines are set in *italics*, while spoken material appears in regular typeface. Table 5.3 provides an overview of the songs that appear in the film *Once*. The table lists the songs together with their narrative context, offering a reference framework for the song-by-song analysis presented in the following sections.

[552] Robert Spencer, "Review. Once on Broadway", *The Sketchy Details* (2012).

Table 5.3. Scene Structure and Musical Numbers in the 2007 Film Version.

#	**2007 Film Version Songs**	**Character**	**Stage**
1	*And the Healing Has Begun*	Glen Hansard (performing a Van Morrison song)	Played while busking on the street
2	*Say It To Me Now*	Glen Hansard	Performed while busking on Grafton Street, Dublin. Introduces Guy as a street musician and establishes his emotional state.
3	*All the Way Down*	Glen Hansard	Performed in Guy's room. Shows his songwriting process and musical identity.
4	*Falling Slowly*	Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová	Performed together in the music shop. First collaborative moment between the protagonists.
5	*Broken Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy*	Glen Hansard	Performed on the bus. Humorous self-presentation of his life situation.
6	*If You Want Me*	Markéta Irglová	Performed while walking through the streets at night. Expresses Girl's inner emotional perspective.
7	*Lies*	Glen Hansard	Performed in Guy's home. Introspective reflection on his emotional conflict.
8	*Gold*	Band (Interference)	Performed in the pub. Shows the communal musical environment.
9	*When Your Mind's Made Up*	Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová	Performed in the record studio. It is a recording studio session. Collaborative musical culmination.
10	*The Hill*	Markéta Irglová	Performed at the piano. Expresses emotional introspection.
11	*When Your Mind's Made Up* (Reprise)	Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová	.

12	*Falling Slowly* (Reprise)	Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová	

The song texts included in Appendix B were transcribed directly from the film as streamed on Amazon Prime Video by the present author. The only exception concerns the song that appears exclusively in the stage version, which will be examined at the end of the commentaries.

The distribution of songs in *Once* also follows a spatial progression that mirrors the development of the protagonists' relationship. Musical performances move from public spaces such as the street, where the Guy initially performs busking alone, to semi-public environments like the music shop, where collaboration begins, and eventually to private and professional spaces, such as home first, and the recording studio then, where their musical partnership reaches its fullest expression. The musical numbers in *Once* can also be interpreted according to their narrative function within the protagonists' relationship. Rather than serving merely as expressive interludes, the songs contribute directly to the development of the story, marking different stages in the emotional and artistic trajectory of the characters. It is possible to see the classification in Table 5.4. Rather than functioning merely as expressive interludes, the songs structure the development of the protagonists' relationship and gradually transform individual musical expression into collaborative artistic creation.

Table 5.4. Narrative Functions of Musical Numbers in *Once* (2007).

Song Type	Narrative Function	Examples
Solitary performance song	Reveals the protagonist's internal emotional state through an individual performance.	• *Say It to Me Now*
Encounter duet	Marks the first moment of artistic and emotional recognition between characters.	• *Falling Slowly*
Self-reflection song	Expresses private emotional introspection or vulnerability.	• *If You Want Me* • *Lies*
Character display song	Shows the performer's personality or musical identity, often with humorous or self-referential elements.	• *Broken Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy*

Collaborative ensemble song	Represents the moment when individual performances become a shared musical project.	• *When Your Mind's Made Up*

Within this functional progression, *Falling Slowly* represents the key moment of transition from solitary performance to collaborative music-making. The duet marks the point at which the protagonists' individual musical identities converge, transforming a casual encounter into the beginning of a shared creative process.

5.7.1 *Leave*

(Present only in the stage musical)

Leave does not appear in the 2007 film version of *Once*. The song was introduced in the stage adaptation, and describes an early character-defining moment for Guy, revealing his emotional vulnerability before the central collaboration with the Girl develops.

This song demonstrates the idea of emotional leaving, as well as heartbreak, which is still unresolved, supporting the background history of Guy. *Leave* is portrayed as an unfiltered outpouring of the emotional pain being felt, providing a window into the unresolved history of Guy's emotional trauma due to the end of his previous relationship. It is one of the first instances where the audience is introduced to the level of heartbreak being felt by Guy, establishing the level of his heartbreak, which will drive his future actions. *Leave* is portrayed as a method of confession, which illustrates the level of heartbreak being felt by Guy. He sings this song because it represents the level of heartbreak that cannot be contained using spoken language. It is also portrayed as a song based upon the frustration, abandonment, and internal conflict being felt by the protagonist. The vocal delivery looks forced, showing the level of urgency being felt by the protagonist, as if he is forced to sing the song for his own survival. *Leave* is considered as a moment that isolates the Guy in his pain, before his connection with the Girl. It provides the psychological foundation that contextualises his artistic openness and emotional fragility. In both film and stage versions, this song retains its intense character, though staging can heighten the sense of isolation by placing the Guy in a physically or acoustically exposed environment. Its inclusion is crucial to the narrative architecture of *Once*: without this part of profound heartbreak, the subsequent emergence of hope and creative revitalisation would lack contrast and emotional credibility. By illustrating the Guy's suffering early in the story, the song establishes an emotional baseline from which

his artistic collaboration with the Girl can meaningfully evolve. It also strengthens the thematic focus on music as an exit for unprocessed emotions.

From the point of view of translation, *Leave* also offers an opportunity to look at the transfer of the songs in *Once* from one audiovisual mode to another. Although humour is not the focus of the current chapter as it was in the case of *My Fair Lady*, the song offers an example of the transformation of the musical numbers from the stage to the subtitle tracks and other forms of mediation. With regard to *Once*, the transformation of the songs includes the initial performed version, the English subtitles, the Italian subtitles for the streaming version, and the Italian dubbed version with the songs performed in the original language. These different modalities reveal how meaning, rhythm, and emotional tone are redistributed across textual and audiovisual channels. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which condensation, reformulation, and performability constraints shape the subtitled and dubbed renderings.

Even at the level of individual lines, the song already presents features that highlight these dynamics. For instance, the repetition of the imperative *Leave, leave* is at the same time the semantic nucleus of the lyrics as well as the rhythmic point of the musical phrase. Similarly, the line *Let go of my hand* is a condensed form of the complex action of letting go of another person's hand, that condenses a complex emotional gesture into a short structure that would require careful reformulation in another language. Finally, the use of non-lexical vocalisations in the form of *da, da* is another example of the importance of the audio components of the song that might not be included in the subtitles.

In this respect, *Leave* anticipates many of the translational dynamics that will become more explicit in later songs, especially in the case of *Falling Slowly* where singable translation strategies are considered as part of the analytical framework.

From a humour perspective, the song presents no wordplay or jokes. Rather than linguistic or cultural humour, its expressive power derives from emotional intensity.

From a multimodal perspective, the song utilises linguistic, aural, visual, and gestural elements to communicate its emotional intensity. Linguistically, lyrics are composed of simple syntax, repetition (*Leave, leave*), and direct, formal language (*Let go of my hand*) that reduces emotional complexity into simplified expressions and helps maintain the song's immediacy.

At the aural level, meaning and emotional pressure are shaped by the voices. Non-lexical sounds (*da, da*) may come up with difficulties when subtitling, with the presence of sound being smaller or omitted.

The performance deals with the isolation theme, and is visually simple. Gesturally, restrained body movements and tension in posture contribute to express emotional agony.

5.7.2 *Falling Slowly*

(Present in both versions)

This song is a duet, and it is important because it is one of the first songs in the story. The audience sees the protagonists recognising each other as a moment of spontaneous understanding conveyed through music rather than words. They sing *Falling Slowly* because music is the only way they can express feelings that are hard to put into words in normal conversation. The song gives hope to the Guy and a moment to be open about her feelings to the Girl, even though she is usually cautious. This song starts hesitantly but becomes synchronised, showing a beginning of trust, artistic compatibility, and emotional resonance. The song also captures the central theme of *Once*: the creation of a close but limited bond, based on shared musicality rather than love. The melodic writing is introspective, and the harmonic progressions help the protagonists' voices come together slowly. It is presented as an informal musical exchange.

The full lyrics of the song are reproduced in Appendix B. From a translational perspective, the simplicity and repetition of the lyrics create both opportunities and constraints for subtitling and potential singable translation, as will be discussed in Section 5.9.

Another aspect of *Falling Slowly* in *Once* is that it represents a form of a diegetic duet that derives directly from the practice of creating music together. The function of a diegetic song is that it exists inside the movie and is performed by the characters themselves. Unlike non-diegetic music, which is heard only by the audience, the performance of *Falling Slowly* is integrated into the story as part of the protagonist's musical interaction. Both main characters are creating something together at this moment. The scene shows the Guy coming up with the musical idea and the Girl slowly joining him at the piano to make a duet. The song not only shows how the characters feel, but it also presents the relationship between them. For this reason, the song not only represents a particular emotional state but also actively creates the relationship between the characters. The gradual unification of the voices and instruments of the two protagonists reflects the development of trust between them, a very important element in *Once*. In

translation, the song must preserve semantic meaning and also the spontaneity that characterises the scene.

Falling Slowly is essential in *Once* because it acts like both a love duet and a songwriting scene. It is something much unlike in typical musical theatre, these two kinds of moments have always been separated. But in *Once*, it is where the song's composing becomes intimately linked to the process in terms of developing the characters relationship and feeling. The song creates not just feelings on stage, but in the story context to see a person develop in some other artistic relationship and emotion. The song is also structured around a chorus:

Take this sinking boat and point it home
We've still got time
Raise your hopeful voice, you have the choice
You've made it now

This chorus provides a rhythmic context to the whole composition and its melody. Structure repetition for song translation can be dual: by recalling the context it is built on to create memorability and emotional support, and by retaining a strong rhythmic and lyrical backbone of the song itself. In doing so, any song translation must be as semantic and performable as possible and should not exclude syllabic length, stress patterns and melody with the source text.

Given its position in the story and its translational significance, *Falling Slowly* is the primary example discussed in this chapter. Although the song does not feature humour or the use of the joke structure in the way that the texts have in the preceding chapter, the discussion may still be seen to fit within the broader methodological framework offered in this work. In this way, some representative lyrics will be presented to highlight the main translational considerations.

The lines *I don't know you / But I want you* (*Non ti conosco / Ma ti voglio*; *Non so chi sei / Ma ti voglio*), *And words fall through me / and always fool me* (*Le parole vengono da sole / E mi tradiscono sempre*; *Parlo a stento / E so soltanto*), *Take this sinking boat / And point it home* (*Prendi questa barca che affonda / E riportala a casa*; *Salvaci da noi / Affondiamo già*), and *And I'm painting black* (*E intorno a me è tutto nero*; *L'ombra è su di me*) do not have any humour. Instead, they rely on minimal contrast, metaphor, and symbolic imagery to convey emotional intensity and vulnerability. The first Italian

translations correspond to the official subtitles of the film, while the alternative versions (*Non so chi sei / Ma ti voglio*, *Parlo a stento / E so soltanto*, *Salvaci da noi / Affondiamo già*, *L'ombra è su di me*) have been developed by the author as singable translations, designed to fit the musical and performative constraints of the song. These versions will be analysed in detail in Section 5.9, with particular reference to the balance between sense, singability, and prosodic alignment as outlined in Low's Pentathlon Principle.

From the multimodal point of view, *Falling Slowly* requires a balanced interaction (linguistic, aural, visual, gestural) to interpret meaning. Linguistically, the lyrics are simple with repetition and metaphorical imagery, so that emotions are felt clearly.

On an aural level, meaning develops when the two voices synchronise with each other. Initial hesitancy gives way to harmonised alignment, which will lead to trust and emotional resonance. The melody and phrasing help convey a sense of closeness and co-creation; this is the reason why it feels both musical and relational. Visually, the scene is set in a minimal and realistic environment in which the subjects are physically close. The visual mode reinforces the naturalistic style of *Once*, avoiding spectacle in favour of authenticity. Gesturally, the interaction between the performers is subtle but significant. Small movements, shared glances, and a slowly built coordination of performance together convey a sense of communication. The song is not only expressive but also part of the relationship. Meaning emerges through performance, making *Falling Slowly* a key example of how multimodality and musical co-creation intersect in the narrative structure of *Once*.

5.7.3 *North Strand*

(Present only in the stage musical)

The North Strand is part of the soundtrack that will provide the sense of Dublin at the start of Act I. It does not contain lyrics. This song places the film's naturalistic ambience in the theatrical context and keeps the musical's undervalued realism at the centre.

In terms of humour this song does not use jokes and wordplay as it is only instrumental. The focus shifts towards a multimodal construct of meaning, not simply that of humour. *North Strand* relies primarily on the interaction of aural, visual and gestural modes. The musical texture helps visualise Dublin and its urban environment. Visually, the song is part of a scenic construction for the setting and helps the audience participate in the event. Gesturally, it is an act of interaction, with the performers holding and moving with one

another. Meaning is generated through environment and atmosphere rather than through verbal or narrative language.

5.7.4 *The Moon*

(Present only in the stage musical)

A reflective interlude, expressing Guy's contemplative approach. *The Moon* is a warm and serene moment; it changes the narrative mood and gives a moment of meditation. This song allows the listener to pause and recalibrate. It broadens audience consciousness of the Guy's poetic sensibility and his introspective tone to contrast with songs like *Leave* and *When Your Mind's Made Up*. He sings *The Moon* as his way of expressing a quiet little sorrow. The lyrics are written from a metaphorical and undervalued perspective, suggesting he reflects and is aware, with an emotional range and emotional contentment throughout the song. It is this peaceful atmosphere where turbulence in the background of a song can be temporarily lifted from desperation to moderated and reflective melancholy. In the story, the Guy is depicted as an introverted person. This dimension of his character later becomes essential for understanding the emotional reciprocity between him and the Girl In film and stage versions, *The Moon* maintains the intimate quality. The minimal instrumentation and soft vocal delivery make a tune as soft and emotional with the more rhythmically and emotionally forceful numbers in Act I. As such, the song functions as a structural balancing device, modulating the emotional pacing of the narrative and preparing the audience for the deepening relational dynamics that follow. The stage adaptation often emphasises the atmospheric qualities of the piece through lighting and spatial arrangement, enhancing the sense of introspective calm. While it remains a relatively quiet moment within the score, its presence is essential for maintaining the delicate equilibrium between emotional intensity and reflective subtlety that characterises *Once*.

Ultimately, *The Moon* enriches the musical's emotional palette by highlighting the protagonist's contemplative nature and providing thematic contrast. Its gentle tone anticipates the interiority explored more fully in Act II, contributing to the cohesive emotional architecture of the work.

As a song introduced in the stage adaptation, *The Moon* illustrates how the theatrical version expands the film's musical material in order to deepen characterisation and modulate the emotional pacing of the narrative. The imagery of the lyrics, presented in

Appendix B, marked by symbolic surreal references, contributes to the song's introspective tone and distinguishes it from the more narrative-driven songs of the score.

Yet another notable feature of *The Moon* is its use of lyrical language. While many of the songs in *Once* tend to use fairly straightforward, even colloquial, imagery, *The Moon* uses a different kind of vocabulary. The use of lines like *Cut the bonds with the moon* or *Burn the gauze in the spoon* is notable, as it is reminiscent of the vocabulary of contemporary singer-songwriter music, as opposed to the narrative language one might expect in a musical theatre text. This is, of course, another way in which this song is introspective.

Although *The Moon* does not make use of humour or joke structures, a small analysis of few lines is reproduced here because it is necessary to conform to the methodological framework set out in the rest of the study.

While no instances of humour can be identified according to Zabalbeascoa's categories, the song displays a high degree of semantic and stylistic differences, which produces interpretative complexity rather than comic effect. The column about the Italian Subtitles is not provided because the song is not included in the movie version.

At the aural level, the soft vocal delivery and minimal instrumentation reinforce the atmosphere. The slow progression and dynamics offer a sense of suspension, giving the listener a chance to focus on the sound of the words alongside their meaning. The staging tends to take place in a dark atmosphere. The movements are limited and controlled.

All these modes form and feed into one kind of meaning-making: atmosphere, symbolism and internal reflection over narrative progression.

5.7.5 *Ej Padá, Padá Rosička*

(Present only in the stage musical)

This song puts the Girl in the context of her Czech cultural background and looks at her family relationships.

Ej Padá, Padá Rosička brings up a culturally important moment in the story that shows the Girl's Czech heritage and how her personal identity fits into a bigger family and social setting. In this scene, the focus is on the Girl's community. Most of the other songs in the score are about how the Guy and Girl's relationship is getting stronger, but with this song is possible to understand who she is and how she feels. The Girl's family sings the song together. It is a traditional Moravian folk song. The fact that it is a group song sets it apart

from the more personal singer-songwriter style used in the whole musical. The ensemble performance makes it seem like family members and generations are close to each other, which supports the idea that the Girl's story is part of a bigger cultural network. This scene from the stage adaptation shows how close and loving the family is. It shows that music is not only a way for people to express themselves, but also a way for people to share a cultural practice.

The melody is easy to remember and repeats itself. There are male and female voices that call and respond to each other, and then everyone sings the same part together. These kinds of patterns show how oral traditions work. Repetition and group participation are two important ways to strengthen community ties. The lyrics are all in Czech, which for a short time takes the musical's language centre away from English. This makes a small but important change to the language hierarchy that runs through most of the story. The Girl speaks a language that is not her own for most of the story, but in this scene, the Guy doesn't understand the language around him. The effect changes how the characters interact with each other. It puts the Girl's cultural identity in the spotlight and makes her more than just a migrant figure; she is also someone who is deeply connected to a specific language and culture.

The writing style of the text is like that of folk poetry. The repeated line *Ej padá, padá rosička* (*Hey, the dew is falling*) uses simple images from nature that are common in rural folk songs. In these songs, things in nature often stand in for feelings or changes in life. The lines are repeated, and the male and female vocal parts are similar, which makes the performance feel more like a group activity. The repeated interjections *Hey, hey, hey* also add to the participatory mood of the scene. The lyrics does not tell a complicated story; instead, they let people sing and play music together. The song wasn't in the movie version from 2007, but it was added to the stage version to make the story's cultural world bigger. It makes the music sound more interesting and gives it a different style than the indie-folk songs of Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová. *Ej Padá, Padá Rosička* is also an important part of how the play is put together. Set in Act I, it changes the mood for a short time, which makes the emotional intensity of the scenes around it less strong for a short time. It also makes one of the musical's main ideas stronger: the link between being part of a community and being able to express yourself. A lot of the songs in *Once* are about looking inside yourself, but this one reminds that memory, language, and cultural tradition also make people who they are.

In the end, *Ej Padá, Padá Rosička* makes the emotional and cultural parts of the stage adaptation deeper. The song adds depth to the musical's plot by putting linguistic diversity at the centre, making the ensemble's role stronger, and putting the Girl in a clearly defined cultural community. The song meaning is not told, but shared. The title means "Oh, the dew is falling". *Padá, padá* means *fall* and *rosička* stands for *little/gentle dew*, in a poetic way.

The line *Ej padá, padá resička* does not constitute humour, but rather a culture-bound expression rooted in Czech folk tradition. While it may appear unfamiliar to non-Czech audiences, its effect is linked to cultural identity rather than to any comic mechanism. Therefore, it cannot be classified as national humour in Zabalbeascoa's terms.

The function of the song is to show cultural identity and collective participation through language and performance.

From the multimodal point of view, linguistically, the use of Czech introduces a temporary switch in the musical's language, interrupting the English-language framework. This change shows the Girl's cultural identity and creates an asymmetry in comprehension, as the Guy and the audience, cannot access the verbal content. At the aural level, the song is structured around repetition, call-and-response patterns, and ensemble singing, all of which are characteristic of oral traditions.

Visually, the staging typically emphasises group presence. Gesturally, coordinated movement and shared performance practices reinforce the participatory nature of the scene, where meaning is constructed through collective embodiment rather than individual gesture.

5.7.6 *If You Want Me*

(Present in both versions)

If You Want Me is one of the first songs that tries to get to the bottom of how the Girl feels. The Girl's first lines are often marked by caution, practicality, and emotional control. But this song shows her vulnerability and her emotional depth and longing for connection, which she does not often say out loud. The song is like a side note that shows how she feels about wanting something but not being sure about it, which is what her relationship with the Guy is all about. The Girl sings *If You Want Me* because she wants to say something that she is not able to say out loud very often. She sings about the chance to connect while also making it clear that honesty, trust, and emotional give-and-take are

important. The simple harmonies and melodies match her emotional distance, and the light phrasing of the melody shows signs of doubt, hope, and self-protection.

In terms of language, simple sentences sound like you are talking to someone. Another important part is the song's repeated refrain, *If you want me*, which uses the conditional structure. It does not have all the parts of a conditional sentence, but it does connect the two people who know each other. The girl is not always open; she is only open when the other person wants her to be. The line *If you want me / satisfy me* (*Se mi vuoi / rendimi felice*) is used as a rhetorical device and as a way to mark the structure of the song. It is used as a refrain that keeps coming back, just like the Girl's mind keeps going back to the same thing. The line creates ambiguity through its conditional structure, generating tension between dependence and emotional control rather than humour. This means that what she says is not really what she means; it is what she is going through. The use of the word *you* in the refrain also supports the idea of talking to each other. The song is used in a realistic way in the movie, when the Girl is walking down the street alone at night. This gives the impression of being alone and thinking about herself, which is what this scene in the movie is all about. The focus is on the idea of solitude, and the audience is able to hear the song as if it is a conversation. The use of additional ensemble voices in the stage version of the song is used to alter the song. The idea behind the song is still introspective, but the additional voices used give the song more depth, and place the Girl's emotional thoughts in the context of the entire soundscape of the musical. This is used in the drama to make the song more powerful while maintaining the introspective qualities.

If You Want Me is an important moment in the Girl's emotional development as a character in the story. It is the first time that the audience is able to see just how involved she is in the relationship. As such, it acts as a counterbalance to the expressions of frustration and desire that the Guy has been displaying. *If You Want Me* is also an important part of helping the audience understand the emotional state of the Girl better, as well as getting at what the main problem is that leads to *The Hill*. It is an important part of the expressive range that is characteristic of *Once* by combining simple lyrics with emotional complexity. Finally, *I do what you ask me / If you let me be free* (*E io faro / Quello che mi chiederai / Se mi lascerai libera*) presents a paradox between submission and autonomy, generating interpretative tension.

Although there is no humour in the song, the linguistic features can be analysed. For instance, the use of conditional structures and repetition is seen to create a tension. A set of representative lines is therefore offered below.

From a multimodal perspective, *If You Want Me* relies on interactions between linguistic, aural, visual, and gestural modes. Linguistically, the song is characterised by simple sentence structures, repetition, and the recurrent use of conditional forms, which create a sense of emotional hesitation. The refrain *If you want me* reflects the Girl's hesitation between openness and self-protection. At the aural level, the soft voice makes the song introspective. Important is the Guy's backing vocals in the chorus in a scene where the Girl is alone at night. Visually, the song is often associated with solitude, Gesturally, movement is minimal, with emphasis placed on the internalisation of emotion rather than outward expression. The song represents a key moment in the Girl's character development, where linguistic simplicity is used to convey complex emotional states.

5.7.7 *Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy*

(Present in both versions)

Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy is one of the first funny parts of the musical. It helps to reduce the emotional intensity of the earlier songs. The song proves that the Guy can be funny, make fun of himself, and be spontaneous in his performances, which contrasts with his more introspective and melancholic personality. It also shows that he is a street musician (busker) whose creativity goes beyond sad ballads to include playful improvisation and more relaxed and informal style performance.

The Guy sings this song to get away from his emotional problems for a little while. A lot of the music is about longing and vulnerability, but this song shows how he can deal with his own bad luck with irony and humour. The performance, which is sung casually in front of the Girl, makes her feel at ease and welcomes her into his artistic world without putting any emotional pressure on their new relationship. In this way, the song gives people a funny and easy way to get to know him and his musical style.

The humour of the lyrics comes from their use of everyday language combined with exaggerated self-descriptions. The words *broken-hearted, hoover, fixer, sucker,* and *guy* are playful and catchy, making it enjoyable to say. It brings together different aspects of the character: his job (fixing hoovers), his emotional state (broken-hearted), and his tendency to make fun of himself (sucker guy). This layering of modifiers creates a structure that almost sounds like a tongue twister. The song sounds even more spontaneous because the lines are easy to read. It sounds like it came from the Guy's way of telling stories.

The fast-paced lyrics and relaxed rhythm make the song sound fun and lively. The playful phrasing is very different from the slower, more thoughtful songs in other parts of the musical. In the film, the scene is presented as an informal musical exchange, reflecting how street musicians in Dublin tupically perform and reinforcing the sense of authenticity that runs through the film's musical language. This addition of humour and self-irony in the musical makes it more emotionally rich and sets it apart from the songs that are before and after it, which are more emotional in their content. The change in tone makes the more serious parts of the story stronger and shows how humour and vulnerability can work together in the musical world of *Once*.

The comic nature of *Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy* can be examined through the lens of Zabalbeascoa's typology of humour introduced in Chapters 2 and 4. The song's humour comes from language-dependent jokes, and the joke comes from the fun way the song uses rhythm, sound, and lexical cumulation. The phrase *broken-hearted hoover fixer sucker guy* is a series of exaggerated adjectives that combine personal problems, professional identity, and character in one rhythmic unit. This kind of humour is hard to translate into audio and video because it is hard to understand. The humour is very much based on how the English language sounds, especially when it comes to internal rhymes and the word *sucker*. Zabalbeascoa says that language-dependent humour is one of the hardest types of humour to translate because it only works in certain languages. Because of this, the translator might have to come up with creative ways to keep the text funny and make it work with the musical phrase. There is also some character-based humour in this text, because the main character tries to make himself look funny by making his bad luck seem worse than it is. This kind of self-deprecating humour is meant to show that the Guy is emotionally weak and can also be ironic.

There is another interesting thing about the Italian versions of the movie. The songs in the dubbed version of *Once*, like the other songs, remain in English and are not translated for performance. But the Italian subtitles change the line *broken-hearted hoover fixer sucker guy* to *un coglione che ripara aspirapolvere con il cuore spezzato*. This translation shows how hard it is to get the humour of the original line across.

The Italian version does a good job of capturing the main character's self-deprecating tone, but it loses the short, rhythmic structure of the English phrase. The Italian subtitle, breaks the structure, putting semantic clarity ahead of rhythmic density. This example demonstrates how subtitling and dubbing have different purposes when it comes to translating music into audiovisual form. Dubbing keeps the original song performance,

while subtitles try to make the lyrics easier to understand, even if that means losing some of the phonetic and rhythmic features that make the song funny.

Unlike the songs analysed above, *Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy* offers instances of humour which can be analysed with the help of Zabalbeascoa's typology. Humour is mostly language-dependent and is closely related to phonetic patterning, rhythmic delivery, and lexical accumulation. Some lines of the song which can be considered representative of the humorous effect created here have been reproduced below.

Table 5.5. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy.*

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Subtitles (TT)**
Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy	Language-dependent joke	The humour derives from lexical accumulation, internal rhythm, and phonetic play, as well as from self-deprecating characterisation. The song contains a tongue-twister effect that reinforces humour. It is a character-based humour	*Un coglione che ripara aspirapolvere Con il cuore spezzato*
But she went and screwed some guy that she knew	Language-dependent joke	The humour derives from colloquial and vulgar phrasing, contributing to the informal and ironic tone of the story. It is a potentially taboo, and informal humour	*Ma scopò con uno che conosceva*
But until then I'm just a sucker of a guy	Language-dependent joke	The line reinforces self-irony through the repetition of "sucker", contributing to the character's comic self-representation. It is a character-based humour	*Ma fino ad allora sarò solo un coglione*

The song has language-dependent, in line with Zabalbeascoa's framework. From a multimodal perspective, *Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy* relies on a dynamic

interaction between linguistic, aural, visual, and gestural modes. Linguistically, the song is characterised by rapid delivery and informal phrasing, which together contribute to its comic tone. At the aural level, fast rhythm, internal rhyme, and repetition reinforce the song's playful character, while also highlighting the performative dimension of humour. Visually, the scene is informal, inside a bus. Gesturally, the performer's body language, facial expressions, and interaction are important to carry semplicity.

5.7.8 *Say It to Me Now*

(Present in both film and stage musical)

Say It to Me Now exhibits the Guy's emotional rawness in the first few minutes of the movie, when he busks on Grafton Street, Dublin. The song exhibits his personal and artistic crisis as an expositional monologue that simultaneously reveals vulnerability before setting off the main narrative. The audience is immediately faced with the Guy's psychological state at the start of the story: a mix of being abandoned, frustrated, and still wounded from a failed relationship. The song also welcomes people into his soul and establishes the emotional honesty and immediacy that pervades much of *Once*. The Guy sings *Say It to Me Now* because music is the only way to express feelings difficult to verbalise. There is also the clear challenge of *And if you have something to say / you'd better say it now* (*E se hai qualcosa da dire / È meglio che tu la dica ora*), which communicates the need for immediate interaction. The refrain's redundant imperatives work for such emotional thrust, making the song out to be a call for someone to take action after a while (without opening), and the insistence is one of the ways the song feels emotionally urgent. This performance highlights the emotion and power in a private battle of a song to be sung in a public space. That tension between public performance and personal confession is one of the principal themes of *Once*. Busking gets to be a way to earn a living, a way to vent your feelings. The song features an acoustic guitar part that is made louder during the course of the song. The internal struggle for the main character becomes even more aggressive as the performance progresses. The raw and constricted sound of the voice also helps to understand the authenticity of *Once*'s musical language.

The film version remains deeply rooted in naturalism. The street environment and the sounds of the city make Dublin's busking culture feel real. The stage version of the song is delivered right into the beginning of the musical, and immediately, the audience enters the Guy's emotional world. *Say It to Me Now* is a baseline where the emotional foundation

of the protagonist's journey is established in the wider story. The song marks the very first major musical incarnation of his internal conflict. It establishes the emotional mood for the later collaborative numbers. The song's visceral power is different from the more measured, relational musical beats that follow later in the story, especially after the Guy encounters the Girl. This difference addresses one of the central themes of *Once*, how communal music might transform people. *Say It to Me Now* is basically the emotional connecting bridge, which the movie and the stage version are bringing up to introduce the audience to sound and drama of the story.

These examples confirm the absence of humour in *Say It to Me Now*. None of the selected lines rely on wordplay, incongruity, or cultural comic references; instead, they are characterised by a high degree of emotional intensity.

The use of imperative constructions, as in *You'd better say it now*, contributes to a sense of urgency. Similarly, metaphorical expressions such as *these shadows fall on me now* (*E mentre il buio cade su di me*) have a poetic register. The line *I'm picking up the message, Lord* (*Sto capendo, Signore*) introduces spiritual dimension. From a translational perspective, the Italian subtitles tend to preserve this intensity without attempting to introduce other strategies. The increasing intensity of vocal delivery and the progressive amplification of the guitar accompaniment play an important role for the aural mode, and it is the same with the voice that starts clean and becomes raw while the song proceeds. Visually, the song is performed nearly at the beginning of the movie, during the night, in the centre of Dublin. The song is a bridge between a public performance and a private confession. The body language is shaped by face expressions, that gesturally, intensify as the song progresses.

5.7.9 *Abandoned in Bandon*

(Present only in the stage musical)

Abandoned in Bandon provides comic relief. The Bank Manager character has a rather minor relevance in film's *Once*, but in the stage version he gets more importance and transforms himself to a sort of brief lead character. This song enriches the musical in a way that allows the audience to slow things down more than before. The lyrics reflect the character of this musical number. Originally introduced as a sensible financial broker who takes on the job of approving the protagonists' loan, he unexpectedly demonstrates a genuine passion for music and performance. Requiring his performance of *Abandoned in*

Bandon to be performed, he tries to show his artistic sensibility and aspirations in music. The song's humour derives from the contrast between the Bank Manager's sparkling self-presentation and the awkwardly confusing appearance of his actions. His magnificent delivery of the words and stylised movements are mimicking the standards of country and western music, causing a comically dissonant contrast in feeling between the heartfelt singing and the emotional sincerity apparent on the Guy-style songs.

This inappropriateness gives a moment of mild satire that points out the gap between aspiration and skill, and does not make them seem like a target. Instead, the scene highlights one of the underlying ideas of *Once*: that music is not a space for the exceptionally gifted only but a way of speaking that anyone wants to be heard. It's an obviously recognisable story, which makes reference to aspects of the country and western idiom, especially its storytelling melody and geographical and romantic references. The lyrics tell a melodramatic tale of division and emotional exile within Irish counties, referring to places like Bandon and County Clare. This storytelling style, similar to many country ballads, describes emotional struggle in narratives of journeys, distance and lost relationships. The humour is also intensified linguistically with the title words *Abandoned in Bandon*.

There are internal rhyme and alliteration involved, creating a playful phonetic symmetry that adds to the number's comic moment. The repeated sounds help keep the song in mind while underlining, almost exaggerating, the melodramatic storyline the Bank Manager is trying to give. By way of a comparison from the point of view of humour theory, the comic dimension of the song could also be analysed from an audiovisual texts standpoint using the theory of humour put forth by Zabalbeascoa, as previously seen in Chapters 4.

In contrast to the verbal humour found in *My Fair Lady*, where play with words and phonetic contrasts is significant, in *Abandoned in Bandon* humour functioned in the kingdom of figure and delivery. The comic effect is produced by the combination of words, vocal style, musical language, and performance. The song can therefore be understood as an example of multimodal humour, since gesture, voice, and musical idiom contribute to the humour as much as the lyrics do. The song is not in the film version of *Once*. By giving a musical number to a character who previously was no more than a backseat, the stage version enlarges the narrative universe and the emotional rhythm of Act I. The song happens when the Bank Manager has an influence. His willingness to pay for the recording session is instead framed as the act of a person who represents, in a

creative or imaginative sense, the protagonists' artistic ambition. More generally, the development of *Abandoned in Bandon* shows one of the ways in which adaptation strategy is utilised in stage musicals adapted from film stories: new character numbers have become more important.

Table 5.6 does not include the Italian Subtitles column because the song is performed only in the stage version. *Abandoned in Bandon* is perhaps the most humorous song in *Once*. Humour emerges from linguistic features such as rhymes, but also from cultural references.

Table 5.6. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *Abandoned in Bandon.*

Song Lyrics (ST)	Joke Type	Source of Humour
Abandoned in Bandon	Language-dependent joke	The humour derives from rhyme and phonetic similarity between *Abandoned* and *Bandon*, creating a playful pattern
Two countries. One love	International joke	The line exaggerates emotional conflict
He dialed that name and imagined them kissin'	Complex (language-dependent + community-based humour) joke	The informal register *kissin'* contributed to the imitation of country style, going in contrast with the character's social role. The language-dependent joke derives from the verb *dial*, that evokes the culturally specific practice of dialling numbers.

Linguistically, the humour is partly rooted in phonetic play, as in the title. At the aural level, the use of a country-melodic style reinforces the sense of parody. Visually, the Bank Manager's professional identity and his performance represent a contrast. Gesturally, the song is characterised by exaggerated expressivity.

5.7.10 *Gold*

(Present in both versions)

In the story of *Once*, *Gold* is a time to think deeply. The song is not like the other songs that have a lot of emotional highs and lows. It shows a strong and calm kind of hope. The lyrics suggest that the main character is slowly coming to terms with his past pain and

realising how important he is. This is a small but important step in the main character's emotional journey. *Gold* gets the audience ready for the end of the story by giving them a moment of quiet thought before the big reveals that come next.

The song makes people think because it has warm harmonic progressions and a steady instrumental backing. In both the movie and the stage version, the musicians around Guy play *Gold* together. This group performance shows how music can bring people together and how important it is to help and work with each other. The group's performance shows that making music together can help people get through tough times. This is why themes of perseverance and self-worth are shown not only through personal reflection but also through group artistic experience. *Gold* builds one of the main ideas of *Once*: that music can bring people together and help them heal, even when they aren't sure if they will find love.

From a language point of view, the lyrics use simple but powerful images to show how figurative language can change how people feel. The phrase *walking on moonbeams* gives a sense of fragile hope, and the use of gold as a metaphor for emotional truth is used again. The line *If a door be closed / then a road for home start building* uses a structure that is similar to a proverb to back up the song's message of strength and new beginnings. It says that new chances can still come up even after bad things happen. *Gold* feels close and real in the movie, just like it does when musicians are playing together. The scene fits with the movie's style of being real by showing how music is a normal part of life that people do together. The song is usually bigger on stage, because the ensemble harmonies are richer and the staging is bigger. This growth makes the song more emotional and makes the moment feel like a bigger show of support from the group. The calm and thoughtful mood of this song balances out the more emotional songs that come before and after it, like *Sleeping* and *The Hill*. The song breaks the tension in the story for a short time, giving the audience time to think about what the main characters have been through before the story ends. *Gold* makes a quiet but powerful statement of hope that adds to the story and emotional structure of *Once*. The song's group performance, reflective imagery, and simple musical language put the main characters' personal experiences in a bigger group setting. This shows that music and community can help people when their emotions change.

The song relies linguistically on simple imagery, including metaphors such as *gold* and *moonbeams* (*I wouldn't trade her for gold* - *Che non la cambierei con l'oro*, and *I'm walking on moon beams* - *Sono al settimo cielo*). The second word's literal meaning is

“raggi di luna” (*rays of moonlight*), but in the Italian official subtitles, it is rendered as “settimo Cielo” (*seventh heaven*). The aural mode is set up with not only a guitar, there is a violin too. Visually the song starts at home with other people, in the style of a “pub gig” and continues on the road as a background song while the two main characters are on a motorcycle. Gesturally, it starts laughing and moves intimately.

5.7.11 *Sleeping*

(Present only in the stage versions)

In the story, the characters give up and the emotions are complex when they sleep. This song represents a break for the Guy to think about himself. It demonstrates the emotional exhaustion he is going through and his feelings about the past. The song is different from the ones before and after it because it is sad and soft. It stops the story for a moment so the audience can gain more insight into the main character’s feelings about his former partner. It sets the mood for the choices he makes later in the story.

The reason for this is that The Guy sings *Sleeping* captures a psychological state that is difficult to convey in dialogue, which is a mixture of resignation, emotional paralysis, and the remaining love despite separation. The metaphor of “sleep” in the title implies a desire for quietness and temporary suspension of activity, which may be interpreted as a psychological desire to escape from the turbulence of emotions that are unresolved. Instead of confronting his past, it seems that he is in a state of reflection.

The lyrics are made up of questions and statements that make it sound like the singer is talking to their partner who is not there. *Are you sleeping? / Still dreaming?* and *How am I supposed to live without you?* are examples of lines that ask the same question over and over again. They make the conversation feel like it has not ended and make audience feel confused. The fact that these questions keep coming up shows that the main character is unable to move on, and the song’s simple language makes it sound more like a confession. The phrase *lazy love* makes people think of a strong metaphor for a relationship that has slowly faded away because of emotional inactivity instead of a single, clear break.

Sleeping, on the other hand, is not like a lot of the musical parts that happen when the Guy and the Girl work together. This solitude makes the emotional distance between what the main character says to other people and what he is still working through inside himself even bigger. The song is like a private monologue that shows flaws that are not usually

talked about in the relationships in the story. *Sleeping* also helps to balance the themes between the two main characters in *Once*. The song's dramatic symmetry with the Girl's later solo number *The Hill* comes from putting the Guy's internal conflict front and centre. Both songs are breaks that show how the characters are feeling at key points in the story. This is how the musical makes sure that the two main characters' points of view are balanced. The music has soft backing and a voice that is not too loud. The closeness is even stronger in the movie version because it uses a naturalistic style of acting that keeps the main character's emotional vulnerability at the centre of the story. The stage version keeps most of this mood, but the way the characters are set up might make physical or spatial separation stand out more to show how deep they are. Adding *Sleeping* to the play's setting makes sure that the ensemble-oriented staging does not get in the way of the main character's story. So, the song helps keep the emotional structure of the work stable by grounding Guy's personal journey and reinforcing the main idea that art can be a way to say things that would otherwise go unsaid.

Sleeping is not included in the 2007 movie, but only in the theatrical version. Table 5.7 shows just one line of the song demonstrating that there is no humour in the lyrics, except for that one representing a visual joke. In this line, the humour arises from the metaphor *buried in yourself*, which describes emotional distance and it is reinforced by the visual context, turning it into a visual joke.

Table 5.7. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *Sleeping.*

Song Lyrics (ST)	Joke Type	Source of Humour
Still buried in yourself?	Visual joke	The line uses metaphor to describe emotional retraction

The song has a simple structure, full of repetition and interrogative forms, which create the impression of an internal dialogue. This is what happens linguistically. At the aural level, the orchestration is minimal, contributing to an atmosphere of intimacy and fragility. The song is associated with solitude and visual isolation. Also, gesturally, the performance is characterised by limited physical movement.

5.7.12 *When Your Mind's Made Up*

(Present in both versions)

A powerful expression of creative conflict and emotional tension. *When Your Mind's Made Up* is one of the most emotionally charged scenes in *Once*. As a song within a rehearsal session, *When Your Mind's Made Up* actually creates a moment of conflict where artistic collaboration meets personal tension. Rather than being a "rehearsal" song in itself, it actually provides a strong way out for conflict, frustration, and emotional tension.

The Guy sings *When Your Mind's Made Up* as an expression of frustration. Although the performance is directed toward the band during the rehearsal, its emotional force addresses the Girl and the Guy himself. His voice increases dynamically as the song progresses, signalling a struggle to keep feelings that cannot easily be articulated. The Girl listens in silence.

Linguistically, the lyrics are based on repetition. The refrain *When your mind's made up*, subtitled as *Se hai già* deciso, is repeated insistently throughout the song, emphasising the inevitability of a decision that is impossible to be reversed. This repetition mirrors the emotional relationship between the characters, suggesting that once a choice has been made, dialogue becomes useless. The colloquial expression *when the shit* falls, subtitled as *Quando sei nella merda*, introduces a moment of informal language that intensifies the emotional authenticity of the song, reflecting the protagonist's frustration.

The lines *There's no point trying to change it* (*Non serve a nulla provare a farti cambiare idea*) and *There's no point even talking* (*Non serve a nulla parlare*) do not contain any form of humour. Instead, they convey a strong sense of resignation and emotional closure. The first line rejects any possibility of changing the situation, while the second marks the complete breakdown of communication.

Musically, the song is characterised by a gradual dynamic escalation. The song begins with a relatively moderate arrangement but progressively adds instrumental layers and vocal intensity.

In the film version, the performance has a strong sense of realism. The scene shows the immediacy of live performance and the blurred boundary between personal emotion and artistic creation. In the stage adaptation, the song often becomes a larger ensemble moment.

When Your Mind's Made Up functions as an ensemble number that transforms individual frustration into collective musical energy.

This song, together with *Falling Slowly*, is one of the most important songs in the movie. It represents the moment in which the Guy, together with a band and the Girl, makes an effort to prove, first to himself, that he is worthy and capable of making good music.

The song has repetition all along the song. The chorus is full of them. Their meaning is to reinforce the inevitability and irreversibility of the emotional situation. The use of colloquial expressions also enhances the perception of authenticity. At the aural level, the song is characterised by a strong dynamic; the intensity of the music grows, and so does the number of instruments that enter as if they were different layers.

Visually, the song is staged within a rehearsal of recording setting, inside a recording studio. The presence of a band moves the song from an individual experience to a shared moment.

5.7.13 *The Hill*

(Present in both versions)

The Hill is the point where the Girl's emotions change. Finally, she speaks out about the inner conflict that has been going on throughout the story. Although she mostly interacts with the Guy in a calm, practical, and emotionally cautious way, this song shows how deeply she feels torn between her growing feelings for him and her duty to her husband and family. It is the only moment in which she verbalises, through music rather than dialogue, the depth of her internal conflict, her sense of responsibility toward her husband and family, and her restrained affection for the Guy. The song starts to look like a confession, letting the audience hear her thoughts and feelings that she is not able to admit.

The Girl keeps her emotional distance throughout the story, and she often changes the subject to music or everyday problems. But in this moment, that calmness gives way to a more open reflection. The song shows that she knows that every choice she makes will have effects and that she needs to be honest with herself about her feelings while also being responsible for her actions.

The words in the lyrics resemble a way to talk to herself. Using first-person statements makes it seem like there is a private conversation going on inside the speaker's head

instead of one that is directed outward. Lines like *I wish I didn't have to make all those mistakes and be wise* show how painful it is to realise that emotional maturity often comes from making hard choices. Repeated mentions of sight and perception, like *don't you see me crying* and *he's looking right through me*, also give the impression that the person is invisible to the other person. The Girl feels like no one sees or understands her. She is stuck between her own feelings and what others expect from her. The melody gets louder and louder, just like the lyrics do, going from quiet reflection to a more open and expressive climax. This controlled musical language makes it seem even more like the song is about a rare moment when the Girl lets herself feel things she usually keeps under control. The lines *I'm letting myself down / By satisfying you* (*Sono delusa di me stessa / Per averti reso felice*) does not contain humour as well. Instead, it expresses a strong internal conflict, as the speaker recognises that meeting the other person's expectations comes at the expense of her own needs.

The Hill is also very important in getting the audience ready for the story's ending. The song makes it clear why the expected romantic resolution between the main characters does not happen by putting the Girl's honesty and sense of duty at the front. It prepares the audience for the story's quiet, non-romantic resolution. *The Hill* changes the story's point of view in both the movie and the stage version. Instead of focusing on the Girl and Guy's musical relationship, it focuses on the Girl's emotional landscape.

Musically, the almost fragile accompaniment underscores her isolation, while the vocal line rises in intensity to convey the weight of her choices. The musical structure of the song stays mostly the same in both versions, but the theatrical setting often makes the moment feel more real. The singer's physical presence highlights the song's confessional quality. In the end, *The Hill* is one of the most personal and revealing parts of *Once*. The song's simple music and deeply personal lyrics make the main conflict between desire and responsibility clear. This helps the audience understand the emotional logic behind the story's quiet and unusual ending.

The examples presented above confirm that, within the song, meaning is primarily constructed through introspective and emotional strategies rather than humour. The lyrics are characterised, as mentioned before, by a confessional tone, expressing the Girl's inner conflict and emotional vulnerability through simple, direct, and clear language. For this reason, the song can be interpreted as if she is talking to the Guy, either utilising the music as a projection of emotional support and escape from her situation.

5.7.15 *The Moon (Reprise)*

(Present only in the stage musical)

The Moon (Reprise) returns briefly to the meditative atmosphere established earlier in the musical through the original song *The Moon*. It is a musical bridge between two longer musical numbers. Reprises form a central part of any musical theatre drama and also show audiences where the story's emotional connections run through. It keeps the themes alive.

5.7.16 *Falling Slowly (Reprise)*

(Present in both versions)

Falling Slowly (Reprise) makes a quick turn back to the musical and emotional material of the protagonists' initial duet. By tapping into the melody of their first ever gig together, the song illustrates the emotional status of that engagement even as their relationship begins to move in different directions. The reprise remembers the moment when the two first recognised their creative alignment with one another's creative capabilities. This particular, earlier sense of connection can never really be made again, and in this way, the brief form of the reprise is one that indicates the last. The reprise does not feature within the licensed score, so this is a directorial choice rather than an integral part of the musical's structure. *Falling Slowly*'s main theme is the theme of relationship, and the repetition of that motif embodies one of *Once*'s central story themes, a sense of having shared a sense of connectedness with someone else, something which, though they remain to be resolved, leaves an indelible mark on them.

5.7.17 *Trying to Pull Myself Away*

(Present only in the film)

Trying to Pull Myself Away is present after the final scene in the movie as a reflection of the Guy's emotional process. Where most of the musical numbers in *Once* come directly from the characters' interactions and unfold in the story world, this song is heard during the closing credits. For this reason, it acts almost as a lyrical epilogue rather than a particular narrative and continues the protagonist's inner reflection when the narrative has effectively ended. In the language of film studies, songs within *Once* are mostly diegetic; they exist inside a fictional narrative world, and are played by the characters themselves. The audience observes characters playing instruments, singing or rehearsing

them as one, and the music is a direct reflection of the narrative reality. *Trying to Pull Myself Away*, by comparison, belongs to the non-diegetic dimension of the soundtrack: it fits with the end credits and is audible only to the audience, not to the characters. If placed in that moment, the song continues to highlight the film's intimate psychological profile of the Guy.

The phrase *I'm trying to pull myself away*, repeated, communicates that "I won't give up", and that "I'm getting nowhere", and even more so reinforces the belief that disconnection emotionally is still unfinished. Yet another repetition of a phrase which enhances the sense of the passage of time while highlighting the circularity of thought of the lead character is *everything's gone*. The song embodies the Guy's request to find a sense of balance in himself. When he uses music again, he's able to express feelings that remain challenging to put into words.

The song is not in the stage version of *Once*. By taking the emotional reflection beyond the last scene, its structure underscores the reflective character of the film's approach to artistic and emotional vulnerability. Last of all, as a closure, *Trying to Pull Myself Away* lets the audience stay in the protagonist's head for a little while.

Although the song may appear in credit sequences, it does not function within the film's narrative structure and remains marginal to the audiovisual text.

5.7.18 *All the Way Down*

(Present only in the film)

In the film, *All the Way Down* comes as a musical moment that reflects the Guy's emotional tiredness after the break-up of his former romance. This song it is heard immediately after the opening busking scene on Grafton Street, as the film runs through images of the Guy going back to his daily routine. He is in his room, singing alone with his guitar.

The phrasing *you have broken me all the way down*, suggests that in the end, what might have been easy was psychological and emotional, and at least suggests a moment of self-awareness when the protagonist realises the level to which he has been devastated by the breakup of their relationship. The Guy is not yet in a position to express himself clearly, and at this point in the story, the song serves as a form of indirect articulation of his internal conflict. The song is omitted from the theatrical adaptation of *Once*. This

exclusion underscores a dramaturgical focus in the theatrical version, which favours songs that actively promote character interaction or ensemble engagement.

The lines *Down upon my knees* (*Mi hai messo in Ginocchio*), *I'll be far to sea* (*Io sarò in mare aperto*), and *What chance had we got* (*Che speranze abbiamo*) do not contain humour. Thet contribute to the emotional depth of the song through figurative and reflective language. The first sentence shows the speaker's vulnerability, the second one uses spatial imagery to suggest distance and isolation, and the third sentence introduces a moment of reflection on the failure of the relationship.

The song has a simple repetitive structure; it conveys exhaustion and psychological fragmentation. The repeated line *you have broken me all the way down* reinforces the sense of total collapse. The song starts in a diegetic mode, with the Guy sitting on his bed, playing the guitar and singing; it then shifts into a non-diegetic dimension, as he is shown going about his daily routine while the music continues to be heard only by the audience.

5.7.19 *Fallen from the Sky*

(Present only in the film)

Where the music is pretty introspective, emotionally intense songs, which is largely filled with emotion, this one is playful, a lot of experimentation with music. The music plays at a relatively casual moment in the narrative, freeing the protagonist to step, for a while, out of the emotional weight he carries over many of his previous acts. In this context, *Fallen from the Sky* serves more as a fanciful musical interlude than a dramatic confession. In doing so, the audience understands that the Guy is not only as a mournful or heartbreaking songwriter, but also a musician with humour. In terms of language, the line *you must have fallen from the sky* gives a sense of wonder and disconnection, like someone who seems to suddenly appear but still feels like a stranger. The song itself is missing from the stage production of *Once*.

The song appears in fragmentary form within an informal musical interaction, rather than as a fully developed musical number.

5.7.20 *Lies*

(Present only in the film)

Lies appears in the film as a kind of emotional overflow that shows the Guy's ongoing pain after a relationship break-up. Although earlier songs such as *Leave* speak directly and honestly to that hurt, *Lies*, in the middle of the movie, reflects a more reflective and restrained viewpoint. Musically, the song explores a balance between sadness and clearness. The repeated refrain of *Lies, lies, lies* (*Bugie, bugie, bugie*) is a double-edged sword, both about blaming and about waking up to the way that denial and miscommunication were central to failure. It uses repetition to intensify accusation and emotional tension. And by revealing the more soft elements of his grief, the song also helps the audience to see why, on a level of intimacy, and anxiety, he is taking both tenderness and caution about his relationship with the Girl seriously. He is no longer revealing his vulnerability simply in agony, he's becoming more aware of his and others' vulnerability. The song is omitted from the stage adaptation of *Once*. The themes from *Lies*, heartbreak, emotional paralysis, the challenges of letting go, have been covered in others, including *Leave*, *Sleeping* and *The Hill*. Instead of providing resolution, *Lies* shows us a moment of recognition, a time when the protagonist has begun to grasp the emotional mechanisms that have influenced the course of his life.

The little cracks they escalated (*I malintesi aumentavano*) employs metaphor to describe the gradual ending of the relationship; the same occurs with the lines *You're moving too fast / And I can't keep up with you* (*Vai troppo veloce per me / E non Riesco a starti dietro*).

Unlike fully developed performances, *Lies* appears in the film as a moment of musical composition rather than a complete staged song. The Guy is shown singing and working on the writing of the words. The song is presented as an evolving expression of the protagonist's emotional state. Then, in the movie, few old videos recording of him and ex-girlfriend starts to be shown on screen, as if they were memories during the composition of the song. As the music continues, is it possible to hear the backing vocals of the Girl even if she is not there singing with him.

5.8 Methodological Framework for Textual Analysis in *Once*

This section adopts a methodological framework that builds on the theoretical foundations outlined in the preceding sections, particularly the discussion of *Once* as a "naturalistic musical" characterised by low budget style and live musical performance. The approach reflects the specific status of the 2007 film, largely recorded in live audio, and structured around spontaneous musical interaction, and its later adaptation into a more formally codified stage musical. The analysis therefore requires methodological tools capable of capturing the multimodal nature of musical performance, the translational and editorial interventions evident in subtitle tracks, and the adaptive transformations that occur when material originally conceived for the screen is reinterpreted for the theatrical stage.

5.8.1 Analytical Scope and Primary Sources

The primary sources examined in this section are:

- **The original film audio (*Once*, 2007)**, as streamed on Amazon Prime Video, transcribed manually by the author. This includes sung passages, spoken interjections, music, and non-verbal vocalisations, which are integral to the film.
- **The official English subtitle track** currently available on Prime Video. As subtitle files on streaming platforms undergo periodic updates, the analysis reflects the version accessible at the time of viewing, without presuming historical continuity with the 2007 subtitles.
- **The Italian subtitle tracks** available on the same streaming service, analysed comparatively to identify translational strategies and constraints.
- **The stage musical script (2011-2012)**, used to examine adaptive reshaping for theatre, including structural repositioning of songs, ensemble integration, and the introduction of additional musical numbers.

This combination of sources allows for a multidimensional comparison: intra-lingual (audio vs English subtitles), inter-lingual (English vs Italian subtitles), and intermedial (film vs stage musical).

It should be noted that the final table presented in this chapter, which includes the column offering a proposed Italian rendering for dubbing and/or for potential singable

subtitling, does not derive from any existing published material nor from official translation resources. Rather, it constitutes an original contribution developed specifically within the framework of the present work. The Italian versions provided are formulated in accordance with the methodological principles outlined earlier in the thesis, particularly those pertaining to prosodic alignment, melodic scansion, performability, and semantic coherence in the translation of sung text, utilising the quantitative and qualitative method explained in the methodological chapter.

While an Italian stage adaptation of *Once* has in fact been produced and performed in Italian theatres, the translated song lyrics used in that production are not publicly available. Access to the official Italian texts was formally requested from the producing company, which staged the Italian version of the musical; however, at the time of writing, no authorised materials have been made available for scholarly consultation. In the absence of verifiable documentary sources, the present translation and analysis do not draw on those stage translations but are full author's elaboration.

Consequently, the Italian rendering proposed here are original and were developed independently for the purpose of this work. They do not seek to reproduce or approximate the Italian stage version, but rather to explore, through applied translation practice, the constraints and possibilities of singable translation within the specific aesthetic and performative framework of the film. These proposed renderings reflect a process of applied translation practice that seeks to balance fidelity to verbal meaning with the structural and expressive demands imposed by musical setting.

Furthermore, the solutions offered here are not intended as prescriptive or definitive, but function instead as a tool that illustrates, through concrete examples, the types of decisions, constraints, and creative negotiations involved when adapting musical material for performance in another language. In this respect, the table forms an integral part of the scholarly contribution of the thesis, providing an applied demonstration that both applies and tests the methodological framework established in the preceding chapters.

Unlike classical film musicals, where songs are pre-recorded, edited, and synchronised to produce an idealised sound, *Once* employs what Carney describes as "unselfconscious" and "honest" performance aesthetics. Many musical moments were captured in sync sound, with ambient noise and microphone imperfections preserved as part of the film's signature authenticity.

This has two methodological consequences:

- **The audio track is treated as an authoritative primary text**, not as a derivative performance of a written score.
- **Micro-variations in breath, articulation, hesitations, and dynamic shifts** are meaningful indicators of emotion and must be reflected in transcription where relevant.

To acknowledge this performative dimension, the methodology distinguishes between:

- **Original Movie Audio** (indicating the live performance as heard).
- **Film Subtitles**, which necessarily compress, restructure, or omit material due to spatial and temporal constraints.

The stage musical constitutes a form of "reverse" adaptation, where cinematic spontaneity is reshaped into theatrical structure. As noted before, the musical reframes the film's naturalistic songs within a dramaturgy that emphasises ensemble presence, narrative pacing, and formal cohesion.

5.8.2 Transcription Conventions

All excerpts follow a consistent system designed to capture linguistic, musical, and audiovisual features:

- **Sung material** is preceded by the symbol ♪ (for the English subtitles but not for the Italian ones, that are written in *Italics*), following established AVT convention.
- **Spoken interjections, vocalisations, and non-verbal sounds** (e.g., humming, sighs, laughter) are included where they carry narrative or expressive significance.
- **Lineation follows the film's musical phrasing**, not the subtitle segmentation.
- **Capitalisation, punctuation, and repetition** reflect the performed source rather than the subtitle file.
- **Time-codes** correspond to the film version analysed and are included for reproducibility.
- **English and Italian subtitles** are reproduced word-for-word, including deviations, omissions, line breaks, and condensation.

This transcription is essential to evaluating subtitling strategies such as condensation, paraphrase, neutralisation, rhythm flattening, and suppression of non-lexical information.

5.9 *Falling Slowly* (Analysis)

This section provides a multi-layered examination of *Falling Slowly*, the first major musical number in *Once* and the only song to have achieved independent international recognition, winning the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 2008. As discussed above, the song is central to the film's narrative and aesthetic architecture: it marks the moment in which the two protagonists, Guy and Girl, enter into an authentic mode of communication that transcends the linguistic and cultural obstacles structuring their earlier interactions. The performance of *Falling Slowly* in the music shop, recorded largely in live audio, exemplifies the film's naturalistic approach to musical storytelling and functions as the emotional and structural hinge upon which the remainder of the plot turns.

In order to illustrate the progressive transformation of the song across different audiovisual and translational modalities, the analysis proceeds from the original film audio to subtitling, from subtitling to dubbing, and finally to a proposed singable Italian rendering. Unlike the analysis presented in the previous chapter on *My Fair Lady*, where an official Italian sung version already exists in the film and therefore the discussion focused exclusively on comparative analysis, the case of *Once* presents a different situation. In the Italian dubbed version of the film, the songs are not translated and remain in the original English, reflecting a common practice in contemporary audiovisual translation known as the "non-translation of songs"[553], whereby musical numbers are preserved in the source language rather than adapted into the target language. Although Italian stage productions of the musical do exist, the corresponding Italian script and lyrics are not publicly available for consultation and could not be included in the present analysis. For this reason, the final table (Table 5.11) presents a proposed singable Italian translation produced for the purposes of this dissertation, intended as an example of the translational strategies involved in adapting a song for performance within audiovisual translation contexts.

[553] On the practice of leaving songs untranslated in dubbed audiovisual products, see Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Aline Remael, *Audiovisual Translation. Subtitling*, London, Routledge, 2007; Johan Franzon, "Choices in Song Translation. Singability in Print, Subtitles and Sung Performance", *The Translator*, 14-2 (2008), pp. 373-399.

The textual analysis presented here is organised into four comparative tables, each addressing a distinct dimension of audiovisual and intermedial variation in the song *Falling Slowly*.

- **Table** 5.8 compares the **original film audio**, including sung lines, spoken interjections, and non-verbal vocalisations, with the **English subtitles** provided by the platform. This intra-lingual comparison highlights the processes of condensation, omission, and reformulation that subtitling necessarily entails, especially when dealing with sung material performed live.
- **Table** 5.9 juxtaposes the **English subtitles** with the **Italian subtitle track** currently available on Amazon Prime Video. This inter-lingual comparison reveals how semantic nuance, musical phrasing, and cultural references are reshaped during translation, and how the emotional contour of the song is modulated to accommodate the constraints of Italian subtitling norms.
- **Table** 5.10 compares the **Italian dubbing** with the **Italian subtitles**. This intra-lingual comparison highlights the different strategies adopted in dubbing and subtitling when rendering sung dialogue and lyrical material within the same target language.
- **Table** 5.11 presents the **English and Italian subtitles alongside an original Italian rendering designed for dubbing and/or singable subtitling**. As stated in the methodological section, this final column constitutes original work produced for the purposes of this dissertation and serves as a heuristic demonstration of the translational negotiations required when adapting a song for performance.

Together, these tables allow for a layered investigation into how *Falling Slowly* is transformed across modalities (audio vs text), languages (English vs Italian), and media practices (subtitling, dubbing and singable translation). They also demonstrate the degree to which the song's affective and communicative potency, its textual simplicity, and its understated emotional build, is subject to reinterpretation as it moves across formats.

5.9.1 *Falling Slowly* – Intra-Lingual Comparison (Film 2007 vs English Subtitles)

The English subtitles analysed in this section were taken from the version of *Once* currently available on Amazon Prime Video (last accessed 2025). Since streaming platforms routinely update or replace subtitle files for reasons of formatting, licensing, or error correction, it is not possible to determine whether these subtitles correspond to the original 2007 subtitle track. The present analysis therefore reflects the version available at the time of viewing.

Table 5.8. Line-by-line Intra-Lingual Comparison Between the Original Movie Audio and the English Subtitles of *Falling Slowly*.

#	Time-Code	Character	Original Movie Audio	English Subtitles
1	00:15:44	Guy	*I don't know you* *But I want you*	♪ I don't know you But I want you
2	00:15:51		*All the more for that*	♪ All the more for that
3	00:15:59	Guy and Girl	*And words fall through me* *And always fool me*	-♪ And words fall through me and always fool me -[HARMONIZING]
4	00:16:06		*And I can't react*	♪ And I can't react
5	00:16:12	Guy	We change here	We change here.
6	00:16:14		*And games that never amount*	♪ And games that never amount
7	00:16:18		*To more than they're meant*	♪ To more that they're meant
8	00:16:22		*Will play themselves out*	♪ Will play themselves out
9	00:16:27		Hold on	Hold it.
10	00:16:28		The chorus	And the chorus.
11	00:16:32	Guy and Girl	*Take this sinking boat*	♪ Take this sinking boat
12	00:16:36		*And point it home*	♪ And point it home
13	00:16:40		*We've still got time*	♪ We've still got time
14	00:16:46		*Raise your hopeful voice*	♪ Raise your hopeful voice
15	00:16:51		*You have the choice*	♪ You had the choice
16	00:16:55		*You've made it now*	♪ You've made it now
17	00:17:05	Guy and Girl	*Falling slowly* *Eyes that know me*	♪ Falling slowly eyes that know me
18	00:17:13		*And I can't go back*	♪ And I can't go back
19	00:17:20		*And moods that take me* *And erase me*	♪ Moods that take me and erase me
20	00:17:27		*And I'm painted black*	♪ And I'm painted black
21	00:17:35	Guy	*Well, you have* *suffered enough*	♪ Well, you have suffered enough
22	00:17:40		*And warred with yourself*	♪ And warred with yourself
23	00:17:43		*It's time that you won*	♪ It's time that you won

24	00:17:50		Again	Again.
25	00:17:53	Gui and Girl	*Take this sinking boat*	♪ Take this sinking boat
26	00:17:58		*And point it home*	♪ And point it home
27	00:18:02		*We've still got time*	♪ We've still got time
28	00:18:08		*Raise your hopeful voice*	♪ Raise your hopeful voice
29	00:18:12		*You have the choice*	♪ You had the choice
30	00:18:16		*You've made it now*	♪ You've made it now
31	00:18:29	Guy	*Oh Oh, Oh Oh*	[HUMMING]
32	00:18:39		*Yeeh!*	♪ Yeah
33	00:18:40	Guy and Girl	*Take this sinking boeat*	♪ Take this sinking boat
34	00:18:44		*And point it home*	♪ And point it home
35	00:18:48		*We've still got time*	♪ We've still got time
36	00:18:54		*Raise your hopeful voice*	♪ Raise your hopeful voice
37	00:18:59		*You have the choice*	♪ You had the choice
38	00:19:02		*You've made it now*	♪ You've made it now
39	00:19:08		*Falling slowly*	♪ Falling slowly
40	00:19:12		*Sing your melody*	♪ Sing your melody
41	00:19:17		*I'll sing alo…*	♪ I'll sing along…
42	00:19:25	Guy	*…ong*	[HUMMING]
43	00:19:29		*Ah*	[VOCALISING]
44	00:19:40		*Ah Ah*	
45	00:19:47		*Call and I'll sing along*	♪ Call and I'll sing along
46	00:20:01			[PIANO CONTINUES]

By conducting an intra-lingual comparison between the original film audio and the English subtitles, it is possible to identify a series of systematic changes resulting from the tension between the demands of musical performance and the demands of reading the subtitles. As shown in Table 5.8 above, the subtitles often re-segment the lines of the lyrics to satisfy temporal and spatial constraints, even when the original film audio is presented in a fluid manner, typical of live musical performance.

A number of micro-variations between the performed audio and the English subtitle track illustrate how the subtitles mark the transitions between sung and spoken delivery. For instance, when the audio shifts to spoken interjection, the line *Hold on* is rendered in the subtitles as *Hold it*, not in italics and without the musical note symbol, signalling a momentary exit from the sung mode. Similarly, the performed *The chorus* appears in the subtitles as *And the chorus*, introducing a conjunction that is not present in the original sentence. These differences are particularly visible in subtitle lines 9 and 10, where spoken words also include final punctuation. Another discrepancy occurs in subtitle line

15: the performed *You have the choice* is shifted into the past tense as *You had the choice*, altering both the temporal anchoring and pragmatic force of the original line.

Non-lexical sounds such as humming, vocalising, and breaths, features that contribute significantly to the naturalistic texture of the film's sonic environment, are omitted from the subtitles. Although this deletion adheres with subtitling conventions, it reduces the performance's perceptual immediacy and flattens expressive elements that have melodic and narrative significance.

A second feature involves lexical simplification and regularisation. Lines that in the audio are delivered with minor variation, such as *You have the choice* becoming *You had the choice* in several subtitles, are rendered in a more standardised form that prioritises textual economy over faithful reproduction of live performance dynamics. While such changes do not alter the song's meaning, they introduce a slight shift in temporal perspective.

The subtitles also demonstrate a tendency toward segmentation according to syntactic rather than musical units. Whereas the audio articulates phrases according to melodic line and emotional emphasis, the subtitles regroup these into short segments that facilitate rapid reading but obscure the musical phrasing. This is particularly evident in the chorus, where the interdependence of lyrical and melodic progression is essential to the song's crescendo.

Taken together, these intra-lingual discrepancies underscore the distinct representational logics of performed and subtitled text. While the film privileges liveness, breath, and musical spontaneity, the subtitle file privileges clarity, concision, and legibility. The resulting gap, though subtle, reveals much about the nature of musical communication in naturalistic cinema and the challenges posed by rendering such communication in written form.

5.9.2 *Falling Slowly* – Inter-Lingual Comparison (English vs Italian Subtitles)

The translation of the English and Italian subtitles of *Falling Slowly* also shows an inter-lingual negotiation between music-related and subtitle language. Unlike the intra-lingual comparison, which mainly concerns condensation and segmentation, the inter-lingual analysis considers the negotiation between semantic fidelity and idiomatic naturalness within the target language. However, the Italian subtitles do not generally

utilise the structure of the English lines, as shown in Table 5.9, because they focus on communicative immediacy, and emotional accessibility for Italian audiences.

Table 5.9. Line-by-line Inter-Lingual Comparison Between the English Subtitles and the Italian Subtitles of *Falling Slowly*.

#	Time-Code	Character	English Subtitles	Italian Subtitles
1	00:15:44	Guy	♪ I don't know you But I want you	*Io non ti conosco*
2	00:15:47			*Ma ti voglio*
3	00:15:51	Guy and Girl	♪ All the more for that	*Ancora di più*
4	00:15:59		-♪ And words fall through me and always fool me -[HARMONISING]	*Le parole vengono da sole*
5	00:16:02			*E mi tradiscono sempre*
6	00:16:06		♪ And I can't react	*E non riesco a reagire*
7	00:16:12	Guy	We change here.	Qui cambiamo.
8	00:16:14		♪ And games that never amount	*E i giochetti non valgono mai*
9	00:16:18		♪ To more that they're meant	*Più di quanto vorrebbero*
10	00:16:22		♪ Will play themselves out	*Si risolveranno da soli*
11	00:16:27		Hold it.	Aspetta…E ora il ritornello.
12	00:16:28		And the chorus.	
13	00:16:32	Guy and Girl	♪ Take this sinking boat	*Prendi questa barca che affonda*
14	00:16:36		♪ And point it home	*E riportala a casa*
15	00:16:40		♪ We've still got time	*Abbiamo ancora tempo*
16	00:16:46		♪ Raise your hopeful voice	*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*
17	00:16:51		♪ You had the choice	*Potevi scegliere*
18	00:16:55		♪ You've made it now	*Ora hai scelto*
19	00:17:05		♪ Falling slowly eyes that know me	*Cado lentamente*
20	00:17:08			*Occhi che mi conoscono*
21	00:17:13		♪ And I can't go back	*E non posso tornare indietro*
22	00:17:20		♪ Moods that take me and erase me	*Le emozioni mi assalgono*
23	00:17:23			*E mi annullano*
24	00:17:27		♪ And I'm painted black	*E intorno a me è tutto nero*
25	00:17:35	Guy	♪ Well, you have suffered enough	*Hai sofferto abbastanza*
26	00:17:40		♪ And warred with yourself	*In guerra contro te stessa*
27	00:17:43		♪ It's time that you won	*È ora che tu vinca*
28	00:17:50		Again.	Di nuovo.
29	00:17:53	Gui and Girl	♪ Take this sinking boat	*Prendi questa barca che affonda*
30	00:17:58		♪ And point it home	*E riportala a casa*

31	00:18:02		♪ We've still got time	*Abbiamo ancora tempo*
32	00:18:08		♪ Raise your hopeful voice	*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*
33	00:18:12		♪ You had the choice	*Potevi scegliere*
34	00:18:16		♪ You've made it now	*Ora hai scelto*
35	00:18:29	Guy	[HUMMING]	
36	00:18:39		♪ Yeah	Si!
37	00:18:40	Guy and Girl	♪ Take this sinking boat	*Prendi questa barca che affonda*
38	00:18:44		♪ And point it home	*E riportala a casa*
39	00:18:48		♪ We've still got time	*Abbiamo ancora tempo*
40	00:18:54		♪ Raise your hopeful voice	*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*
41	00:18:59		♪ You had the choice	*Potevi scegliere*
42	00:19:02		♪ You've made it now	*Ora hai scelto*
43	00:19:08		♪ Falling slowly	*Cado lentamente*
44	00:19:12		♪ Sing your melody	*Canta la tua canzone*
45	00:19:17		♪ I'll sing along…	*Io canterò con te*
46	00:19:25	Guy	[HUMMING]	
47	00:19:29		[VOCALISING]	
48	00:19:47		♪ Call and I'll sing along	*Chiama e canterò con te…*
46	00:20:01		[PIANO CONTINUES]	

A primary observation concerns semantic shifts. Lines such as *And words fall through me / and always fool me* are rendered as *Le parole vengono da sole / E mi tradiscono sempre*, is a solution that preserves spontaneity and vulnerability but reinterprets the metaphor through idiomatic Italian phrasing. This choice illustrates a tendency in Italian subtitles to favour interpretative equivalents over literal ones, especially when a direct translation might sound unnatural or too abstract.

A second observation relates to register and tone. The English lyrics of *Falling Slowly* are characterised by a soft, introspective simplicity. The Italian subtitles, occasionally introduce a more explicit or explanatory tone, for instance, *E intorno a me è tutto nero*, which adds a descriptive emphasis not present in the English *And I'm painted black*. Although such additions do not alter the emotional meaning, they reshape the metaphor into a more concrete and less ambiguous image, facilitating comprehension but reducing the original's poetry.

A third dimension is syntactic restructuring. Italian requires more explicit marking of subject and object relations, which results in subtitles that are fuller than the English ones. This structural necessity can lead to a conflict with subtitling norms that prioritise brevity.

The Italian subtitles also display a tendency to neutralise certain expressive elements, particularly those connected to vocal spontaneity. Spoken cues such as *Hold it* or

reformulations like *And the chorus* are either omitted or simplified or joined together in one subtitle.

A further set of differences between the English and Italian subtitles involves segmentation and the handling of non-verbal auditory information. In subtitle line 1, the English version presents two distinct lyrical units *I don't know you* / *But I want you* separated by a line break. In the Italian subtitles, however, these lines are split into two separate subtitles (*Io non ti conosco* and *Ma ti voglio*), a segmentation strategy that recurs elsewhere in the song. At the same time, when dealing with spoken interjections, the Italian subtitles tend to merge adjacent English subtitles into a single unit. The two English cues *Hold it* and *And the chorus*, each punctuated with a full stop, lose both punctuation and separateness in Italian, becoming *Aspetta...E ora il ritornello* with tree dots in between and a final full stop at the end.

Relevant in the Italian subtitle track is the omission of auditory descriptors that are instead shown in the English version. The words [HARMONISING], [VOCALISING] and [HUMMING] do not appear transcribed in any form. As a result, these elements, particularly those signalling vocal interplay or emotional intensification, become inaccessible to d/Deaf or hard-of-hearing viewers. The absence of these markers perpetuates an issue in non-SDH (Subtitles for the d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing) subtitle practices: the failure to convey the full range of sound information required for the comprehension of scenes in which music and vocals are also important. SDH is a modality specifically designed to provide appropriate access by including non-verbal auditory information, such as vocalisations, sound effects, musical descriptors, and speaker identification. SDH subtitles aim to recreate, through textual means, the full sonic environment of a scene. The Italian subtitle track for *Once*, however, adheres to a non-SDH model and therefore fails to indicate harmonising, vocalising, or other paralinguistic sounds. Consequently, d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers receive a reduced representation of the scene, losing access not only to musical in general, but also to the interaction between Guy and Girl.

Overall, the inter-lingual comparison demonstrates that the Italian subtitles focus on ensuring comprehensibility, emotional intelligibility, and idiomatic fluency, even at the cost of attenuating some of the metaphorical and prosodic qualities of the English original. This strategy aligns with broader tendencies in Italian AVT, especially where musical texts are subtitled for general audiences rather than adapted for vocal performance or for d/Deaf people.

5.9.3 *Falling Slowly* – Dubbing, Subtitling, and Singable Translation in Italian AVT

The dubbed version of the film must remain synchronised with musical phrasing, melody, and vocal performance, whereas the subtitles reported word-by-word in Table 5.10 must ensure readability, time alignment with the speech rate, and visual economy. These priorities result in structural, lexical, and cultural choices.

Table 5.10. Line-by-line Intra-Lingual Comparison Between the Italian Dubbing and the Italian Subtitles of *Falling Slowly*.

#	Time-Code	Character	Italian Dubbing (not available)	Italian Subtitles
1	00:15:44	Guy		*Io non ti conosco*
2	00:15:47			*Ma ti voglio*
3	00:15:51	Guy and Girl		*Ancora di più*
4	00:15:59			*Le parole vengono da sole*
5	00:16:02			*E mi tradiscono sempre*
6	00:16:06			*E non Riesco a reagire*
7	00:16:12	Guy	**We change here.**	Qui cambiamo.
8	00:16:14			*E i giochetti non valgono mai*
9	00:16:18			*Più di quanto vorrebbero*
10	00:16:22			*Si risolveranno da soli*
11	00:16:27		**Hold on**	Aspetta…E ora il ritornello.
12	00:16:28		**The chorus.**	
13	00:16:32	Guy and Girl		*Prendi questa barca che affonda*
14	00:16:36			*E riportala a casa*
15	00:16:40			*Abbiamo ancora tempo*
16	00:16:46			*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*
17	00:16:51			*Potevi scegliere*
18	00:16:55			*Ora hai scelto*
19	00:17:05			*Cado lentamente*
20	00:17:08			*Occhi che mi conoscono*
21	00:17:13			*E non posso tornare indietro*
22	00:17:20			*Le emozioni mi assalgono*
23	00:17:23			*E mi annullano*
24	00:17:27			*E intorno a me è tutto nero*
25	00:17:35	Guy		*Hai sofferto abbastanza*
26	00:17:40			*In guerra contro te stessa*
27	00:17:43			*È ora che tu vinca*
28	00:17:50		**Again**	Di nuovo.

29	00:17:53	Guy and Girl		*Prendi questa barca che affonda*
30	00:17:58			*E riportala a casa*
31	00:18:02			*Abbiamo ancora tempo*
32	00:18:08			*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*
33	00:18:12			*Potevi scegliere*
34	00:18:16			*Ora hai scelto*
35	00:18:39	Guy	**Yeee!**	Si!
36	00:18:40	Guy and Girl		*Prendi questa barca che affonda*
37	00:18:44			*E riportala a casa*
38	00:18:48			*Abbiamo ancora tempo*
39	00:18:54			*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*
40	00:18:59			*Potevi scegliere*
41	00:19:02			*Ora hai scelto*
42	00:19:08			*Cado lentamente*
43	00:19:12			*Canta la tua canzone*
44	00:19:17			*Io canterò con te*
45	00:19:47	Guy		*Chiama e canterò con te…*

The comparison between the Italian subtitles of *Once* and the hypothetical requirements for an Italian dubbing or singable adaptation reveals translational challenges that differ from those encountered in classical film musicals. *Once* has no official Italian dubbing for its songs, and the Italian subtitles currently available on Amazon Prime Video were not developed with singability or vocal performance in mind. This absence is significant, as it reflects the film's aesthetic orientation, rooted in naturalistic performance and live recording, defined by performative intimacy.

One of the most evident consequences of this subtitling-oriented approach concerns the systematic reduction of vocal presence. As illustrated in Tables 5.9 and 5.10, the Italian subtitles prioritise semantic clarity and reading economy over the preservation of vocal shades. Non-verbal sounds such as humming and vocalising, crucial to the vocal texture of Hansard and Irglová's performance, are omitted. Without access to prosody, breath, or timbral colour, the subtitled version presents a "cleaner" and more text-bound representation of the song, but it is not accessible to d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

In *Once*, melodic phrasing is not subordinated to metrical predictability. Even when the Italian subtitles offer semantically faithful lines (*Abbiamo ancora tempo*), these cannot function as singable equivalents because their syllable count often exceeds the English original, vowel quality and rhythmic distribution does not go together with the melodic line, and Italian prefers open syllables and predictable stress patterns, making literal renderings unsingable.

These constraints perhaps explain why *Once* has never received a dubbed musical track in Italy and why any hypothetical dubbing would require extensive adaptive rewriting rather than direct translation. Moreover, producing a singable translation represents an additional level of complexity, as it presupposes not only linguistic competence but also a detailed understanding of musical structure, vocal prosody, and performance practice. For this reason, the singable Italian renderings developed in this dissertation are based upon specialised knowledge in composition and vocal performance, allowing the adapted text to respond to the melodic, rhythmic, and expressive demands of the original songs.

The Italian subtitles also tend to concretise metaphors that in the English version are more poetic. Lines such as *And I'm painted black* become *E intorno a me è tutto nero*, shifting the image from metaphor to description. Similarly, the shift from *You have the choice* to *Potevi scegliere* changes the line from the present tense to the past tense and considers the action as complete. This difference, though subtle, alters the emotional relationship between the singers within the scene: what in English remains an encouragement becomes, in Italian, a retrospective assessment.

Table 5.11 of this chapter, containing the Italian renderings designed for dubbing or singable subtitling, produced by the author of this thesis, demonstrates the degree to which such adaptation requires also creative rewriting. These solutions were developed specifically for this dissertation and illustrate:

- The need to reshape the structure to fit the melody.
- The frequent necessity of semantic modulation or metaphorical reorientation.
- The role of vowel distribution in producing singable lines.
- The importance of maintaining emotions while changing the lyrics.

In other words, while the Italian subtitles operate within the constraints of meaning-centred reduction, a singable adaptation requires music-centred reconstruction, often amounting to a re-authoring of the text. This divergence highlights the impossibility of treating singing subtitles and conventional reading subtitles as interchangeable modes of translation.

A further and more substantial issue concerns the treatment of the spoken interjections in *Falling Slowly*. In the Italian dubbed version, where the songs remain in English, these

brief spoken parts, such as *Hold on*, *The chorus*, or *Again*, are also left in English, even though they are not sung and could have been easily revoiced in Italian without compromising the musical integrity of the song. This choice produces a linguistic inconsistency and undermines the cohesion of the dubbed soundtrack. Equally curious is the musical substitution found in the Italian release: although the song remains performed by the original actors, the track inserted in the dubbed version is pitched a semitone higher (D♭ major rather than the original C major), altering the timbral and emotional colour of the performance. Moreover, the integration of this replacement audio reveals clear imperfections in lip-sync timing. The start of the song is slightly anticipated with respect to the actors' articulatory movements, and several dubbed lines are heard before the on-screen speaker begins to move. Such discrepancies disrupt the illusion of synchronicity that dubbing relies upon. For the viewer, these mismatches are not merely technical imperfections but perceptual distractions that compromise both the credibility of the performance and the immersive quality of the scene.

As mentioned before, the final table (Table 5.11) of this section presents an Italian rendering specifically designed for dubbing and/or singable subtitling. Unlike the Italian subtitle track examined earlier, which operates under the constraints of written reception, these proposed versions were crafted with the explicit aim of achieving musical performability, aligning lexical choices with the rhythmic, melodic, and prosodic demands of *Falling Slowly*. The Italian lines included in the final column of the table do not derive from pre-existing materials; rather, they constitute an original contribution developed within the present work, conceived as a demonstration of the processes involved in generating a singable translation.

Creating a musical rendering requires a shift from a meaning-centred approach to a performance-centred one. The translator must consider not only semantic content but also syllable count, stress patterns, vowel distribution, melody, breath support, and the expressive arc of the vocal line. Furthermore, creating a singable translation presupposes specialised competence, all-embracing linguistic, musical, and performative knowledge, as reflected in the Italian renderings developed here, based on professional experience in composition and vocal performance.

Table 5.11. Comparison between the English Subtitles, Italian Subtitles, and a Proposed Italian Singable Translation of *Falling Slowly*.

#	Time-Code	English Subtitles	Italian Subtitles	Italian Translation for Dubbing and/or Singable Subtitling
1	00:15:44	♪ I don't know you But I want you	*Io non ti conosco*	*Non so chi sei*
2	00:15:47		*Ma ti voglio*	*Ma ti voglio*
3	00:15:51	♪ All the more for **that**	*Ancora di più*	*Forse ancor **di più***
4	00:15:59	-♪ And words fall through **me** and always fool **me** -[HARMONIZING]	*Le parole vengono da sole*	*Parlo a **stento***
5	00:16:02		*E mi tradiscono sempre*	*E so **soltanto***
6	00:16:06	♪ And I can't **react**	*E non riesco a reagire*	*Fingere **di più***
7	00:16:12	We change here.	Qui cambiamo.	E qui si cambia
8	00:16:14	♪ And games that never amount	*E i giochetti non valgono mai*	*Giochetti senza una meta*
9	00:16:18	♪ To more that they're meant	*Più di quanto vorrebbero*	*Portano a nulla*
10	00:16:22	♪ Will play themselves out	*Si risolveranno da soli*	*Passano e via*
11	00:16:27	Hold it.	Aspetta…E ora il ritornello.	Aspetta
12	00:16:28	And the chorus.		Il ritornello
13	00:16:32	♪ Take this sinking boat	*Prendi questa barca che affonda*	*Salvaci da noi*
14	00:16:36	♪ And point it home	*E riportala a casa*	*Affondiamo già*
15	00:16:40	♪ We've still got **time**	*Abbiamo ancora tempo*	*C'è tempo, **sai**!*
16	00:16:46	♪ Raise your hopeful voice	*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*	*Prendi un bel respiro*
17	00:16:51	♪ You had the choice	*Potevi scegliere*	*Hai scelto il cammino*
18	00:16:55	♪ You've made it **now**	*Ora hai scelto*	*È tardi **ormai***
19	00:17:05	♪ Falling slowly eyes that know me	*Cado lentamente*	*Mi abbandono*
20	00:17:08		*Occhi che mi conoscono*	*E ti risuono*
21	00:17:13	♪ And I can't go back	*E non posso tornare indietro*	*E no, non torno più*
22	00:17:20	♪ Moods that take me and erase me	*Le emozioni mi assalgono*	*E mi accendo* *E poi mi spengo*
23	00:17:23		*E mi annullano*	
24	00:17:27	♪ And I'm painted black	*E intorno a me è tutto nero*	*L'ombra è su di me*
25	00:17:35	♪ Well, you have suffered enough	*Hai sofferto abbastanza*	*Non soffrire per sempre* (single line)
26	00:17:40	♪ And warred with yourself	*In guerra contro te stessa*	*Combatti te stessa*
27	00:17:43	♪ It's time that you won	*È ora che tu vinca*	*Sii eroe e vittoria*
28	00:17:50	Again.	Di nuovo.	Ancora
29	00:17:53	♪ Take this sinking boat	*Prendi questa barca che affonda*	*Salvaci da noi*
30	00:17:58	♪ And point it home	*E riportala a casa*	*Affondiamo già*
31	00:18:02	♪ We've still got time	*Abbiamo ancora tempo*	*C'è tempo, sai!*
32	00:18:08	♪ Raise your hopeful voice	*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*	*Prendi un bel respiro*
33	00:18:12	♪ You had the choice	*Potevi scegliere*	*Hai scelto il cammino*
34	00:18:16	♪ You've made it now	*Ora hai scelto*	*È tardi ormai*
35	00:18:29	[HUMMING]		*Oh Oh Oh Oh*
36	00:18:39	♪ Yeah	Si!	Si!

37	00:18:40	♪ Take this sinking boat	*Prendi questa barca che affonda*	*Salvaci da noi*
38	00:18:44	♪ And point it home	*E riportala a casa*	*Affondiamo già*
39	00:18:48	♪ We've still got time	*Abbiamo ancora tempo*	*C'è tempo, sai!*
40	00:18:54	♪ Raise your hopeful voice	*Fai sentire la tua voce speranzosa*	*Prendi un bel respiro*
41	00:18:59	♪ You had the choice	*Potevi scegliere*	*Hai scelto il cammino*
42	00:19:02	♪ You've made it now	*Ora hai scelto*	*É tardi ormai*
43	00:19:08	♪ Falling slowly	*Cado lentamente*	*Mi abbandono*
44	00:19:12	♪ Sing your melody	*Canta la tua canzone*	*Nel tuo suono e*
45	00:19:17	♪ I'll sing along…	*Io canterò con te*	*Canto con te*
46	00:19:25	[HUMMING]		*Ah*
47	00:19:29	[VOCALIZING]		*Ah Ah*
48	00:19:47	♪ Call and I'll sing along	*Chiama e canterò con te…*	*Chiama e correrò da te*

A comparison between the English subtitles, the Italian subtitles, and the singable Italian ones reveals several tendencies. First, semantic modulation is often necessary to preserve rhythmic feasibility: lines such as *Take this sinking boat / and point it home* become *Salvaci da noi / Affondiamo già*, which maintains the emotional trajectory while meeting the melodic constraints of the phrase.

Second, prosodic alignment frequently demands the introduction of alternative metaphors, as certain English consonant clusters or diphthongs cannot be matched by Italian equivalents without compromising singability. Third, emotional intensity across musical phrases may require shifts in grammatical perspective or pragmatic tone, ensuring that the sung Italian line mirrors the original one. These examples highlight the distinction between conventional subtitling and singable adaptation: while the first kind of subtitles seeks clarity and cognitive accessibility, the second ones must prioritise music and performance, often at the cost of lexical fidelity. The singable Italian version presented here demonstrates that musical translation constitutes not a simple transposition into another language but a deep process of recomposition, in which textual, musical, and performative considerations converge.

The opening line, *I don't know you,* translated in the Prime Video subtitles as *Io non ti conosco,* does not align with the syllabic distribution and stress pattern of the original English phrasing. To restore compatibility, the line was reinterpreted as *Non so chi sei,* which preserves the semantic core while matching the metrical profile required for performance. The same thing happens in lines 3 and 6, where *All the more for that* and *And I can't react* create a rhyme in English through the echo of *that / react*. In the singable Italian version, this correspondence becomes *Forse ancor di più* and *Fingere di più,* maintaining both rhythmic symmetry and phonetic parallelism.

Further adaptive reshaping was required for line 4. In the Italian subtitles, this line is split into two different lines ending with *"me."* In the sung version, this was reimagined as *stento* and *soltanto,* providing vowel quality and terminal sounds more suitable for melodic sustain while retaining the expressive nuance of the original. The first half of the chorus necessitates even more substantial transformation: *Take this sinking boat / And point it home / We've still got time* becomes *Salvaci da noi / Affondiamo già / C'è tempo, sai!* Although less literal than the subtitle equivalent, this version preserves the emotional style of the original and achieves the necessary alignment with the Italian sound and musicality. The second half of the chorus, *Raise your hopeful voice / You had the choice / You've made it now,* was adapted as *Prendi un bel respiro / Hai scelto il cammino / È tardi ormai,* where the choices *sai* (first part of the chorus) and *ormai* (second part of the chorus) reproduce the long-held *a* vowel of *time* and *now,* allowing for sustained vocalisation that mirrors the English melodic setting.

Additional adjustments were required for the bridge and closing section. *Falling slowly, eyes that know me / And I can't go back* followed by *Moods that take me and erase me / And I'm painted black* was rendered as *Mi abbandono / e ti risuono / e no, non torno più* and *E mi accendo e poi mi spengo / L'ombra è su di me.* These lines preserve the introspective quality of the original while fitting the rhythmic architecture of the melody. More importantly, all non-lexical vocalisations were reintegrated in the adaptation to ensure accessibility and musical completeness, particularly for potential use in SDH-style subtitling.

The final refrain, *Falling slowly / Sing your melody / I'll sing along… / Call and I'll sing along"*, was adapted as *Mi abbandono / Nel tuo suono e / canto con te,* concluding with *Chiama e correrò da te.* The segmentation *Nel tuo suono e / canto con te* reflects the musical break heard in performance. While *Chiama e canterò con te* would have provided a closer lexical correspondence to the source text, *Chiama e correrò da te* was selected for its greater emotional resonance and for its ability to articulate, within the constraints of prosody, the relational dynamic that the song expresses.

These examples underscore the central purpose of this chapter: a singable translation must prioritise singability and musicality over lexical literalness, operating as a creative reconstruction that preserves the expressive and melodic logic of the source text while adapting it to the requests of a new linguistic and musical system.

5.10 Conclusion: Divergent Logics of Mediation and the Challenges of Musical Translation in *Once*

The comparative analysis in this chapter is revealing similarities and differences between subtitling, dubbing and singable subtitles. Italian subtitles are oriented on precision, and viewer economy, but words have not moved to musicality. Any dubbing or singable subtitling attempt requires rhythmic clarity, prosody, musical, stress and syllabic correspondence.

In the original release, *Falling Slowly* is performed in C major, matching the live performance, and representing the intimate timbre that characterises Carney's movie style. However, the version reintegrated into the Italian dubbed version appears in D♭ major, a semitone higher. This choice demonstrates that the track is not the live take used in the film but a re-recorded performance by the same actors. This substitution, left in English, despite the surrounding dialogue being dubbed, raises questions about the criteria used in the translational process.

The Italian dubbed version also displays incongruities in the treatment of spoken interjections within the song. Expressions such as *We change here*, *Hold on*, *The chorus*, *Again*, and *Yeee!* that are not sung, remain untranslated and undubbed, despite the fact that they do not constitute part of the song, but are short dialogue sentences "in the middle" of the song, used to coordinate the performers. Keeping them in English is not justified by any musical necessity, and their presence disrupts the linguistic coherence of the dubbed track. The spoken dialogue appears half in English and half in Italian, while the song remains in English. Ideally, these lines should have been rendered and re-performed in Italian to align with the dubbed dialogue.

Furthermore, the reintegrated musical audio suffers from imprecise synchronisation with the actors' lip movements, producing a visible discrepancy, this means that the lip-sync does not match the sung English version. These technical gap point to a broader challenge: the dubbing process for musical films demands a meticulous integration of linguistic adaptation, rhythmic timing, and audiovisual synchrony, an integration that *Once*, with its reliance on live performance and micro-expressive detail, renders particularly difficult.

Once exposes the limits of traditional AVT strategies when confronted with a film whose musical identity depends on authenticity, fragility, and the unpolished immediacy of live sound. Subtitles offer clarity but flatten vocal presence; dubbing offers linguistic

assimilation, but it is a risk that can compromise musical realism; singable translation requires artistic reconstruction and specialised musical knowledge.

Chapter 06 - Six: The Musical

6.1 The Historical and Theatrical Remediations of Royal Women in *Six: The Musical*

Six: The Musical[554] was created by Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss as a modern pop concert in which the six wives of Henry VIII appear as a modern girl group, retelling their own historical lives[555]. The show was presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2017, with a first preview performance at the ADC Theatre in Cambridge, England on 31 July 2017. Then, after a great success, was performed to professional stages, first in London's West End and later on Broadway[556].



Figure 6.1 Writers Toby Marlow (standing) and Lucy Moss. Photographed at the Charterhouse. (Photo by Paul Wetherell, Vogue, February 2020).

[554] It should be noted that the analysis presented in this chapter is based on *Six: The Musical Live*, the filmed stage production recorded at the Vaudeville Theatre in London and viewed at the Everyman Cinema in Edinburgh on 25 August 2025.

[555] Toby Marlow, Lucy Moss, *Six. The Musical*, Unpublished West End Producion Typescript. All quotations from *Six* refer to an unpublished West End production typescript by Marlow and Moss, consulted in digital PDF form; Leah Everquill, "Divorced, Beheaded, Defied. Solidarity in Individual and Collective Herstories in Six the Musical", *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 44-1 (2024), pp. 165-173; American Repertory Theatre, *Six Toolkit. 2019/20 Season*, Cambridge (MA), 2019; Toby Marlow, Lucy Moss, *Six. The Musical. Libretto*, Unpublished Libretto Typescript; Renata Townsed, *Six on Broadway. Teacher Resource Guide*, New York, 2021.

[556] Małgorzata Kodura, "Activating Creativity in Translation Training Courses Through Song Translation", *Studia Translatorica*, 15 (2024), pp. 281-297.

The musical confronts the traditional historical practice of briefly outlining the lives of the six wives of Henry VIII, as indicated in the titles: *Divorced*, *Beheaded*, *Died*, *Divorced*, *Beheaded*, *Survived*. This practice, although useful, has the disadvantage of reducing the lives and experiences of the six women to their relationships with the king and their deaths. One of the key objectives of the musical *Six* has been to challenge and dissect the traditional narrative of the lives of the six women, referred to as "his-story", and instead highlight the lives and experiences of the women, referred to as "her-story"[557]. This has been further highlighted in interviews with the creators, as they wrote complex, humorous, and engaging roles for female performers, challenging the traditionally male-dominated structure of the musical theatre industry. The same perspective is reflected in the composition of the creative team, which includes co-writer and co-director Lucy Moss and co-writer Toby Marlow[558].

The critical response to *Six* centres on the show's unique blend of entertainment, linguistic creativity, and ideological revision. As Jesse Green[559] argues in his review of *Six*, the show can be described as "pure entertainment" with "wickedly smart" writing, "catchy songs" and highly engaging performances, while Rachel Weinberg characterises *Six* as a "joyful and anachronistic takedown of the patriarchy by reimagining its central figures as a girl power pop group[560]." These approaches focus on the show's ability to combine entertainment with a sophisticated revision of history through contemporary pop discourse.

As the world's largest arts festival, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe offers a surprisingly open and experimental space for new theatrical work. *Six: The Musical* is about Tudor history, but it comes from the Edinburgh Fringe, which is part of a long tradition of Scottish cultural performance and discussion about national identity, especially when it comes to music and oral tradition[561]. Historically, Scotland has employed music and performance as key elements in building and expressing a national identity, both locally and internationally[562]. Scottish intellectual and cultural projects focused on collecting

[557] *Ibidem*.
[558] Leah Everquill, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-173.
[559] Jesse Green, "In *Six*, All the Tudor Ladies Got Talent", *The New York Times* (1 February 2022).
[560] Rachel Weinberg, "Review. Six at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre", *Broadway World* (25 May 2019).
[561] Małgorzata Kodura, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-297; Cathlin Macaulay, "Dipping into the Well. Scottish Oral Tradition Online", *Oral Tradition*, 27-1 (2012), pp. 171-186.
[562] Ruth Forbes, "A Study in Music, Community and Identity in a late", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 11-2 (2006), pp. 256-280.

songs, tales, and verse in Gaelic, Scots, and English, a process exemplified by the work of figures like Robert Burns (who collected for The Scots Musical Museum starting in 1787) and later formalized by institutions like the School of Scottish Studies (established 1951)[563].

The establishment of musical styles in Scotland has continually reflected a dialogue between local identity and international influence[564]. This focus on music as a social phenomenon, where identity is defined through participation and shared repertoire, underlines the significant role music has historically played in shaping cultural identity, which provides great resonance for a musical production launching from Scotland[565].

Many other festivals have a formal selection process, but the Fringe allows artists to experiment and bring their creations to life. Over the years, this has enabled small productions to try out unconventional forms and themes before they enter more commercial theatrical stages[566]. This festival has also become an important platform for making musical theatre accessible to much larger audiences. Projects like *I'm Autistic*, showcased at the Fringe's performance in July and August 2025, demonstrate how contemporary musical theatre can highlight neurodivergent identities and lived experiences in a way that broadens the possibilities of today's performance.

Within this concert-based framework, an important and unfortunately ignored performative element is represented by the onstage backing band. In *Six: The Musical*, the "Ladies in Waiting" are the onstage backing band accompanying the six queens throughout the performance. Rather than being placed offstage, they perform live and remain always visibly present on stage, contributing not only to the musical realisation but also to the concert-style aesthetic. The name "Ladies in Waiting" resembles the historical ladies-in-waiting who served the Queens at the Tudor court of Henry VIII. This naming choice establishes an ironic and symbolic connection between the historical roles of female maids and their modern reinterpretation as powerful musicians inside the context of a pop concert. By occupying a dual role as both instrumentalists and

[563] Cathlin Macaulay, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-186; Stacey Jocoy, "Robert Burns and the Refashioning of Scottish Identity through Song", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 51 (2022), pp. 77-102.
[564] Phil Alexander, "Narratives of Here and of Elsewhere in Scottish-Jewish Music. Meyer Formin and Isaac Hirshow", *Shofar. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 37-3 (2019), pp. 19-58
[565] Janice Waldron, Kari K. Veblen, "Oh Canada meets Scotland the Brave. Identity, Meaning, Culture, and Music Learning in an Intergenerational Canadian-Scottish Pipe Band", *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 19-1 (2020), pp. 208-244.
[566] See "What Is the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?", Experience-Explore the Fringe, *Edinburgh Festival Fringe*, available at https://www.edfringe.com/experience/explore-the-fringe/what-is-the-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?id=1178.

performative figures, the Ladies in Waiting reinforce the collective and collaborative nature of the production, blurring the boundary between principal performers and supporting musicians and highlighting the musical's emphasis on female authority and solidarity[567]. The names of the historical ladies-in-waiting are listed below, together with the instruments they perform on stage. The names of the musicians who portray them follow. As the cast may vary across different productions, the performers shown in Figure 6.2 correspond to the musicians listed here.

- Maggie (Guitar): Kimi Hayes (served Anne Boleyn)
- Bessie (Bass): Michelle Osbourne (served Anna of Cleves and Catherine of Aragon)
- Joan (Keyboard): Julia Schade (served Jane Seymour)
- Maria (Drums): Elena Bonomo (served Catherine of Aragon)



Figure 6.2 Ladies in Waiting. (Photo by Joan Marcus, Theatermania, November 2021).

Within this concert-based structure, the songs themselves become the most important vehicle of the performance. Each Queen's song functions not only as a musical moment but also as a form of lyrical self-presentation through which the characters describe their identities and reinterpret their historical narratives.

Six, unlike big-budget commercial musicals that often have elaborate stage equipment and frequently changing sets, has a minimalist staging approach. The performance does

[567] In addition to the stage script and cast recordings, the audiovisual material analysed includes *Six: The Musical Live*, a filmed stage performance screened at the Everyman Cinema in Edinburgh, and watched by the author, on 25 August 2025, which provides a mediated yet performance-based reference for staging, costume, and musical delivery.

not depend on changing scenery and spatial shifts; the stage itself stays the same throughout the whole show. In this sense, the stage is built less on the basis of physical sets, and more through the interaction of bodies, instruments, lighting and sound. In this context, the musical numbers assume an even bigger function, as the Queen's identities and personal stories are conveyed through lyrics, vocal performance, and musical style.

Costume design also contributes to this scenographic economy. The queens' outfits are not are not intended as historical recreations of Tudor dress; instead, they are stylised costumes that combine royal symbolism with contemporary pop-star looks. Each costume incorporates elements inspired by sixteenth-century silhouettes with modern materials, cuts, and embellishments. This allows the performers to represent both their historical identities and their new roles as modern pop icons. The costumes share a coordinated design style, but each Queen's outfit remains unique. They operate as semiotic markers of individual character, while preserving the visual cohesion of the group.

Each queen is also associated with a specific colour that symbolically reflects her individual history and characterisation. In addition, all performers wear crowns as markers of their royal status. These crowns are individually designed, ensuring that each one is uniquely customised to the character and narrative of the queen who wears it.



Figure 6.3 Image Reproduced from Musical On Tour, "Six The Musical". Photographer not credited.

Taken collectively, the absence of traditional scenery, the constant presence on stage of the band, and the symbolism of costume, serve to create a performance space in which music, bodily presence, and visual aesthetics replace traditional narrative realism. This modality of performance reinforces the immediacy and collective energy of the

performance, and locates this musical more closely in terms of the dynamics of a live pop concert than in traditional narrative musical theatre. Each performance by the Queens constitutes a unique musical and narrative statement, shaped by specific stylistic allusions to pop culture. The following section examines how the six Queens are built as individual pop identities through their musical numbers.

6.2 From Competition to "Histo-remix": Pop Queens and the Rewriting of Tudor History in *Six*

The core concept of the show is structured as a competition in which the Queens use their individual musical performances to persuade the audience that they suffered the greatest hardships under Henry VIII, hence earning the role of the group's lead singer. Each historical figure is dynamically reinterpreted through the lens of modern pop music icons, providing a specific sound and visual models[568].



Figure 6.4 Image Reproduced from Retrospect Journal, "Six the Musical. A History Student's Perspective" (2023). Photographer not credited.

- **Catherine of Aragon**. Her Pop Inspirations are Beyoncé, J-Lo and Shakira. Her song is a powerful and feminist anthem. Presented as a fierce Spanish Queen who insisted on the legitimacy of her twenty-four-year marriage, remaining loyal to the Vatican. Her story focuses on enduring manipulation from the King, who desired an annulment and threatened to move her to a convent, a demand she met

[568] Małgorzata Kodura, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-297.

with resistance, encapsulated in her powerful song, *No Way*. The main colour of her dress on stage is yellow.

- **Anne Boleyn**. Her Pop Inspirations are Lily Allen, Avril Lavigne, Kate Nash, Katy Perry and Miley Cyrus. The song genre is pop-punk; playful and rebellious. Often historically portrayed as a deceitful temptress, Anne is playfully reimagined as a fun-loving figure who inadvertently broke England from the Catholic Church. Her carefree attitude towards Henry's advances and her ultimate fate are detailed in her rebellious and provocative song, *Don't Lose Ur Head*[569]. The main colour of her dress on stage is green.
- **Jane Seymour**. Her Pop Inspirations are Adele and Sia. The song is an emotional power ballad. She is the Queen whom Henry affirmed to "truly love". Jane is depicted as inflexible and loving, yet highly aware that this affection was relied on having produced the male heir, Edward. Her ballad, *Heart of Stone*, reflects her unwavering commitment to standing by Henry, a determination she maintained despite his flaws, acting as an anchor against his storms[570]. The main colour of her dress on stage is white.
- **Anna of Cleves**. Her Pop Inspirations are Rihanna and Nicki Minaj. Her song is fierce, combining R&B and hip-hop influences with a strong parodic tone. This Queen is celebrated as being eccentric and cool, having "secretly won history" by successfully negotiating an amicable divorce after Henry rejected her due to her appearance not matching her Hans Holbein portrait[571]. Her positive outcome granted her significant wealth and the freedom to reside independently in Richmond Palace, a magnificent Tudor royal residence in London, and a life of self-determination she celebrates in her exuberant song, *Get Down*[572]. The main colour of her dress on stage is red.
- **Katherine Howard**. Her Pop Inspirations are Ariana Grande and Britney Spears. Her song can be defined as a bubble-gum pop, a catchy style of pop music marketed to teens with simple and repetitive lyrics, easy to remember, but also

[569] Leah Everquill, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-173.
[570] *Ibidem*.
[571] Hans Holbein the Younger (c. 1497–1543) was a German-Swiss painter and printmaker and one of the leading figures of the Northern Renaissance. He is particularly renowned for the exceptional realism of his portraiture, notably his depictions of the Tudor court in England, including Henry VIII and several of his wives. See Paul Ganz, *The Paintings of Hans Holbeim the Younger*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, pp. 1-13.
[572] Leah Everquill, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-173.

tragic and playful. Represented as charismatic and enchanting, Katherine's exterior masks a deeply complex and tragic history. Her individual performance, *All You Wanna Do*, distinctly reinterprets her reputation for promiscuity. The song portrays a pattern of sexual manipulation and abuse inflicted to her by men from a young age (including her music teacher Henry Mannox and courtier Francis), culminating in her fate under Henry VIII[573]. The main colour of her dress on stage is purple.

- **Catherine Parr**. Her Pop Inspirations are Alicia Keys, Emeli Sande and Jorja Smith. The song is resilient with a soulful R&B arrangement. Recognised as a prolific author and feminist, Catherine Parr is referred to as "the survivor". Her song, *I Don't Need Your Love*, expresses the sorrow of sacrificing her personal life and love for Thomas Seymour in order to marry the King for survival. She later uses her voice to reject the system of the competition itself[574]. The main colour of her dress on stage is blue.

Each musical piece is characterised by the use of the specific stylistic features of a given contemporary pop music genre, which implies that the translated song, if it is to be sung, will have to find a balance not only in terms of the conveyed meaning but also in terms of style, rhythm, and genre-specific vocal performance.

The core narrative tension is resolved when Catherine Parr exposes the real issue with the competition: arguing over who suffered the most under Henry VIII simply reinforces the patriarchal structure that bound their identities to him. Parr highlights that, without the association with Henry, the Queens risk disappearing from historical memory, as demonstrated by the audience frequent inability to name all of his wives. She argues that forcing the Queens to compare traumas, such as murder versus losing a child, is ethically inappropriate and misogynistic.

The resolution involves transforming the competitive structure into the "Histo-remix". The Queens collectively decide to discard the contest rules, take control of the narrative (*taking back the microphone*), and celebrate their collective agency, asserting their independence with the statement *We don't need your love*. This moment culminates in an empowering reimagining of their lives, where they escape their historical fates and pursue individual ambitions, such as Anne Boleyn becoming a lyricist for *Shakesy P* and

[573] *Ibidem*.
[574] *Ibidem*.

Catherine Parr founding the girl group "SIX". The final song celebrates the idea that they are *one of a kind, no category*, free from being defined merely as *one of six wives*.

The focus of *Six* on reclaiming "her-story" [575] and challenging dominant narratives through a modern, international pop genre, reflects a contemporary form of cultural affirmation that comes from the vibrant Scottish performance sphere.

6.3 Musical Corpus and Analytical Framework: Six as a Concert-Style Musical

Six: The Musical is different from other musicals because it does not follow traditional storylines and staging rules. Instead, if a narrative with dialogues and plot progression, *Six* is performed in the style of a pop concert in which the six wives of Henry VIII appear as a modern girl group, each performing a solo number that retells their lives.

This concert-based structure has important consequences for textual and musical analysis. In *Six*, songs do not have the function of narrative interruptions or emotional amplifications of spoken dialogue, as is often the case in traditional musical theatre, but instead represent the primary vehicle of characterisation and storytelling. Each Queen's performance describes their personal story, as a first-person monologue combining historical reference, contemporary language, and pop-culture. As a result, the lyrics have a central role in shaping meaning, while spoken dialogue is reduced to brief exchanges.

From a performative perspective, *Six* is characterised by a minimal and static staging. The absence of changing scenery and the reduced scale of the stage place the performers, their voices, and their presence at the centre of the theatrical experience. The onstage band, known as the *Ladies in Waiting*, remains permanently visible and functions as an integral part of the scenography, reinforcing the impression of a live pop concert rather than a traditional theatrical spectacle.

Six distances the musical from historical reconstruction. The queens' costumes do not aim at period accuracy but instead merge elements of Tudor iconography with contemporary pop-star fashion. This visual hybridity mirrors the linguistic and musical strategies of the show, which employ modern slang and genre-specific pop conventions to reframe historical figures through a contemporary ideological lens. The result is a

[575] Małgorzata Kodura, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-297; Elizabeth Edwards, Kirsteen McCue, "Making Song Travel. Crosscurrents of Language and Landscape in Welsh and Scottish Song Collections, 1804-1818", *Studies in Romanticism*, 63-2 (2024), pp. 189-212.

disintegration of temporal boundaries, in which the past is filtered through the language, sound, and visual codes of the present.



Figure 6.5 American Repertory Theatre, *Six* Toolkit. 2019/20 Season, Cambridge (MA), 2019.

Six: The Musical Live preserves the original stage aesthetics, choreography, and vocal delivery of the West End production, offering a mediated yet faithful representation of the live concert-style experience. Viewed in a cinema setting, the filmed performance occupies an intermediate position between theatre and audiovisual media. It is also anticipated by a short documentary that explains the making of the musical. The cinematic form makes the experience of close-ups and framing simpler, while still maintaining an attitude of live performance. This filmed performance offers a visual and performative reference that reflects the same visual flow and way music, performances and costume is delivered and performed in the studio or live. As in *Once*, the Italian translations discussed in the following sections are original work by the writer, based on the research and aimed at the testing of singable and performable solutions as defined by rhythm, prosody, and genre, analysing linguistic, ideological, and translational challenges.

In line with the methodological approach adopted throughout this study, the analysis is conducted from a multimodal perspective. Employing multimodal discourse analysis[576], the songs are examined not only as verbal texts but as complex semiotic complexes, in which meaning is a result of the interaction of linguistic, musical, visual, and performative modes. As Kress argues, meaning in contemporary communication is

[576] Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*, New York, Routledge, 2021, p. 210.

"made through the orchestration of multiple semiotic resources", rather than through language alone. Citing his own words: "Communication is multimodal: by speech at times, as spoken comment, as instruction or request; by gaze; by actions, passing an instrument, reaching out for an instrument; by touch"[577].

Particular attention is therefore paid to elements such as vocal delivery, rhythm, gesture, staging, lighting, and costume, which in *Six* play an essential role in shaping characterisation and ideological meaning.

As noted above, the analysis of *Six* is based on the filmed stage production *Six: The Musical Live*, viewed at the Everyman Cinema in Edinburgh on 25 August 2025. This study also uses the English-language stage script and the song lyrics from the 2018 cast recording, examined through repeated listening on Spotify. The movie *Live* production features the six original 2017 West End performers taking back their roles as the wives of Henry VIII: Jarnéia Richard-Noel (Catherine of Aragon), Millie O'Connell (Anne Boleyn), Natalie Paris (Jane Seymour), Alexia McIntosh (Anna of Cleves), Aimie Atkinson (Katherine Howard), and Maiya Quansah-Breed (Catherine Parr). The live recording preserves the original stage cast[578]. The Studio Cast Recording instead includes the 2018 West End performers: Renée Lamb (Catherine of Aragon), Christina Modestou (Anne Boleyn), Natalie Paris (Jane Seymour), Genesis Lynea (Anna of Cleves), Aimie Atkinson (Katherine Howard), and Izuka Hoyle (Catherine Parr).

The stage production was directed by Lucy Moss and Jamie Armitage, while the filmed version was directed by Liz Clare.

6.4 Mapping the Musical Numbers in *Six*

Unlike typical musicals, where the music follows the development of the story and its characters, *Six* is composed of a series of songs, each assigned to one of the six queens. So, the musical's story does not follow a straight line; it is more like a series of separate scenes. The songs do not form a single continuous story. Instead, each song tells the story of one Queen, and together they shape the main theme of the musical. This format focus on how the Queens are alike and different, all within the structure of a concert. The

[577] Gunther Kress, *Multimodality. A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, London, Routledge, 2009, p. 32.
[578] Picturehouse Cinemas, "Six: The Musical Live, Picturehouse Cinemas", available at https://www.picturehouses.com/movie-details/016/HO00015881/SIX-The-Musical-Live!?filter= (accessed 3 August 2025).

musical opens with *Ex-Wives*, a company number that immediately establishes both the theme of the show and its musical style. All six Queens sing the first song that introduces each historical figure and in which each Queen seeks to demonstrate who suffered the most under Henry VIII. This song explicitly shows rivalry, while simultaneously setting the ironic and self-aware tone that characterises the entire musical.

The mapping of the songs provides a framework for the analysis that follow. The following Table shows all the Musical Numbers in *Six: The Musical*:

Table 6.1. Musical Numbers in *Six: The Musical*.

#	Musical Number	Performer(s)	Musical Style	Stylistic and Dramaturgical Features
1	*Ex-Wives*	Company	Pop Anthem	Opening ensemble number; fast-paced pop anthem introducing the queens and establishing the competitive concert frame through irony and slogan-like lyrics.
2	*No Way*	Catherine of Aragon	Power Ballad	Defiant pop break-up song; assertive vocal delivery and repetitive refrain emphasise refusal and resilience.
3	*Don't Lose Ur Head*	Anne Boleyn	Playful Pop	Playful, flirtatious pop style with electronic influences; use of humour, irony, and contemporary slang.
4	*Heart of Stone*	Jane Seymour	Emotional Ballad	Lyrical pop ballad; restrained tempo and melodic line foreground emotional stillness, sincerity, and endurance.
5	*Haus of Holbein*	Company	Electronic Dance/Techno	Satirical electronic dance number; exaggerated visual style and parody of beauty standards.
6	*Get Down*	Anne of Cleves	Dance/Pop (Hip-Hop influenced)	Hip-hop/pop-influenced empowerment song; strong audience interaction, assertive tone, and emphasis on

				independence and self-sufficiency following divorce.
7	*All You Wanna Do*	Katherine Howard	Upbeat Pop	Upbeat pop idiom masking progressively darker content; contrast between musical surface and traumatic narrative
8	*I Don't Need Your Love*	Catherine Parr	Reflective Ballad	Pop number; shifts from personal narrative to collective reframing and explicit rejection of patriarchal validation.
9	*Six*	Company	Pop	Final ensemble number; abandons competitive logic in favour of collective empowerment and group identity.
10	*Megasix*	Company	Pop	Remix Encore-style performance; remix of musical motifs presented as a high-energy pop concert finale, reinforcing audience participation and collective celebration.

The Queen's songs are not reprises or variations of a shared musical theme, but distinct pieces that moves between different pop genres, vocal styles, and performance conventions. Catherine of Aragon's song *No Way* is a strong song about refusing the end of a relationship and independence; Anne Boleyn's *Don't Lose Ur Head* adopts a playful, flirtatious pop style; Jane Seymour's *Heart of Stone* moves toward an emotional ballad; Anne of Cleves's *Get Down* convey rhythmic vitality and a dance-based performance; Katherine Howard's *All You Wanna Do* presents an upbeat pop surface that gradually reveals a darker narrative; and Catherine Parr's *I Don't Need Your Love* represents a commentary that reshapes the entire competition.

These differences are not only musical, but are also realised through multimodality. For example, Anne Boleyn's *Don't Lose Ur Head* relies on visual humour and exaggerated performativity, with rapid tonal shifts, playful gestures, and the use of contemporary slang contributing to a comic characterisation. The humorous effect is

produced not only linguistically, but through the interaction of gesture, timing, and visual staging.

This is not the case in Katherine Howard's *All You Wanna Do*, in which the bright pop sound is in sharp contrast to the increasingly dark subject matter of the lyrics; she is talking about abuses. The visual elements of the performance also begin in a manner typical of a pop concert, with confident physicality and audience interaction. However, as the song progresses, the repeated phrase *all you wanna do* takes on a more horrible meaning as a form of abuse and suffering that begins in adolescence. The physicality of the singer becomes more limited and fragmented, just like her voice.

This separation between the musical and lyrical elements is an example of Kress's concept of modal dissonance in which there is a conflict of meaning in the different modes of signification. The visual elements are not simply illustrative of the lyrics but actually reinterpret them in a way that emphasises the loss of independence of the character and the themes of objectification and control.

The song *Haus of Holbein* interrupts the succession of solos with a satirical interlude that exaggerates contemporary beauty standards through a heavy use of visual humour. For instance, there are exaggerated facial expressions and movements that resemble a fashion advertisement, and the electronic music style contributes to a sense of artificiality. This multimodal text is a parody of physical transformation and beauty standards.

The final number, *Six*, abandons the competition introduced at the beginning and replaces it with a collective affirmation of solidarity. Rather than declaring a single "winner," the Queens reject the logic of comparison and assert their identities beyond their relationships with Henry VIII. The song produces a clear ideological progression, moving from rivalry and victimhood toward collective self-definition.

6.5 Analytical Commentary on the Musical Numbers in *Six*

The analysis is conducted at the level of individual songs. Unlike traditional book musicals, where songs are interlaced with dialogue and narrative progression, *Six* relies almost exclusively on song lyrics as the primary conveyor of meaning. Each song is a monologue in which the Queen shows her identity, experiences, and self-perception through a combination of historical reference and contemporary pop language style. This structure highlights the importance of the song lyrics and makes them suitable for linguistic and translation analysis.

For each song, the commentary examines its narrative function within the musical, its musical and stylistic characteristics, and the linguistic features that shape meaning, such as register, idiom, repetition, and rhetorical structure. From a translational perspective, the analysis also considers the implications of this structure for singable translation. Because each song combines strict rhythmic patterns with dense contemporary language, translators are required to negotiate constraints of prosody, semantic clarity, and performability. The Italian renderings discussed in this work are original translations produced by the author and are treated as applied research tools rather than as target texts in a descriptive sense. Their function is to demonstrate translational decision-making and to test how the ideological and emotional force of the source text can be re-articulated within a different language and culture.

In line with multimodality, as outlined earlier, the present analysis also takes into account the interaction between different semiotic resources in performance. Each song is examined not only in terms of its linguistic and musical features, but also through its visual and performative dimensions, including vocal delivery, gesture, facial expression, staging, lighting, and costume. The commentary also describes how meaning may be reinforced, altered, or even contradicted.

The musical analysis draws on the Original Broadway Cast Recording, accessed via Spotify, for close listening and comparison[579]. The analytical framework adopted in this chapter extends beyond descriptive comparison to include the production of singable Italian translations of one particular song, *All You Wanna Do*. This translation is conceived as applied research outputs and is used to test whether performable solutions are possible while respecting the rhythmic, prosodic, and stylistic constraints of contemporary musical theatre, while preserving the ideological and semantic complexity of the source texts.

Humour plays an important role in the linguistic and stylistic construction of *Six*. The musical combines historical material with the language of contemporary pop culture, creating a form of humour based on anachronism. Tudor history is presented through modern expressions, slang, and references to pop performance, which produces an ironic contrast between past and present.

This strategy is already visible in the opening song *Ex-Wives*. The historical rhyme describing the fate of Henry VIII's wives, *Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced,*

[579] *Six: Live on Opening Night (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, music and lyrics by Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss, United States, 2022, audio recording, available in Spotify.

Beheaded, Survived, is transformed into a rhythmic pop refrain. At the same time, expressions such as *Welcome to the show*, *make some noise*, and *get your hands up* place the performance into a contemporary concert environment.

From a translational perspective, this type of humour presents particular challenges. Because the comic effect often depends on rhythm, cultural references, and colloquial language, any singable translation must preserve not only the semantic content of the lyrics but also their playful tone and performative immediacy. These aspects become especially visible in the opening number, which introduces the central themes and the identity of the musical.

As in the other musicals examined in this study, humour is essential. In *My Fair Lady*, it is often linked to accent and social class, while in *Once*, it is largely absent, with only occasional and situational moments. In *Six*, by contrast, humour is produced through the interaction between historical material and contemporary pop culture.

It should be noted that, among the songs examined in this chapter, only *All You Wanna Do* is examined through a singable translation, which will have the entire lyrics analysed in the last section. For the other songs, the Italian rendering is intended to illustrate semantic meaning and key translation choices. They do not attempt to reproduce the original metre, rhyme schemes, or full performability. These translations function mainly as interpretative data supporting the linguistic and humour analysis rather than as complete singable adaptations. For ease of reference, the full lyrics of all the songs discussed in this chapter are provided in Appendix C.

6.5.1 *Ex-Wives*

(Company Number)

Ex-Wives is the first song in Six, setting up the main ideas, tone, and style of the musical. Performed by all six Queens, the song introduces the characters. Each Queen reminds the audience of the famous rhyme summarising their fates: *Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*. This line condenses the complicated history of Henry VIII's marriages into a brief and memorable sequence. It also signals the musical's ironic tone right away. At the beginning, the Queens comment on how history presents them. Catherine Parr notes that they have long been reduced to *just one word in a stupid rhyme*. By stating, *history's about to get overthrown*, the song reveals the show's purpose to rewrite the history from the queens' viewpoint.

The Queens appear as both historical figures and modern pop performers. Phrases like *Welcome to the show* and *Get your hands up* place the audience in a concert setting, while terms like *histo-remix* suggest that the musical is remixing history through modern pop culture. The repeated line *we used to be six wives, but now we're ex-wives* shifts the Queens' identity from their marriages to Henry VIII to a new shared independent identity.

Ex-Wives first highlights the group and then shifts focus to individual characters. Each Queen introduces herself in a brief verse. Catherine of Aragon talks about her loyalty to the Vatican and her long marriage, Anne Boleyn comes across as the rebellious Queen who broke England from the Church, Jane Seymour implies she was the only one he really loved, Anne of Cleves makes a humorous comment about the well-known portrait scene, Katherine Howard is confident and provocative, and Catherine Parr is the survivor.

Ex-Wives is a fast song with strong rhythms and a repetitive style, typical of modern pop music. The entry of all the singers and strong rhythmic beats enhance the confidence, clarity and performance style of a "girl group" pop song, and this looks more important than emotional depth in this style of music.

This helps the people grasp the identities of the Queens and the apparent competition of the show.

From a translation point of view, *Ex-Wives*, as an opening ensemble number, requires precise rhythm, clear pronunciation, and quick understanding. A singable translation must keep the fast tempo, repetitive structure, and catchy quality of the lyrics while ensuring the meaning is clear to the audience. At the same time, the translation should maintain the ironic tone and condensed historical references without oversimplifying them.

Humour is a big part in *Six* when it comes to how historical material and modern popular culture interact. As shown in studies on humour and translation[580], comic effects often depend on the way words are used, cultural references, and wordplay. In song translation, these challenges are further complicated by rhythmic and performative constraints, since the translated lyrics must remain singable while preserving humour and meaning[581]. This can make things very hard for translators. In *Ex-Wives*, humour often

[580] Dirk Delabastita, "Introduction. The Translator as Humourist", in *Traductio. Essays on Punning and Translation*, ed. Delabastita, Dirk, Manchester, St. Jerome, 1997, pp. 1-22; Dirk Delabastita, "Wordplay and Translation", in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Gambier, Yves, Van Doorslaer, Luc, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2011, pp. 284-288; Delia Chiaro, *Translation. Humour and Literature. Translation and Humour Volume 1*, London, Continuum, 2010, pp. 1-20.
[581] Peter Low, *Translating Song: Lyrics and Texts. Translation Practice Explained*, London and New York, Routledge, 2017.

comes from the difference between Tudor history and modern pop-concert language, as well as from turning long, complicated historical stories into short, catchy phrases.

The mnemonic sequence *Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced, Beheaded, Survived* is significant because it combines several of these humorous strategies at once. It is a historical reference, a rhythmic pattern, and an ironic comment on the simplified way in which the Queens are remembered in popular culture.

Another form of humour can be described as meta-historical or metalinguistic humour. The line *just one word in a stupid rhyme* criticises the mnemonic formula used to remember the wives of Henry VIII. At the same time, *history's about to get overthrown* suggests that this musical challenges the traditional way of illustrating the story.

These humorous strategies also interact with the constraints described by Low's Pentathlon Principle, which requires translators to balance sense, singability, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme when adapting song lyrics. One of the most important instances of humorous compression can be found in the famous sequence *Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*. Originally used as a mnemonic rhyme in British historical education, this sequence condenses the difficult history of Henry VIII's marriages into a short and catchy phrase. In *Six*, this sequence is developed into a refrain that serves both as a historical allusion and as a pop-style slogan. The extreme shortness and rhythmic symmetry of the English line make it very effective in the song's fast tempo, but very hard to translate into other languages. The mnemonic nature of this line is thus a particularly hard case for singable translation. This line displays several distinctive linguistic features, as shown in Table 6.2:

Table 6.2. Linguistic Features in the line *Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced, Beheaded, Survived.*

Linguistic Features	Function
Past participle verbs	Condense complex historical events into a compact form
Very short words	Facilitate rhythm and singability
Parallel structure	Creates a slogan-like effect
Repetition	Enhances memorisation

These features make the line highly musical and well suited to the fast tempo of the song.

According to Zabalbeascoa's model, humour is created by a combination of linguistic, cultural, and performative factors rather than through traditional joke structures. In terms of linguistic, morphological contrast often occur. The word *Histo-remix* in the song, plays on a combination of the language of history and the language of contemporary pop concert music, but it is not considered as humour. The switch from "wives" to "ex-wives" in the lines *We used to be six wives / but now we are ex-wives* (Eravamo sei mogli / ora siamo ex mogli) constitutes a linguistic joke based on the meaning of the prefix ex-.

Considering the aural mode, the use of humour is also enhanced by the music style used in this song. The music is a pop number with a fast beat and repetitive rhythms. The refrains in this number are also like those ones of girl groups. This is a historical event set in a pop music style. There is a contrast between the historical event and the humour in this number.

As far as the performative mode as it concerns, the Queens in this musical address the audience with phrases such as *Welcome to the show* and *Make some noise*. These are phrases commonly used in pop music.

The humour in the following table is classified according to Zabalbeascoa's typology of audiovisual jokes.

Table 6.3. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *Ex-Wives*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Translation (TT)**
Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced, Beheaded, Survived	Complex joke (community-based humour + cultural)	Historical mnemonic rhyme summarising Henry VIII's wives known in British culture	*Divorziata, decapitata, morta / divorziata, decapitata, viva*
Just one word in a stupid rhyme	Complex joke (Verbal + Cultural)	Self-referential commentary on the historical rhyme itself	*Solo una parola in una stupida rima*
We used to be six wives / but now we're ex-wives	Language-dependent joke	Morphological wordplay based on the prefix *ex-*	*Eravamo sei mogli / ora siamo ex-mogli*

As can be noted from the Table 6.3, there are different types of humour in *Ex-Wives*, including cultural references, linguistic wordplay, and self-commentary on historical narratives. Humour in *Ex-Wives* contributes to the playful atmosphere of the opening song and, at the same time, sets up the ideological base for the musical: the reinterpretation of historical events from the perspective of Queens from Tudor history. Also, in this song,

humour is predominantly community-based, language-dependent, and complex jokes, confirming the highly layered and multimodal nature of irony in contemporary musical theatre.

6.5.2 *No Way*

Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) was the first wife of Henry VIII and Queen of England from 1509 to 1533. She was the daughter of the Catholic Monarchs of Spain, and was initially married to Henry's elder brother Arthur. After Arthur's death, she married Henry VIII. Henry wanted to end their marriage so he could marry Anne Boleyn and have a son, which led to a big political and religious fight and the break with the Roman Catholic Church. Catherine refused to accept the annulment, protesting that her marriage was legitimate. Eventually, Catherine spent her final years separated from the court and died in isolation.



Figure 6.6 Catherine of Aragon. Left: *National Gallery of Art (public domain)* [582].
Right: Six: The Musical Live*, filmed stage production, Vaudeville Theatre, London, 2022.*

No Way is Catherine of Aragon's lead solo piece. It is placed after *Ex-Wives*, which is the ensemble opening number in the musical. Catherine's character refuses to be replaced

[582] Unless otherwise specified, references to historical portrait imagery in this chapter derive from the American Repertory Theatre, *Six Toolkit*, 2019/20 Season, Cambridge (MA), 2019.

or dismissed. She does not present herself as an abandoned wife but as someone who is strong and in control.

The song resembles a contemporary break-up song. Catherine turns Henry's attempt at annulling their marriage into an assertion of her own power. This is an important aspect of the context of the musical because it challenges the traditional narrative that characterises the Queens based on their relationship with Henry VIII. *No Way* establishes a pattern that will recur throughout the musical: each Queen initially presents her story through a contemporary genre that allows historical injustice to be reframed as empowerment. As the first solo, the song sets a precedent for the numbers that follow, demonstrating that personal narrative in *Six* will be articulated through modern pop idioms rather than through historical realism.

Musically, the fast rhythm, repetitive chorus, and the vocal delivery reinforce the character's position of refusal and self-confidence. The melody prioritises clarity, ensuring immediate impact and audience engagement. The repeated words *No way* functions as both a musical hook and a semantic anchor. Through repetition and accumulation, the song builds intensity and emphasises Catherine's refusal to accept Henry's actions. The resulting effect is a sense of controlled strength, just like Catherine's portrayal as determined and unwavering.

The lyrics of *No Way* are characterised by a contemporary and accessible register. They rely on colloquial expressions and emphatic repetition. The language is direct and mirrors the conventions of modern break-up songs while making the historical narrative accessible to a contemporary audience. Repetition plays a central linguistic role, particularly through the refrain.

From a translational perspective, *No Way* presents challenges related to rhythm, emphasis, and performative clarity. The high number of repetition and the strong stress patterns require careful attention in the production of Italian translations, especially singable ones. At the same time, the translation must balance contemporary colloquialism with semantic precision. Catherine's voice must remain authoritative and dignified while still sounding natural within a modern pop style.

No Way is "funny" because it uses irony, exaggeration, and everyday language. Catherine talks about her past relationships using expressions typical of modern break-up discourse. This linguistic contrast between Tudor history and contemporary idiom creates a comic effect. The line *Daughters are so easy to forget* is an ironic comment on gender expectations in the Tudor society. It is and injustice because the King wants a male heir.

The loud sound (aural mode) makes Catherine's message even stronger. Saying *no way* over and over again, and really stressing it, makes it sound a lot like a chant. This makes the idea of resistance stronger. Catherine's colour in the show is yellow. This colour symbolises royal authority and confidence. The other Queens visually support Catherine's story while maintaining the concert structure of the show. Gesturally, the humour and dramatic tension are conveyed through confident body language and stage presence. Catherine talks straight to the audience, using her hands to show she really won't accept Henry's decision. The choreography demonstrates solidarity among the Queens, while reinforcing Catherine's leadership in the song.

Table 6.4. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *No Way*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Translation (TT)**
You must think that I'm crazy / You wanna replace me baby	Language-dependent joke	Rhythmic rhyme and playful pop phrasing typical pf break-up songs	*Devi pensare che io sia pazza / vuoi sostituirmi, baby*
Send me to a nunnery, honey	Cultural joke	Historical reference to the threat of forcing Catherine into a convent	*Mandarmi in convento, Tesoro*
Daughters are so easy to forget	Cultural joke	Ironic criticism of Tudor preference for male heirs	*Le figlie sono così facili da dimenticare*
No way (repeated chorus)	Language-dependent joke	Repetition with the meaning of a performative refusal	*Non se ne parla*

The original song's chorus, *n-n-n-n-n-n- no way*, uses phonetic repetition and rhythmic fragmentation to create emphasis. In an Italian singable translation, this effect can be made by repeating *no no no no no no, oh no* in a way that keeps the musical rhythm and performance intensity while changing the language structure to fit the target language.

Having examined the linguistic, performative and translational features of *No Way*, the analysis now shifts to the next song, *Don't Lose Ur Head*, where humour, tone, and stylistic choices have a more playful character.

6.5.3 *Don't Lose Ur Head*

Anne Boleyn (c.1501-1536), Henry VIII's second wife, was Queen of England from 1533 to 1536. Her marriage followed the annulment of Henry's union with Catherine of Aragon and played a central role in the English Reformation. Although she gave birth to the future Elizabeth I, Anne did not produce a male heir and was later accused of adultery, incest, and betrayal. She was executed at the Tower of London in 1536.



Figure 6.7 Anne Boleyn. Left: *National Gallery of Art (public domain)* [583].
Right: Six: The Musical Live*, filmed stage production, Vaudeville Theatre, London, 2022.*

Don't Lose Ur Head is Anne Boleyn's main solo number and presents her character through a playful and ironic perspective. The song narrates Anne's historical reputation by emphasising intellect, charm, and self-awareness rather than victimhood or tragedy. Instead on focusing directly on her execution, the song builds a character defined by flirtation, irony, and performative control. Anne narrates her relationship with Henry VIII using humour and contemporary references, covering her fate behind a light and confident tone. This approach reflects the musical's strategy of rewriting historical trauma through contemporary pop language. Within the structure of *Six*, *Don't Lose Ur Head* reinforces the competitive framework introduced in *Ex-Wives* while at the same time complicates it. By refusing to adopt a tragic tone, Anne differentiates herself from the other Queens.

[583] Unless otherwise specified, references to historical portrait imagery in this chapter derive from the American Repertory Theatre, *Six Toolkit*, 2019/20 Season, Cambridge (MA), 2019.

Musically, *Don't Lose Ur Head* is characterised by a light texture, electronic sounds, and a strong dance rhythm. The melody is agile and playful, supporting a voice that prioritises timing and articulation over emotional intensity. This stylistic choice contributes to the construction of Anne as a figure who remains in control of the story, even as the audience is aware of the historical outcome that lies beyond the lyrics.

The lyrics of *Don't Lose Ur Head* employ a contemporary, informal register with frequent use of colloquial expressions (slang), wordplay, and humour. References to modern dating culture and social media language (LOL, *sorry, not sorry, went* viral) reduce the distance between past and present. Irony is central to the song. Even the title functions as a dark joke, referring to Anne's execution while presenting it in a casual and almost trivial tone. This use of playful language makes the character immediately accessible to a modern audience, while also highlighting the tension between historical reality and performative identity.

From a translational perspective, *Don't Lose Ur Head* presents challenges related to humour, wordplay, and cultural reference. The song's efficiency relies on timing, rhythm, and the audience's recognition of irony. Producing a singable Italian translation requires careful adaptation rather than literal transfer, particularly in relation to idiomatic expressions and anachronistic references. The translation must preserve the song's playful tone while ensuring that the underlying irony remains intelligible. Excessive domestication risks flattening the historical resonance of the lyrics, while overly literal solutions may compromise performability.

Table 6.5. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *Don't Lose UR Head*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Translation (TT)**
Sorry, not sorry	Language-dependent joke	Contemporary idiomatic expression with ironic tone	*Scusa, non scusa*
L-O-L	Language-dependent joke	Reference to digital communication and internet culture. It is an abbreviation. Incongruity comes from an historical character using modern language	*L-O-L*

Don't lose your head	Language-dependent joke (idiomatic incongruity)	Double meaning: casual advice + reference to execution. Wordplay + lexical incongruity (modern vs historical)	*Non perdere la testa*
Went viral	Complex joke (Language-dependent + culture)	Reference to social media culture. The humour relies on a double meaning of "viral", which refers both to rapid online circulation in social media contexts, and, implicitly, to its original medical sense.	*È diventato virale*
Three in the bed…	Language-dependent joke	Playful reference to a nursery rhyme	*Tre nel letto…*

For the line *Sorry, not* sorry, from a rhythmic and performative point of view, a translation like *Come? Io "scusa"?* works well because it copies the stress pattern and metric delivery of the original sentence. The use of quotation marks reinforces the ironic distancing effect, showing that the apology is not real. On the other hand, alternatives like *scusa, ma anche no* or *scusa, mica tanto* are more semantically similar to the source text, but they tend to make the rhythm smoother losing the original stress pattern. A more literal translation like *scusa, non scusa*, which was used before as a direct translation, does not work either because it sounds not natural in Italian and does not capture the idiomatic and performative force of the original phrase. As Low[584] points out in the Pentathlon Principle, translating songs is hard because there is the need to find a balance between semantic accuracy and performability. Even though *Come? Io "scusa"?* changes a little bit the meaning, it keeps the musical energy and performance attitude of the original text, which are both very important for a singable translation.

Don't lose your head is important because it uses a common idiom and refers to Anne's execution, which makes it funny on more than one level. This effect can be explained in terms of "incongruity", as the figurative meaning of the idiom contrasts with its literal historical implication. As noted by Vandaele, humour often arises from incongruity, that is, a deviation from an expected norm, which in this case results from the contrast between

[584] Peter Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

the figurative meaning of the idiom and its literal historical meaning[585]. Moreover, as Díaz Cintas and Remael observe, humour does not function in isolation but is deeply blended in its linguistic, cultural, and situational context, and its interpretation depends on the audience's ability to recognise incongruities and contextual signals. In audiovisual texts in particular, the translator must first identify these elements and then attempt to recreate an equivalent effect in the target language[586].

The line *Three in the bed and the little one said* constitutes a playful reference to an English nursery rhyme (*There were ten in the bad and the little one said*). The humour comes from the contrast between the original child context and its reinterpretation within an adult scenario, creating an effect of incongruity that relies on shared cultural knowledge.

Humour mostly comes from slang, wordplay, and irony when it comes to language. The lyrics are full of modern phrases that give new meaning to historical events. The line

The sound part of the song (aural mode) adds to its playful tone. The fast tempo, precise rhythm, and light singing all add to the feeling of energy and irony. The music is different from the serious historical story, which makes the comedy even funnier. Visually, Anne is linked to the colour green in her looks, and her outfit mixes royal and modern pop styles. The choreography and lighting on stage shows the song's upbeat mood, making it clear that it is a performance.

Gesturally, humour is shown through big facial expressions, silly movements, and talking directly to the audience. Anne's style of performance is lively and self-aware, with a focus on control and confidence. Her gestures often add to the ironic tone of the lyrics, which makes the difference between the lightness of the performance and the darker historical reality.

6.5.4 *Heart of Stone*

Jane Seymour (c.1508-1537) became Henry VIII's third wife in 1536, shortly after the execution of Anne Boleyn. She is historically remembered as the only wife to provide Henry with a legitimate male heir, the future Edward VI. Jane died in 1537, after

[585] Jeroen Vandaele, "Humour", in Yves Gambier e Luc van Doorslaer (ed), *Handbook of Translation Studies*, vol. 1, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2010, pp. 147-152.
[586] Jorge Díaz Cintas, Aline Remael, *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*, Manchester, St. Jerome Pub, 2007, pp. 212-214.

childbirth, likely due to postnatal complications. Henry respected and was very fond of her and chose to be buried beside her.



Figure 6.8 Jane Seymour. Left: *National Gallery of Art (public domain)* [587]. Right: Six: The Musical Live*, filmed stage production, Vaudeville Theatre, London, 2022.*

Heart of Stone is Jane Seymour's individual song and represents a clear shift in tone within *Six*. After the energetic and ironic performances of Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, this song introduces a moment of quietness and emotional reflection. Jane's narrative is not built on humour, but on strength, loyalty, patience and sacrifice. Rather than presenting herself as a victim, she expresses a quiet form of strength based on constancy and devotion. The song emphasises continuity rather than breaking, presenting love as a sustaining force rather than a source of conflict. Her suffering is not expressed through spectacle or irony.

Musically, *Heart of Stone* deviates from the dominant pop style of the musical and adopts the form of a ballad song. The slow tempo, sustained melodic lines, and minimal rhythmic variation create a sense of emotional suspension. The song maintains a controlled dynamic range, reflecting Jane's inner stability.

[587] Unless otherwise specified, references to historical portrait imagery in this chapter derive from the American Repertory Theatre, *Six Toolkit*, 2019/20 Season, Cambridge (MA), 2019.

The lyrics of *Heart of Stone* are characterised by a more elevated and less colloquial register than those of the other songs. The language contains metaphors. The repetition of key expressions such as *unbreakable* and *unshakable* reinforces the idea of emotional stability and resilience. The absence of slang or humour contributes to the song quality, allowing Jane's voice to be sincere. Natural elements such as fire, wind, and water are used to express endurance, while the image of *stone* becomes a symbol of constancy and strength.

The slower tempo and extended vocal lines require careful attention to vowel quality, syllabic distribution, and melodic stress. Preserving simplicity and sincerity is central to maintaining the song's affective impact.

The following lines do not fall within any of Zabalbeascoa's humour categories, as they do not produce a comic effect but instead rely on expressive and emotional language.

The line *You've got a good heart…but I know it changes*, translated as *Hai un buon cuore…ma so che può cambiare*, is based on emotional contrast. The initial positive evaluation is qualified by a note of uncertainty, creating a sense of emotional tension rather than humour. The effect is introspective and emotional, not comic. A similar dynamic can be observed in *You can build me up / You can tear me down*, rendered as *Puoi costruirmi / puoi distruggermi*. Here, the meaning is structured through a clear rhetorical parallelism, with two opposing actions that highlight the speaker's emotional dependence. Finally, *My heart of stone*, translated as *Il mio cuore di pietra*, is a conventional metaphor expressing emotional detachment. It does not introduce any form of comic incongruity.

These examples show that not all figurative or rhetorically structured language can be associated with humour. In these cases, the absence of irony justifies their classification as non-humorous. Instead, meaning is conveyed through metaphor and repetition. At the linguistic level, the song is characterised by simplicity and emotional clarity.

The aural dimension is defined by a slow tempo and sustained vocal lines. The singer's vocal control is essential in conveying emotion. The lack of rhythmic complexity shifts the focus from energy to expressivity. Visually, the performance is restrained compared to other songs. There is more intimacy rather than spectacle. Gesturally, the performance is minimal and controlled. The focus remains on vocal delivery rather than physical dynamism.

6.5.5 *Haus of Holbein*

(Company Number)

The title *Haus of Holbein* do not use the standard English word for *House*; instead, it employs the German spelling *Haus*. This choice has a dual function. On the one hand, it references the German origin of Hans Holbein the Younger (c. 1497-1543), a Renaissance painter born in Augsburg (southern Germany) who worked in England as court artist to Henry VIII. Holbein is known for his detailed portraits of the Tudors. His work played a key role in shaping royal identity through visual representation.

The word *Haus*, on the other hand, makes people think of a modern "house" of fashion, which connects Renaissance court portraits to modern beauty, fashion, and body display industries. It suggests that the aesthetic standards that were used on women at the Tudor court are still used in today's pop and fashion culture. In this context, Holbein does not serve as a biographical figure but rather as a symbolic equivalent for the power of images to influence female desirability, status, and visibility throughout history.

Haus of Holbein functions as a satirical interlude within *Six* and temporarily suspends the competitive narrative established by the solos. Positioned after *Heart of Stone*, the song interrupts the emotional continuity of the queens' personal stories and move the focus toward spectacle, parody, and collective performance. The song does not develop individual characters, but comments on the construction of female beauty and desirability. The song exaggerates contemporary beauty standards, associating them with court portraiture. It is a critique of how women's bodies are shaped and evaluated across different historical periods.

Musically, *Haus of Holbein* adopts a highly stylised and repetitive structure, characterised by electronic influences, rhythmic insistence, and exaggerated vocal delivery. The emphasis is places on rhythm, repetition, and visual performance rather than on emotional expression. The lyrics of *Haus of Holbein* also rely heavily on repetition, imperative forms, and deliberately exaggerated diction. German phrases like *ja*, *nein*, and *das ist gut* contribute to the stylised and parodic tone of the song. By reducing language to slogans and commands, the song reflects the reductive logic of beauty standards.

From a translational perspective, *Haus of Holbein* presents challenges primarily related to cultural reference, rhythm, and performative excess. The song's humour depends not only on language but also on visual and musical elements.

Table 6.6. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *Haus of Holbein*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	Joke Type	Source of Humour	Italian Translation (TT)
Haus of Holbein	Complex joke (language-dependent + cultural)	German-English hybrid + fashion reference	*Haus of Holbein*
We'll turn this vier into a nine	Complex joke (Language-dependent + binational)	Wordplay mixing German and English numerals	*Trasformiamo questo quattro in un nove*
Make up contains lead poison	National Culture/Institutions joke	Reference to historical dangerous beauty practices, involving harmful ingredients, which may not be familiar to alla audiences.	*Il trucco contiene piombo*
Magical ingredient (from your bladder)	International joke	Grotesque reference to historical cosmetics.	*Ingredient magico (dalla tua vescica)*
So just say ja and don't say nein	Language-dependent joke	Repetition of German for comic effect	*Di' solo ja e non dire nein*

The line *we'll turn this vier into a nine* plays with languages and numbers to comment on culture. The German word *vier* means "four", and using it with the English word *nine* was intentional for creating this hybrid expression that adds to the song a comic tone. The rating of physical attractiveness from 1 to 10 using numbers is also another way of doing it. The idea conveyed is that a woman considered a *four* can be transformed into a *nine* through artificial means of make-up, clothes, and body modification.

The joke has several levels. On one hand, it plays with words and languages. On another, it plays with culture and beauty. The joke is making fun of how women's beauty has been transformed into something quantifiable. In doing so, it supports and challenges the notion of perfection that has been imposed on women through history and modern times.

To summarise, at the linguistic level, humour is generated through repetition, code-switching, and exaggeration. The mixture of German and English creates a fake register that adds a funny tone to the song. The sound part is mostly made up of a strong, repetitive beat and electronic sounds. The mechanical rhythm echoes the artificial nature of beauty routine. The costumes, lighting, and choreography all make the stage look like a fashion show. The singers use big movements and synchronised choreography to express

themselves. The body is an important part of the show, because it emphasises the idea of showing off.

6.5.6 *Get Down*

Anne of Cleves (1515-1557) was Henry VIII's fourth wife, married to him in 1540 as part of a political alliance with German Protestant states. The marriage was never consummated and was annulled after only six months. Anne accepted the annulment peacefully and was granted a generous settlement, remaining in England for the rest of her life. She outlived Henry and all his other wives.



Figure 6.9 Anne of Cleves. Left: *National Gallery of Art (public domain)* [588]. Right: Six: The Musical Live*, filmed stage production, Vaudeville Theatre, London, 2022.*

Get Down is Anna of Cleves's song. After the satirical interlude of *Haus of Holbein*, the song returns to individual storytelling, talking about self-determination and reinvention. Historically remembered for the failure of her marriage to Henry VIII, Anna is presented here as a figure who, in the end, benefits from the separation of that union. The song rejects the victim-centred logic; she does not attempt to prove that she suffered

[588] Unless otherwise specified, references to historical portrait imagery in this chapter derive from the American Repertory Theatre, *Six Toolkit*, 2019/20 Season, Cambridge (MA), 2019.

more than the other Queens and refuses to define her worth through marital success or romantic validation. Instead, she celebrates financial independence and personal freedom.

Get Down is a turning point. It interrupts the tragedy-oriented stories that precede and follow it.

Musically, *Get Down* has a strong emphasis on rhythm, groove, and physical movement. Rather than building toward emotional climax, the song maintains a strong level of energy, showing Anna's stability and self-possession.

The lyrics of *Get Down* employ a contemporary register characterised by direct statements, colloquial expressions, and references to wealth and independence. Linguistic choices emphasise material security and self-sufficiency, considering the failure of the marriage as an opportunity rather than a failure. The language is modern, reinforcing the song's alignment with present-day empowerment discourse. Repetition has the function. of affirmation rather than insistence.

From a translational perspective, *Get Down* presents challenges related primarily to rhythm, slang, and cultural reference. The dance-oriented structure imposes strict constraints on syllabic timing and stress placement, requiring solutions that prioritise musical flow and performability. At the same time, references to financial independence and social mobility must be rendered in a way that remains culturally legible within an Italian context.

Table 6.7. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *Get Down*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	Joke Type	Source of Humour	Italian Translation (TT)
I didn't look like my profile picture	Complex joke (cultural + language-dependent)	Reference to social media and online identity	*Non assomigliavo alla mia foto profilo*
I'm the Queen of the castle	Complex joke (cultural + language-dependent)	Childlike phrase recontextualised as power claim	*Sono la Regina del castello*
Release the bitches!	Language-dependent joke	Double meaning (dogs / derogative slang for women); provocative and offensive register	*Scatenate le ragazze!*
I ain't sayin' I'm a gold digger	Cultural joke	Reference to pop culture (Kanye West song)	*Non dico di essere una cacciatrice di dote*
I'm a Wienerschnitzel, not an English flower	Bi-national joke	Contrast between German identity and English femininity	*Sono una Wienerschnitzel, non un fiore inglese* or *Sono*

			tedesca, non un fiore inglese

At the linguistic level, humour emerges from colloquial language and cultural references. The use of phrases such as *profile picture* introduces a modern way of speaking that contrasts with the historical setting. The aural dimension consists of rhythm and groove. Visually, the performance emphasises movement, colour, and presence. Anne is positioned at the centre of attention, reinforcing her narrative of visibility and control. Gesturally, the performer adopts confident and expansive movements. The body becomes a symbol of autonomy, contrasting with the previous solo songs where it was associated with constraint or judgment.

Among the examples discussed, the line *Release the bitches* requires specific clarification, as it involves a marked shift in register and pragmatic force in translation. The Italian version mitigates the offensive connotation of "bitches" by replacing it with a non-derogatory term "ragazze" (*girls*) while preserving the energetic and empowering function of the utterance through a strategy of mitigation and register adjustment.

A different case is represented by *I'm a Wienerschnitzel, not an English flower*, which allows for a dual translation strategy. While the reference to "Wienerschnitzel" carries cultural and humorous value, its phonetic length and specificity make it difficult to render in an Italian version. A more performable and domesticating version solution such as *Sono tedesca, non un fiore inglese* preserves the contrast while ensuring rhythmic, and prosodic compatibility, enhancing immediate comprehensibility for the target audience, reducing the cultural and ironic nuance. Otherwise the translation has to be left with the first part in German, considering the foreignising solution like *Sono una Wienerschnitzel, non un fiore inglese*, preserving the cultural specific and humorous effect linked to German identity.

6.5.7 *All You Wanna Do*

Katherine Howard (c.1520-1542), Henry VIII's fifth wife, was a cousin of Anne Boleyn and married the King in 1540 while still very young. Her marriage was marked by significant power asymmetry and investigation. Accused of adultery and misbehaviour, she was condemned of betrayal and executed in 1542. Modern historical perspectives interpret her story through the lens of manipulation and abuse.



Figure 6.10 Katherine Howard. Left: *National Gallery of Art (public domain)* [589]. Right: Six: The Musical Live*, filmed stage production, Vaudeville Theatre, London, 2022.*

All You Wanna Do is Katherine Howard's song and represents one of the most complex numbers in the show. The song traces her relationships with a series of older men, which are initially presented as romantic or consensual, but are gradually revealed as situations of manipulation, pressure, and abuse. The structure of the song is based on a process of gradual revelation. At the beginning, Katherine appears confident, playful, and even flirtatious, presenting herself as desirable and in control. However, as the song progresses, this surface breaks down. The repetition of similar situations exposes a pattern in which her role is consistently reduced to satisfying male desire. Rather than presenting her as immoral or irresponsible, the song highlights her youth and vulnerability. What initially seems like choice is gradually revealed as luck of authority. Through repetition and escalation, the lyrics expose a recurring pattern in which Katherine's value is reduced to sexual availability.

Katherine's experience cannot be easily compared to the others. It forces both the Queens and the audience to reconsider the logic of the competition itself.

Musically, the song adopts a bright and catchy pop style, a fast tempo, repetitive melodic patterns, and a captivating refrain. However, this musical brightness contrasts with the content of the lyrics.

[589] Unless otherwise specified, references to historical portrait imagery in this chapter derive from the American Repertory Theatre, *Six Toolkit*, 2019/20 Season, Cambridge (MA), 2019.

The lyrics of *All You Wanna Do* rely heavily on contemporary colloquial language. At the centre of the song is the repeated line *All you wanna* do. This phrase gradually reduces Katherine's identity to a single function, reinforcing the theme of objectification. At the same time, the language is ambiguous. The listener is guided through the same process as the character: what first appears light and playful becomes increasingly uncomfortable.

From a translational perspective, *All You Wanna Do* presents important challenges. The song combines rhythmic constraints with multiple layers of meaning, including irony, innuendo, and emotional development. For this reason, to have a singable translation, it is necessary to take into account multiple factors: rhythmic constraints, clarity, and gradual revelation. It is also necessary to avoid revealing too much too soon, as this would compromise the song's structure. *All You Wanna Do* is the only song in this study for which a fully singable Italian translation was created and analysed in depth. The goal was to reproduce both the contrast between musical and narrative levels and the effect of repetition. This translation was created as part of an applied research project to test how complex and sensitive material could be adapted for performance while maintaining its ideological and emotional effect.

Table 6.8. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *All You Wanna Do*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Translation for Dubbing and/or Singable Subtitling**
I'm the ten amongst these threes	Complex joke (cultural + linguistic)	Numerical rating of attractiveness	*Io sono un dieci tra questi tre*
*The only thing you wanna do is…*Kiss* Ahh*	Complex joke (visual + aural)	Fake romanticism masking darker meaning. It is a visual joke	*L'unica cosa che tu vuoi è… (L'unica cosa che ti importa è)* **Bacio* Ahh*
Birds and the bees me	Complex joke (linguistic + cultural)	Euphemistic reference to sex usually used to explain sexuality to childre	*Insegnami il mondo*
Little piece of ass…istant	Language-dependent joke	Wordplay (sexual innuendo)	E volle che diventassi la sua piccola assistente…molto da vicino

As the table shows, humour in *All You Wanna Do* is unstable and compromised. What begins as playful language slowly takes on darker meanings, showing how humour can be used as a cover in stories of manipulation and exploitation.

Humour is based on ambiguity, repetition, and insinuation at the level of language. At first, the repeated phrases seem like flirting, but over time, they become ambiguous and not balanced. The music remains happy and catchy throughout the song. This makes the emotional impact stronger by making the content more disturbing. The performance often starts with bright colours, dance moves, and fun gestures. As the song goes on, these parts become less and more uncomfortable, demonstrating how the meaning changes. The performer's body language changes a lot as the song continues. What begins as confident and controlled slowly turns tense and limited, reflecting how the character loses control.

Given its complexity and its central role within the musical, *All You Wanna Do* will be analysed in depth in the following section, where a complete singable Italian translation of the song will be provided and discussed in detail.

The translation choices presented in the table reflect an attempt to balance semantic precision with performability, in line with the principles of singable translation outlined by Low[590]. In several cases, literal equivalence has been adjusted to preserve rhythm, naturalness, and audience comprehension in a musical context.

For example, the line *I'm the ten amongst these threes*, changes to *Io sono un dieci tra questi tre*. It maintains the numerical metaphor. The humour does not rely on wordplay, but on the cultural convention of rating attractiveness inside a competitive context.

The sentence *The only thing you wanna do is…* could be translated as *L'unica cosa che tu vuoi è…* or *L'unica cosa che ti importa è….* It is a complex joke combining verbal, visual, and aural elements. The incongruity is between the expected romantic outcome and the exaggerated and ambiguous oral part *Ahh*.

On the other hand, the sentence *Birds and the bees me* is translated as *Insegnami il mondo*, where functionality is privileged over reference to avoid cultural opacity and to ensure meaning.

The wordplay of "little piece of ass…istant" represents a particular case. In the Italian text, the wordplay partially reproduces the original ambiguity, remaining understandable ("E volle che diventassi la sua piccola assistente…molto da vicino"). It is worth to notice,

[590] Peter Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

however, that this line, is spoken rather than sung, which means it does not have to be singable as the other lines. For this reason, in the original script it is not marked in italics.

Overall, these choices illustrate how singable translation involves continuous negotiation between meaning, rhythm, and performative context, requiring flexible solutions that prioritise the communicative and dramatic function of the song.

In *All You Wanna Do*, there is a form of modal dissonance, as described by Kress and van Leeuwen. On the one hand, the visual dimension, especially Katherine's pink costume, suggests energy, playfulness, and hyper-femininity. On the other hand, the lyrics tell a much darker story of emotional and physical abuse. The contrast between what is seen and what is said creates a strong sense of tension.

From the perspective of visual grammar, Katherine is made highly "salient". With the word "*salience*", Kress and Leuween intend "the elements that are made to attract the viewer's attention to different degrees, as realised by factors as placement in the foreground or background, relative size, contrasts in tonal value (or colour), difference in sharpness and so on"[591]. The intensity of the colour and the lighting immediately draw attention to her, making her stand out on stage. As Kress and van Leeuwen argue, colour is not neutral: elements such as brightness and saturation contribute to meaning. In this case, the extreme pink can be read as an exaggerated form of youthful femininity, almost pushed to the point of artificiality. Tonal (black and white) and colour contrast (strong bright colours and soft pastel colours) are also factors of salience, like rhythm, which involves cycles that alternate between sensations of salience, such as stressed syllables and accented notes, pitch, intensity, dynamics, and non-salience, like unstressed syllables and unaccented notes.

The costume itself plays an important communicative role. Its materials and overall aesthetic look like something modern and constructed, which can be interpreted as a sign of how Katherine is turned into an object to be consumed. There is also a temporal incongruity: although she is a historical figure, her experience is presented in a way that closely resembles that of a contemporary young woman. In this sense, the costume helps connect past forms of abuse with more modern ones. The accessories reinforce this last statement. The "choker", in particular, is a powerful visual element. It can be linked to the historical context, recalling the place where Katherine will eventually be executed, but it also carries more general connotations of control and restriction. Visually, it

[591] Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

separates the head, associated with thought and identity, from the body, which becomes the focus of desire.

Overall, from a multimodal perspective, Katherine's appearance can be seen as a kind of framing device: she is presented as bright, attractive, and visually striking, yet at the same time reduced to something almost object-like, more to be looked at than to be heard.

This song is deeply analysed in full in the following section of the chapter. The lyrics of this and the other songs are also found on the Appendix C.

6.5.8 *I Don't Need Your Love*

Catherine Parr (1512-1548) was Henry VIII's sixth and final wife, marrying him in 1543. Educated and politically clever, she acted as Queen during Henry's military campaigns and was closely associated with Protestant reformist circles. Catherine survived Henry and later married Thomas Seymour. She died in 1548 following complications from childbirth.



Figure 6.11 Catherine Parr. Left: *National Gallery of Art (public domain)*[592].
Right: Six: The Musical Live*, filmed stage production, Vaudeville Theatre, London, 2022.*

[592] Unless otherwise specified, references to historical portrait imagery in this chapter derive from the American Repertory Theatre, *Six Toolkit*, 2019/20 Season, Cambridge (MA), 2019.

I Don't Need Your Love is Catherine Parr's principal song. Unlike the previous solos, which take part in the competition of suffering, this song questions and rejects the logic of comparison between the Queens. Catherine's narrative shifts the focus away from romantic relationships and personal trauma, and instead presents herself as a writer, and a politically aware woman. Her identity is no longer defined by her marriage to Henry VIII, but by her intellectual work and her voice.

Musically, *I Don't Need Your Love* adopts a mid-tempo pop style that balances clarity and control. As the song progresses, musical layering and ensemble participation gradually increase. This transition mirrors the song's ideological movement from personal independence to shared empowerment, reinforcing its function as a bridge between individual solos and the final group affirmation.

The language of *I Don't Need Your Love* is direct and reflective. The title is a clear statement of autonomy, rejecting the idea that romantic love defines a woman's value. Catherine speaks about her work, her books, and her role in promoting female education. Compared to earlier songs, the tone is less playful and more focused. Humour is nearly absent, replaced by clarity.

From a translational perspective, *I Don't Need Your Love* requires careful attention to tone and balance.

Table 6.9. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *I Don't Need Your Love*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	**Joke Type**	**Source of Humour**	**Italian Translation (TT)**
His-story	Language-dependent joke	Wordplay (history vs his-story)	*La "sua" storia*
Been a wife twice before, just to survive	Language-dependent joke	Based on internal rhyme	*Sono già stata sposata due volte, solo per sopravvivere*
'Cause I am not your toy, to enjoy	Language-dependent joke	Based on internal rhyme	*Perché non sono un tuo gioco, non servo a farti divertire*
Ha, darling, get a clue *There's nothing you can do*	Language-dependent joke	Based on internal rhyme	*Ah, caro, apri gli occhi* *Non puoi farci niente*

To summarise, the linguistic mode is centred on clarity. The lyrics use direct statements to express autonomy and self-definition. The music supports the text through

a controlled structure. The absence of extreme dynamics allows the message to remain central.

Visually, the focus shifts from spectacle to presence. Catherine is a speaker and not a performer; she emphasises her authority and voice. Gesturally, the performance is more restrained. Movements are minimal, reinforcing the seriousness of the message.

6.5.9 *Six*

(Company Number)

Six is the final song of the musical and represents the complete rejection of the initial idea of competition. Once Catherine Parr refuses to continue the competition in her experience, the Queens as a group move away from the idea that their experiences are comparable or ranked. The song does not even name a winner but completely changes the focus to identification and empowerment. They are no longer referred to as "ex-wives" of Henry VIII, but as individuals with their own voices and histories. This song brings closure by resolving the ideological conflict introduced in *Ex-Wives*.

Six is a mix of a pop anthem and an ensemble finale. The song contains words associated with each Queen, and together they create a sense of unity. The chorus and vocal entries are shared, which makes everyone feel like they are part of something. *Six* is different from other musical numbers because it shows how the ensemble works together, musically showing the big change from being an individual to being part of a group.

The lyrics of *Six* adopt a direct tone. The use of inclusive pronouns such as *we* reinforce the idea of collective identity. Lines like *we're one of a kind* and *no category* emphasise uniqueness and independence.

Table 6.10. Song-Level Humour Mapping in *Six*.

Song Lyrics (ST)	Joke Type	Source of Humour	Italian Translation (TT)
Lost in his-story	Language-dependent / Cultural joke	Wordplay (history vs his-story)	*Persi nella "sua" storia*
Shakesy P	Cultural joke	Informal reference to Shakespeare	*Shakesy P*
Royalling Stones	Language-dependent joke	Wordplay (Rolling Stones)	*Royalling Stones*

Histo-remix	Language-dependent joke	Blend of history + remix	*Histo-remix*
No category	Community-based tone	Identity beyond classification; rejection of labels	*Nessuna categoria*

The aural dimension is characterised by a strong, energetic sound typical of the endings of pop concerts. The layered voices reinforce the sense of collective participation. The stage becomes visually a shared space. The Queens appear as a unified group rather than as individual performers in competition. Gestures are also coordinated, conveying solidarity and shared identity.

Table 6.10 explains that humour is primarily based on wordplay and cultural references. These elements contribute to the song's "funny" tone, but they do not represent tools of irony or critique. Instead, they support the final affirmation of collective identity.

In *Lost in his-story* there is again the dual meaning of "history" (time-related) and "his story" (the story of a single person, which in this case it is the King). In *Shakesy P* there is an informal and playful reference to William Shakespeare, considering the author like a rap artist, with the creation of a cultural effect, giving him the nickname through abbreviation and stylistic reduction. *Royalling Stones* is a wordplay based on the English band "Rolling Stones", adapted to fit a "royal" context. In *Histo-remix* the humour instead derives from blending historical discourse with contemporary pop terminology, creating a hybrid lexical form. The line *No category* is not a conventional joke, but rather a statement of identity. Its meaning comes from the rejection of predefined labels, no ranking, reflecting the main ideological message of the musical.

6.5.10 *Megasix*

(Company Number)

Megasix functions as an encore, the so-called "bis", rather than as a narrative continuation of *Six*. Performed after the conclusion of the musical, it does not introduce new content but instead re-sings and recombines material from the previous songs. Its function is celebratory, reinforcing audience engagement and extending the energy. Musically, this song consists of a remix-like sequence that brings together key motifs, hooks, refrains, and all the genres of the songs. The focus is not on lyrical development

but on the repetition of parts of the lyrics from other songs, their amplification, and audience participation. Instrumental solos and call-and-response moments also reinforce the moment. From a performative perspective, this song focuses on the interaction between performers and the audience, erasing the boundary between musical theatre and a pop live show.

For this reason, Megasix is not treated here as an independent object of analysis, but as a performative extension of previously discussed material.

6.6 Textual Comparison: Stage Script and the Author's Italian Translation

Six: The Musical has not yet experienced an official Italian-language version with translated lyrics performed on stage. There is no stable Italian version of the musical that has singable translations, and there is no official Italian cast recording or translated libretto for the musical. The only documented presence of *Six* in Italy consists of a limited engagement of the international touring production, performed in English[593].

In April 2024, *Six* was staged at the Teatro Stabile del Friuli Venezia Giulia "Il Rossetti" in Trieste, from 24 to 28 April, as the only Italian stop of the European tour. Contemporary press confirms that the production was presented entirely in English and that accessibility for Italian-speaking audiences was ensured through the use of Italian surtitles rather than through any form of sung or spoken translation. Reviews describe the event as an imported international production rather than an Italian adaptation, emphasising its exceptional character within the Italian theatrical scene.

Alongside the absence of an official Italian stage version, no authorised Italian translations of the songs from *Six* have been published. Nevertheless, a number of Italian-language renderings of the songs circulate online in unofficial form. These translations are typically produced by fans and can be found through lyrics websites and video-sharing services (YouTube), often in connection with amateur covers. Such translations are not intended for professional performance and do not follow the constraints of singability, musical theory, or theatrical performability.

[593] Alessandro Allocca, "'Six'. Arriva in Italia il Musical sulle Sei Mogli di Enrico VIII diventato un Fenomeno Pop", *La Repubblica* (2024); "Six. Il Musical Fenomeno arriva in Italia con i Sopratitoli", *La Nouvelle Vague*, 2025. See at https://www.lanouvellevague.it/arriva-six/; The Musical - European Tour", Teatro Stabile del Friuli Venezia Giulia, *Il* Rossetti, 2024. See at https://www.ilrossetti.it/it/spettacoli/six-3334.

From a methodological perspective, the absence of an official Italian translation of *Six* does not constitute a limitation but rather defines the analytical framework of the present study. Since, at the time of this thesis, no authorised Italian version of the musical exists, the analysis is conducted directly on the English-language stage script and song lyrics, drawing on the librettos and audio recordings consulted by the author on Spotify.

The Italian renderings discussed in the following sections are therefore not derived from pre-existing translations, nor from informal or fan-produced materials. Instead, they are original translations produced specifically for the purposes of this dissertation, following the same methodological principles adopted in the analysis of *Once*. These translations are intended as applied research outputs, designed to evaluate the possibility of singable and performable solutions while considering issues of rhythm, melody, register, stress, and structure. For this reason, the Italian version is not treated as a mere target text, but as an analytical tool that enables an analysis and comparison between the English source text and the author's proposed Italian translations. Given the absence of an official Italian version of *Six*, these translations are conceived specifically as singable renderings developed within the context of doctoral research. They do not claim any institutional or performative authority.

6.7 *All You Wanna Do* (Analysis)

One of the most complicated songs in *Six the Musical* is *All You Wanna Do*. It works as a narrative monologue, a description of the Queen's history, instead of a celebratory solo. Katherine Howard sings the song, which starts sounding like a light-hearted and romantic pop song. As it goes on, it reveals a pattern of sexualisation, coercion, and abuse that has been going on since the character was a teenager and continues into adulthood. The apparent irony of its cheerful musical language is very different from the increasing number of traumas described in the lyrics.

From a methodological point of view, the analysis differs from that utilised for film musicals like *Once* and *My Fair Lady*. Because *Six* is a stage musical designed primarily for live performance, this study uses the stage script and libretto, as well as the official cast recording, rather than audiovisual material with fixed time codes. As a result, the song is viewed as a play text meant to be performed repeatedly, with rhythm, lyrical repetition, and addressing the audience all being important parts. This also affects how

the last column of the table is translated, suggesting Italian translations for dubbing and/or singable subtitles, in line with the methodological principles set out earlier in the thesis.

6.7.1 Dubbing and Singable Subtitling: Italian Translation

Before showing the comparative table, it is important to give a brief overview of the story and meaning of *All You Wanna Do*. This is because the translation strategies used in the Italian versions below are directly affected by how the story and meaning change. This song is not like a song that stands on her own and convey only one emotion. Instead, it is a long story told in a single voice, where repetition does not reinforce the meaning, but instead shows how it is slowly fading away.

The song starts with Katherine Howard showing herself off in the competitive setting that the other Queens have set up. She sounds ironic and very sure of herself at first, and talks about how attractive she is and how she objectifies herself (*I'm the ten among these threes*). This makes it look like she has power, but it also makes her less attractive. The repeated line *All you wanna do* was first used to make someone think the song was a confident, sexually empowered pop performance. The narration of all of Katherine's relationships, starting with her first approach to a man named Henry Mannox, slowly erodes this sense of power. The use of musical metaphors and technical terms (like *dynamics*, *major to minor*, and *C to D*) makes the lyrics dense on purpose. The reason for that is that the seriousness of the situation (sexual abuse of a minor) does not come to light until later. The text creates a conflict between how Katherine sees herself and how the audience sees her, turning humour and wordplay into instruments of dramatic irony.

In the other relationships she is involved in, the same rhetorical pattern is used, with different male characters saying almost the same things about emotional reciprocity (*we have a connection*; *this one's real*). The repetition of these lexical units is structural coercion: despite the men differ in age, status, and institutional power, their desire remains constant. So, repeating things is a way to tell a story that shows how Katherine's manipulation and abuse are systematic and how choice is an illusion.

The last part of the song breaks this cycle for a short time by introducing Thomas Culpeper, who is first shown as a platonic figure who cares for and is friends with the Queen. But this break from the abuses is not real. The last part of the chorus, which starts to integrate, has violent images (*Bite my lip and pull my hair*), showing that any remaining belief in emotional exceptionality is gone. The repeated line *The only thing you wanna*

do is... followed by the mechanical gesture and sound of a "Kiss" is no longer flirting; instead, it has become an empty performance that shows the singer has completely lost control. The song has changed from a fun pop performance to an implicit condemnation. She appears lost, her face has changed, she looks humiliated, sad, fooled, with no power in her voice and body. This semantic and emotional trajectory sets unique challenges for translation, particularly in relation to dubbing and singable subtitling.

The Italian translations in Table 6.11 below try to keep the meaning of the words, the rhythm, and the way the tone changes over time. This way, the early confusion stays clear without losing the eventual signs of coercion and trauma. This also means that translation is not done line by line; instead, it is a dramatic process that must keep the song's overall meaning in mind.

Table 6.11. Line-by-line Inter-Lingual Comparison Between the Stage Script and a Proposed Italian Dubbing and Subtitles of *All You Wanna Do*.

#	Character	Stage Script	Italian Dubbing and Subtitles
1	Katherine Howard	So yeah, I can't even begin to think of how I compete with you all… Oh, wait, like this!	Ecco, sì
2			Non saprei neanche come competere con voi
3			Oh aspettate, così!
4	Others	*All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby*	*Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
5	Katherine Howard	I think we can alla agree I'm the ten amongst these threes	Penso che siamo tutte d'accordo: io sono un dieci tra questi tre
6	Others	*All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby*	*Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
7	Katherine Howard	And ever since I was a child I'd make the boys go wild	E già da bambina facevo impazzire i ragazzi
8	Others	*All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby*	*Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
9	Katherine Howard	Take my first music teacher Henry Mannox	Il mio primo insegnante di musica Henry Mannox (subtitles) **Prendiamo** il mio primo insegnante di musica Henry Mannox (dubbing)
10		*I was young, it's true*	*Piccolina, è vero*

		But even then I knew	*Eppure già sapevo*
11		*The only thing you wanna do is…* **Kiss* Ahh*	*L'unica cosa che tu vuoi è…* *(L'unica cosa che ti importa è)* **Bacio* Ahh*
12		*Broad, dark, sexy Mannox* *Taught me all about dynamics*	*Mannox, scuro, grande e sexy* *Con la dinamica mi stressi*
13		*He was twenty-three* *And I was thirteen* *Going on thirty*	*Lui a ventitré* *A tredici io già grande per me*
14		*We spent hours strumming the lute* *Striking the chords and blowing the flute*	*Ore e ore sempre a suonare* *E con il flauto ancora a soffiare*
15		*He plucked my strings all the way to G* *Went from major to minor* *C to D.*	*Mi pizzicò la corda del Sol* [594] *Dal maggiore al minore, Do e Re trovò*
16		*Tell me what you need* *What you want* *You don't need to plead*	*Dimmi cosa vuoi*
17			*Cosa ti va* *Non implorare*
18		*'Cause I feel* *The chemistry* *Like I get you* *And you get me and*	*Sento la chimica*
19			*Se tu hai me* *Io sto con te*
20		*Maybe this is it* *He just cares so much* *It feels legit*	*Forse è tutto qui*
21			*Gli importa, sì* *Sembra così*
22		*We have a connection* *I think this guy is different*	*C'è una connessione* *E penso che sia un po' speciale*

[594] The use of Italian terms (Sol instead of G, Do and Re instead of C and D) preserves the musical code of the original text while allowing erotic connotations to emerge implicitly through contextual accumulation rather than explicit lexicalisation.

23		*'Cause* *All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby's*	*E* *Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
24		*Touch me, love me* *Can't get enough, see*	*Amarmi, Toccarmi* *Non puoi fermarti*
25		*All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby's*	*Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
26		*Please me, squeeze me* *Birds and the bees me*	*Accendimi, Stringimi* *Insegnami il mondo*
27		*Run your fingers through my hair* *Tell me I'm the fairest of the fair*	*Accarezza i miei capelli* *Dimmi "sei la più bella tra le belle"*
28	All	*Playtime's over*	*E non si gioca più*
29	Katherine Howard	*The only thing you wanna do is…* **Kiss* Ahh*	*L'unica cosa che tu vuoi è…* **Bacio* Ahh*
30		Then there was another guy, Frances.	Poi c'era un altro tipo, Francis.
31		And at the time, I was living at my Step-Grandma's house.	All'epoca vivevo a casa della mia nonna…non proprio mia.
32		He was working for her - working so so hard.	Lui lavorava per lei – lavorava davvero tantissimo.
33		So he asked me to be his little piece of ass…istant.	E volle che diventassi la sua piccola assistente…molto da vicino.
34		*Serious, stern and slow* *Gets what he wants and he won't take no*	*Lento e serio però* *Prende ciò che vuole e odia i "no"*
35		*Passion in all that he touches* *The sexy secretary to the dowager duchess*	*Passione che non si ignora* *E io segretaria sexy di una gran signora* (single line)
36		*Helped him in his office had a duty to fulfill* *He even let me use his favourite quill*	*Un unico dovere nel suo ufficio ho da tenere* (single line) *Penna e calamaio lui mi lascia mantenere* (single line)
37		*Spilled ink all over the parchment* *My wrist was so tired*	*Inchiostro sopra il foglio* *Non sento più il mio polso*
38		*Still I came back the next day* *As he required*	*Tornai il giorno dopo* *Lui lo volle ad ogni costo*

39		*You say, I'm all you need* *All you want, you don't need to plead*	*Sono ciò che vuoi*
40			*Ciò che ti va* *Non implorare*
41		*'Cause I feel the chemistry* *I get you and you get me and*	*Sento la chimica*
42			*Qui tu hai me* *E io sto con te*
43		*I know, this is it* *He just cares so much* *This one's legit*	*Lo so, è tutto qui*
44			*Gli importa, sì* *Lo so è così*
45		*We have a real connection* *I'm sure this time is different*	*Una vera connessione* *Son certa che lui sia speciale*
46		*'Cause* *All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby's*	*E* *Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
47		*Touch me, love me* *Can't get enough, see*	*Amarmi, Toccarmi* *Non puoi fermarti*
48		*All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby's*	*Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
49		*Please me, squeeze me* *Birds and the bees me*	*Accendimi, Stringimi* *Insegnami il mondo*
50		*You can't wait a second more* *To get my corset on the floor*	*Non puoi aspettare più* *E poi il corsetto cade giù*
51	All	*Playtime's over*	*E non si gioca più*
52	Katherine Howard	*The only thing you wanna do is…* **Kiss* Ahh*	*L'unica cosa che tu vuoi è…* **Bacio* Ahh*
53		Yeah, that didn't work out.	Sì ecco, non è andata proprio benissimo. (single line)
54		It turns out some guys just employ women to get them into their private chambers.	Pare che certi uomini assumano le donne solo per farle finire nelle loro stanze private.
55		It was a different time back then.	Ma erano altri tempi, allora.
56		So, I decided to have a break from boys.	Così ho deciso di prendere una pausa dai ragazzi.
57		Just focus on my career.	Concentrarmi solo sulla carriera.

58		Then my dad got me this amazing work placement in court.	Poi mio padre mi ha trovato questo incredibile lavoro a corte.
59		And you'll never guess who I met.	E non indovinerete mai chi ho incontrato.
60		*Tall, large, Henry the Eighth* *Supreme head of the Church of England*	*Alto, imponente, Enrico Ottavo* *Supremo capo della Chiesa inglese*
61		*Globally revered* *Although you wouldn't know it from the look of that beard*	*Nel mondo venerato* *Ma quella barba mi fa dire "esagerato"*
62		*Made me a lady in waiting, hurled* *Me and my family up in the world*	*Una dama di compagnia* *Io e la mia famiglia nella gerarchia*
63		*Gave me duties in court and he swears it's true* *That without me he doesn't know what he'd do*	*Tanti incarichi a corte meritai davvero* *Non sapeva come fare senza me, sincero* (single line)
64		*You say, I'm all you need* *All you want, we both agree*	*Sono ciò che vuoi*
65			*Ciò che ti va* *Ormai si sa*
66		*This is the place for me* *I'm finally where I'm meant to be*	*Questo è il posto per me* *Qui esisto e faccio da me*
67		*Then he starts saying all this stuff* *He "cares so much", he calls me "love"*	*Poi ha detto paroloni*
68			*"Gli importa, sì"* *Mi chama "amore"*
69		*He says we have a "connection"* *I guess it's not so different*	*Dice che abbiamo "connessione"* *E credo non sia più speciale*
70		*'Cause* *All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby's*	*E* *Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
71		*Touch me, love me* *Can't get enough, see*	*Amarmi, Toccarmi* *Non puoi fermarti*

72		*All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby's*	*Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
73		*Please me, squeeze me* *Birds and the bees me*	*Usami, Stringimi* *Insegnami il mondo*
74		*There's no time for when or how* *'Cause you've just got to have me now*	*Non c'è tempo di capire* *Che tu mi vuoi solo possedere*
75	All	*Playtime's over*	*E non si gioca più*
76	Katherine Howard	*The only thing you wanna do is…* **Kiss* Ahh*	*L'unica cosa che tu vuoi è…* **Bacio* Ahh*
77		So we got married…Woo!...	E così ci siamo sposati…woo!
78		*With Henry, it isn't easy* *His temper's short and his friends are sleazy*	*Enrico non è mai tranquillo* *Squallidi amici e lui scatta come un grillo* (single line)
79		*Except for this one courtier* *He's a really nice guy just* *So sincere*	*Solo un cortigiano* *È davvero un bravo tipo, sai* *Così sincero*
80		*The royal life isn't what I planned* *But Thomas is there to lend a helping hand*	*La vita da Regina non era il mio piano* *Ma Thomas era lì e mi tende la mano*
81		*So sweet, makes sure that I'm okay* *And we hang out loads when the King's away*	*Lui è dolce e premuroso e ha cura di me* (single line) *E stiamo sempre insieme quando il Re non c'è* (single line)
82		*This guy, finally* *Is what I want, the friend I need*	*Ora so chi è*
83			*Ciò che voglio, un vero amico*
84		*Just friends, no chemistry* *I get him and he gets me*	*Amici senza chimica*
85			*Io ho lui e lui ha me*
86		*And there's nothing more to it*	*E non c'è niente di più*
87		*He just cares so much, he's devoted*	*Gli importa, sì* *È preso così*
88		*He says we have a connection…*	*Dice che abbiamo connessione…*
89		*I thought this time was different*	*Pensavo adesso fosse speciale*
90		*Why did I think he'd be different?*	*Perché credevo fosse speciale?*

91		*But it's never, ever different*	*Ma non è mai, mai speciale*
92		*'Cause* *All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby's*	*E* *Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
93		*Touch me, when will* *Enough be enough, see?*	*Toccami,* *quando ne avrai abbastanza?*
94		*All you wanna do* *All you wanna do, baby's*	*Tutto ciò che vuoi* *Tutto ciò che vuoi, baby*
95		*Squeeze me, don't care* *If you don't please me*	*Stringimi,* *anche se non mi piace*
96		*Bite my lip and pull my hair* *As you tell me I'm the fairest of the fair*	*Mordi il mio labbro e tira i capelli* *Dimmi "sei la più bella tra le belle"*
97	Others	*Playtime's over*	*E non si gioca più*
98	All	*Playtime's over*	*E non si gioca più*
99		*Playtime's over*	*E non si gioca più*
100	Katherine Howard	*The only thing*	*L'unica co…*
101		*The only thing*	*L'unica co…*
102	Katherine Howard	*The only thing you wanna do is…* **Kiss* Ahh*	*L'unica cosa che tu vuoi è…* **Bacio* Ahh*

6.7.2 Analytical Commentary on the Italian Adaptation of *All You Wanna Do*

The Italian adaptation of *All You Wanna Do* uses a clearly performance-oriented translation strategy that differs between sung and spoken passages. Spoken sections privilege immediacy, naturalness, and audience accessibility, while sung passages are guided primarily by constraints such as rhythm, stress placement, and vowel openness. Semantic fidelity is negotiated rather than followed as an absolute, in favour of singability.

A main macro-strategy that supports the adaptation is the stabilisation of chorus. The recurring line *All you wanna do* is consistently rendered as *Tutto ciò che vuoi*, while *Playtime's over* becomes *E non si gioca più*. These repetitions are not redundant but structurally necessary: they function as musical and semantic anchors (hooks), ensuring recognisability and reinforcing the accusatory style of the song. The repetition mirrors the obsessive cycle described by the narrative, made of abuses. The line *All you wanna*

do is also similarly maintained in *Tutto ciò che vuoi*. In more complex cases where ambiguity and innuendo may arise, more complex solutions must be put forward.

Another crucial principle is the deliberate use of *speciale* as a semantic catchword. While the English adjective *different* could be translated more literally as *diverso*, the choice of *speciale* allows the Italian text to face Katherine's self-deception: the belief that this time the man she meets will be exceptional. By repeating *speciale* across multiple narrative events, the adaptation biulds a thematic loop that ends in the line *Ma non è mai, mai speciale*, where the illusion collapses. This repetition is narratively motivated and psychologically charged.

In the spoken sections, the translation favours idiomatic Italian discourse markers and pragmatic equivalence over lexical correspondence. For instance, the opening *So yeah* is rendered as *Ecco, sì*, a conversational way to reproduce the casual, self-aware tone of the original. Similarly, *Then there was another guy* becomes *Poi c'era un altro tipo*, where *tipo* introduces a colloquial register. The use of *step-grandma* as *la mia nonna… non proprio mia* exemplifies a domestication strategy: instead of forcing an unnatural relationship label, the translation preserves the explanation that characterises Katherine's voice.

Wordplay poses a particular challenge in the spoken sections, most notably in the *ass…istant* pun. The Italian solution (*la sua piccola assistente… molto da vicino*) sacrifices the morphological joke but compensates for it with timing and implication. The pause and rethinking recreate the bait-and-switch effect while avoiding excessive vulgarity, which could disrupt tone or reception.

Throughout the sung passages, imperatives and infinitive constructions are used to convey shifts in agency and objectification. Lists such as *Amarmi, Toccarmi* create a catalogue-like effect that mirrors the accusatory enumeration of male demands, while direct imperatives (*Accendimi, Stringimi*, later *Usami, Stringimi*) represents physical urgency in real time. The alternation between infinitive and imperative is not inconsistent but expressive, marking the transition from narrated accusation to embodied coercion.

The culturally bound euphemism "birds and the bees" is handled through semantic domestication rather than literal translation. The Italian *Insegnami il mondo* preserves the function of the euphemism, sexual initiation framed as education, while avoiding an image that would be culturally opaque or incongruent. Also, the shift from *Accendimi* to *Usami* intensifies the meaning, showing Katherine's progressive instrumentalisation and loss of agency.

Visual metaphors are likewise preserved and theatrically effective. The corset line (*E poi il corsetto cade giù*) maintains the image of undressing while condensing the syntax to fit musical phrasing. Similarly, the introduction of Henry VIII demonstrates careful compression of historically specific material: *Supremo capo della Chiesa inglese* retains ideological weight while remaining rhythmically reasonable, and *inglese* replaces *d'Inghilterra* for reasons of length and singability.

Rhyme and humour play a central role in maintaining the musical's satirical tone. The lines *Nel mondo venerato / Ma quella barba mi fa dire "esagerato"* exemplifies how solemn authority is immediately undercut by visual mockery, replicating the original's comic reversal through Italian rhyme. Likewise, the translation of *hurled me and my family up in the world* as *Io e la mia famiglia nella gerarchia* avoids ambiguity and indicates social rise explicitly, solving a potential misreading (*io e la mia famiglia voliamo via* as physical departure) while preserving musicality.

Verb tense and narrative perspective are handled with consistency and flexibility. While Katherine's story is primarily told in the past, the sung sections frequently employ the present tense and direct address. Markers such as *e credo* for *I guess* successfully maintain uncertainty and internal conflict, reflecting Katherine's ongoing rationalisation.

Omission and condensation are used strategically, particularly in rapid lyrical sequences. The compression of *Tell me what you need / what you want / you don't need to plead* into *Dimmi cosa vuoi / Cosa ti va / Non implorare* preserves pragmatic meaning while respecting rhythmic constraints. Conversely, selective explicitation occurs at critical moments: translating *you've just got to have me now* as *Che tu mi vuoi solo possedere* foregrounds coercion and aligns with the feminist critique underlying the song, even if it slightly reduces ambiguity.

Later sections carefully recalibrate intensity. The line *Toccami, quando ne avrai abbastanza?* places the burden of excess straight on the male figure, while *Stringimi, anche se non mi piace* avoids implying Katherine's disinterest in the man himself, instead highlighting the erasure of her pleasure. This distinction is crucial in maintaining character coherence: Katherine remains emotionally devoted, even as consent deteriorates.

Finally, the explicit rendering *Mordi il mio labbro e tira i capelli* restores the physical violence implicit in the original. Its inclusion marks a choice to match the English line's force rather than mitigate it, signalling the culmination of the song's escalation.

Overall, the Italian adaptation can be described as a functional, performance-led translation that balances singability, narrative clarity, and thematic cohesion. Through chorus stabilisation, controlled domestication of culture-bound elements, strategic repetition, and carefully calibrated explicitation, the translation preserves both the musical energy and the fidelity of the original. Rather than merely transferring content, it reconstructs Katherine Howard's voice for an Italian-speaking audience, maintaining the song's cyclical structure of desire, illusion, and disillusionment while respecting the formal constraints of musical theatre.

6.8 Conclusion: From Competition to Collective Voice. Rewriting History in *Six*

Six: The Musical reimagines the six wives of Henry VIII as a contemporary pop group who compete to determine which of them suffered the most as a result of their marriage to the king. Through a sequence of solo songs framed as a concert, each queen narrates her personal history, gradually shifting the focus from rivalry to collective empowerment. The musical in the end rejects the competition, redefining the Queens not as victims of a shared past, but as autonomous figures reclaiming authorship over their own stories.

The analytical commentary developed in this chapter has examined the musical songs of *Six* as autonomous yet interconnected units through which narrative, ideology, and characterisation are constructed almost exclusively through song. Unlike traditional book musicals, *Six* replaces linear storytelling with a concert-based structure in which each number functions as a self-contained narrative statement, while collectively contributing to a coherent ideological trajectory.

The progression of the songs reveals a deliberate movement from competition to solidarity. Early songs such as *Ex-Wives* and *No Way* establish rivalry and self-assertion grounded in contemporary pop discourse, while other songs destabilise the premise that female experience can be meaningfully compared through suffering. This destabilisation reaches its critical point in *All You Wanna Do*, which exposes the ethical limits of the competition, and is resolved through *I Don't Need Your Love* and *Six*, where collective agency and self-authorship replace comparison and victimhood as principles.

From a musical and linguistic perspective, this musical demonstrates a strategic use of stylistic contrast. Choreographic songs, lyrical ballads, satirical interludes, and anthemic ensemble pieces coexist within a unified pop "concert", allowing each Queen's narrative to be shown through a distinct expressive mode. Language plays a central role in this

process: contemporary idiom, irony, and repetition are employed to collapse temporal distance and render historical figures understandable within present-day cultural system. The analysis has also highlighted the implications of this structure for singable translation. The Italian translations proposed in this study are conceived as applied research, designed to test the practicability of performable solutions that respect rhythmic and prosodic constraints while preserving the same ideological style. Particular challenges emerge in relation to humour, irony, trauma representation, and collective voice, all of which require adaptive strategies rather than literal transfer.

Concluding this chapter, *Six* emerges as an example of contemporary musical theatre's engagement with feminist discourse through popular music forms. The concert-style format not only reshapes dramaturgical conventions, but also opens new possibilities for translational practice, positioning singable translation as a critical and at the same time, creative tool within the study of musical theatre.

As Cassie Tongue writes in her review, "musicals aren't always kind to women (some classics are downright misogynist), but *Six* is a joyous celebration of sisterhood" [595].

[595] Cassie Tongue, "Six Review. Hamilton-style hit musical turns Henry VIII's wives into pop group for the ages", *The Guardian*, (10 January 2020).

Chapter 7 - Conclusions

The present study aimed to explore song translation in musical theatre not like some isolated case, but as a central space in which multiple dimensions intersect and are continuously reshaped.

As has emerged throughout the thesis, translation in musical contexts cannot be reduced to the transfer of verbal content. Rather, it has to deal with a complex network of semiotic resources, in which words, music, and voice operate simultaneously and collaboratively. For this reason, this work has approached translation as a process of negotiation, one that takes place across different levels and is shaped by constraints that are linguistic, musical, performative, and technical.

Particular attention has been dedicated to the notion of singable translation. Instead of viewing singability as only a formal or technical requirement, the study has considered it as a more dynamic concept, involving rhythm, prosody (the rhythmic and intonational features of speech, including stress, pitch, and timing), vocal articulation, and performability. Singability is not a limitation imposed on translation, but a space in which meaning is built. The voice plays a crucial role in this process, as it mediates between text and performance, shaping how translated material is perceived by the audience.

The three case studies analysed in this thesis have made it possible to observe these dynamics in different yet complementary contexts. *My Fair Lady* has highlighted the importance of phonetic variation and sociolect, showing how pronunciation itself becomes a carrier of meaning, identity, and social positioning. The translational challenges associated with this musical, indicate the difficulty of rendering not only "what" is said, but "how" it is said, especially when linguistic variation is central to the narrative structure.

In contrast, *Once* has offered a more naturalistic configuration, in which language contact is incorporated in everyday interaction and in the confrontation between different cultural backgrounds. Here, songs gradually become a way of communication that goes beyond spoken dialogue, allowing characters to express what they cannot say in words. This shift from speech to song as a primary mode of communication brings into focus the role of music as a principal resource, and raises important questions about how such meanings can be translated across languages and media.

Six: The Musical, finally, has introduced a different model, characterised by its concert-like structure and its contemporary musical language. In this case, the absence of a traditional narrative setting and the emphasis on performance and vocal delivery reshape the relationship between text, music, and audience. The interaction between historical figures and modern pop aesthetics also complicates the translational process, as it requires balancing stylistic coherence with accessibility and audience expectations.

The three case studies examined in this thesis also illustrate the different functions of humour and musical expression across distinct models of musical theatre. In *My Fair Lady*, humour is based on language and social interaction, emerging from wordplay, register variation, and class-based dynamics. In *Once*, humour is almost absent, and emotional meaning is conveyed instead through intimacy, simplicity, and a more subtle expression of emotions. In *Six*, humour becomes a central performative strategy, relying on anachronism (elements that are intentionally placed outside their original historical context, creating a contrast between the two different time periods), pop culture references, and linguistic play to reinterpret historical narratives.

Despite these differences, all three musicals demonstrate the need to adapt translational strategies to their specific expressive purposes. As Low suggests, singable translation requires a flexible balance between meaning, rhythm, naturalness, and performability; however, the analysis carried out in this study shows that this balance cannot be applied in the same way. Rather, it must shift according to genre, tone, and communicative intention.

Taken together, these case studies illustrate not only the diversity of musical theatre forms, but also the variability of translational practices across different contexts. At the same time, they reveal a common underlying principle: that translation in musical theatre is always the result of a series of negotiated choices, in which different semiotic priorities must be balanced rather than resolved.

The results of this study suggest that meaning in musical theatre translation is not transferred but negotiated across interacting semiotic layers. Translational choices are shaped by the constant interaction of linguistic, musical, and vocal constraints. Singability is a central dimension of meaning, rather than a secondary aspect. Translation also plays an active role in shaping voice, identity, and performance within musical texts.

Another key aspect that has emerged from the analysis concerns the relationship between translation and accessibility. In audiovisual contexts, and particularly in subtitling, the constraints of space, time, and readability often require significant

reduction and reformulation. While such strategies are necessary, they may also lead to the partial loss of elements that are central to musical meaning, such as prosodic patterns (rhythmic and intonational organisation of speech, including stress, timing, pitch), phonetic variation, or vocal shades. This raises important questions about the extent to which translated versions remain accessible to different audiences, especially in cases where sound and voice play a crucial role in meaning construction.

From a broader perspective, the thesis contributes to current developments in Translation Studies, particularly the shift towards multimodal and interdisciplinary approaches. By combining corpus-based research, multimodal analysis, and cognitive-affective perspectives, it considers both the features of translated texts and the processes behind translational decisions. Rather than proposing a fixed model, this approach provides a useful way to deal with this complexity.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the present study. The analysis has focused on a relatively small number of case studies within the anglophone musical tradition, and further research could extend this investigation to other linguistic, cultural, and performative contexts. In addition, while the thesis has addressed issues of accessibility from a theoretical and analytical perspective, future work could benefit from studies of audience reception to better understand how translated songs are experienced by different groups of viewers. With regard to singable translation, further research could explore the performative and vocal dimension through empirical analysis, for example by involving performers or singers, in order to more concretely evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed translation solutions, and how these translations are applied in performances. The future of translation research lies in interdisciplinary cooperation, integrating quantitative and qualitative data from corpora, experimental settings, and sociological observation to fully capture the complex, multifaceted nature of the translated text and the translating characters.

In conclusion, this thesis has argued that song translation in musical theatre should be understood as a fundamentally multimodal and performative practice, in which meaning is not transferred but reconfigured through the interaction of multiple semiotic systems. By foregrounding the interplay between words, music, and voice, and by examining the role of translation within this dynamic environment, the study has attempted to contribute to a better understanding of audiovisual translation. More broadly, it suggests that translation can be seen as a space of contact, where languages, cultures, and artistic forms

intersect, and where meaning is continuously shaped by the conditions of its performance and reception.

Appendix A - *My Fair Lady*

A.1 "Why Can't the English?"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [596]

Higgins:

Look at her, a prisoner of the gutter,
Condemned by every syllable she utters.
By right she should be taken out and hung,
For the cold-blooded murder of the English tongue.

Eliza:

A-o-o-o-w!

Higgins:

Aoooow!
Heavens, what a noise!
This is what the British population,
Calls an elementary education.

Pickering:

Come, sir, I think you picked a poor example.

Higgins:

Did I?
Hear them down in Soho square,
Dropping "h's" everywhere.
Speaking English anyway they like.
You sir, did you go to school?

Cockney:

Whatya tike me fer, a fool?

[596] Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe, *My Fair Lady*, New York, Chappel & Co., 1956, pp. 14-15.

Higgins:

No one taught him "take" instead of "tike"!

Hear a Yorkshireman, or worse,
Hear a Cornishman converse,
I'd rather hear a choir singing flat.
Chickens cackling in a barn,
Just like this one.

Eliza:

Garn!

Higgins:

Garn!
I ask you, sir, what sort of word is that?

It's "Aaoooww" and "Garn" that keep her in her place.
Not her wretched clothes and dirty face.

Why can't the English teach their children how to speak?
This verbal class distinction, by now,
Should be antique.
If you spoke as she does, sir,
Instead of the way you do,
Why, you might be selling flowers, too!

Pickering:

I beg your pardon!

Higgins:

An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him.
The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him.
One common language I'm afraid we'll never get,

Oh, why can't the English learn to

set a good example to people whose
English is painful to your ears?
The Scotch and the Irish leave you close to tears.
There even are places where English completely disappears.

In America, they haven't used it for years!

Why can't the English teach their children how to speak?
Norwegians learn Norwegian,
the Greeks are taught their Greek.
In France every Frenchman knows his language from "A" to "Zed"

The French never care what they do, actually, as long as they pronounce it properly.

Arabians learn Arabian with the speed of summer lightning,
The Hebrews learn it backwards,
which is absolutely frightening.
But use proper English and you're regarded as a freak.

Why can't the English,
Why can't the English,
Learn To Speak?

A.2 "Wouldn't It Be Loverly?"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [597]

Second Cockney:

It's rather dull in town
I think I'll take me to Paree.
Mmmmm!

Third Cockney:

The missus wants to open up
The castle in Capri.
Mmmmm!

First Cockney:

Me doctor recommends a
quiet summer by the sea!

The Cockney Quartet:

Mmmm! Mmmm!
Wouldn't it be loverly?

Eliza:

All I want is a room somewhere,
Far away from the cold night air.
With one enormous chair,
Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?
Lots of choc'lates for me to eat,
Lots of coal maki' lots of heat.
Warm face, warm hands, warm feet,
Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?
Oh, so loverly sittin' abs-bloomin'lutely still!
I would never budge 'till

[597] Ivi, pp. 18-19.

Spring crept over me windersill.
Someone's head restin' on my knee,
Warm and tender as he can be.
Who takes good care of me,
Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?
Loverly! Loverly!
Loverly! Loverly!

The Quartet:
All I want is a room somewhere,
Far away from the cold night air.
With one enormous chair,

Eliza:
Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?

All:
Lots of choc'lates for me to eat,
Lots of coal maki' lots of heat.
Warm face, warm hands, warm feet,

Eliza:
Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?
Oh, so loverly sittin' abs-bloomin'lutely still!
I would never budge 'till
Spring crept over me windersill.

The Men:
Someone's head restin' on my knee,
Warm and tender as he can be.

All:
Who takes good care of me,

Eliza:

Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?

The Men:

Loverly!

Eliza:

Loverly!

The Men:

Loverly!

Eliza:

Oh, Wouldn't it be loverly!

The Men:

Loverly!

A.3 "With a Little Bit of Luck"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [598]

Doolittle:

The Lord above gave man an arm of iron
So he could do his job and never shirk.
The Lord above gave man an arm of iron, but,
With a little bit of luck,
With a little bit of luck,
Someone else'll do the blinkin' work!

The Trio – Jamie, Harry & Doolittle:

With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit of luck,
You'll never work!

Doolittle:

The Lord above made liquor for temptation,
To see if man could turn away from sin.
The Lord above made liquor for temptation; but
With a little bit of luck,
With a little bit of luck,
When temptation comes, you'll give right in!

The Trio:

With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit of luck,
you'll give right in!

Doolittle:

Oh, you can walk the straight and narrow;

[598] Ivi, pp. 23-25.

But with a little bit of luck,
You'll run amuck!

The gentle sex was made for man to marry,
To share his nest and see his food is cooked.
The gentle sex was made for man to marry, but,
With a little bit of luck,
With a little bit of luck,
You can have it all and not get hooked.

The Trio:
With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit of luck,
you won't get hooked.

With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit of luck,
of bloomin' luck!

Angry Woman:
Shut your face down there! How's a woman supposed to get her rest.

Doolittle:
I'm tryin' to keep 'em quiet, lady!

Angry Man:
Shut up! Once and for all, shut up!

Doolittle:
'Ere, 'ere - that's no way to talk to a lady!

Harry and Jamie join him:
We've got to be neighborly-like, boys. After all:

Doolittle:

The Lord above made man to help is neighbor;
No matter where, on land, or sea, or foam.
The Lord above made man to help his neighbor, but,
With a little bit of luck,
With a little bit of luck,
When he comes around you won't be home!

The Trio:

With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit of luck,
You won't be home!

Doolittle:

They're always throwin' goodness at you;
But with a little bit of luck,
A man can duck!

Oh, it's a crime for man to go philand'rin
And fill his wife's poor heart with grief and doubt.
Oh, it's a crime for man to go philand'rin, but,
With a little bit of luck,
With a little bit of luck,
you can see the bloodhound don't find out!

The Trio:

With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit of luck,
She won't find out!
With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit of luck of bloomin' luck!

A.4 "I'm and ordinary man"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [599]

Higgins:

I'm an ordinary man,
Who desires nothing more
than just the ordinary chance
to live exactly as he likes
and do precisely what he wants.
An av'rage man am I,
of no eccentric whim;
Who wants to live his life
free of strife;
doing whatever he thinks is best for him.
Just an ordinary man.

But let a woman in your life
and your serenity is through!
She'll redecorate your home
from the cellar to the dome;
then get on to the enthralling
fun of overhauling
you.

Oh, let a woman in your life
and you're up against the wall!
Make a plan and you will find,
she has something else in mind;
and so rather than do either
you do something else that neither
likes at all.

[599] Ivi, pp. 36-38.

You want to talk of Keats and Milton;
she only wants to talk of love.
And go to see a play or ballet
and spend it searching for her glove.

Oh, let a woman in your life
and you invite eternal strife!

Let them buy their wedding bands
for those anxious little hands;
I'd be equally as willing
for a dentist to be drilling
than to ever let a woman in my life!

I'm a very gentle man;
even-temper'd and good natur'd,
whom you never hear complain;
Who has the milk of human kindness
by the quart in ev'ry vein.
A patient man am I
down to my fingertips;
the sort who never could,
ever would,
let an insulting remark escape his lips.
Just a very gentle man.

But let a woman in your life
and patience hasn't got a chance,
She will beg you for advice;
your reply will be concise.
And she will listen very nicely,
then go out and do precisely
what she wants!

You were a man of grace and polish
who never spoke above a hush.
Now all at once you're using language
that would make a sailor blush.

Oh, let a woman in your life
and you're plunging in a knife!
Let the others of my sex
tie the knot around their necks;
I'd prefer a new edition
of the Spanish Inquisition
than to ever let a woman in my life!

I'm a quiet living man
who prefers to spend his ev'nings
in the silence of his room.
Who likes an atmosphere as restful
as an undiscovered tomb.
A pensive man am I
of philosophical joys;
who likes to meditate,
contemplate,
free for humanity's mad, inhuman noise.
Just a quiet living man.

But let a woman in your life
and your sabbatical is through!
In a line that never ends
come an army of her friends,
come to jabber and to chatter
and to tell her what the matter
is with you.

She'll have a booming, boist'rous fam'ly
who will descend on you en masse.
She'll have a large Wagnerian mother
with a voice that shatters glass!
Oh, let a woman in your life,
let a woman in your life,
let a woman in your life.
I shall never let a woman in my life!

A.5 "Just You Wait"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [600]

Eliza:

Just you wait, 'enry 'iggins, just you wait!
You'll be sorry, but your tears'll be to late!
You'll be broke and I'll have money;
Will I help you? Don't be funny!
Just you wait, 'enry 'iggins, just you wait!

Just you wait, 'enry 'iggins, till you're sick,
And you scream to fetch a doctor double quick!
I'll be off a second later
And go straight to the the-a-tre!
Oh, oh, oh, 'enry 'iggins, just you wait.

Oooooooh, 'enry 'iggins!
Just you wait until we're swimmin' in the sea!
Oooooooh, 'enry 'iggins!
And you get a cramp a little ways from me!

When you yell you're gonna drown,
I'll get dressed and go to town!
Oh, oh, oh, 'enry 'iggins!
Oh, oh, oh, 'enry 'iggins!
Just you wait!

One day I'll be famous! I'll be proper and prim!
Go to Saint James so often I will call it Saint Jim.

One evening the king will say, "Oh, Liza, old thing,
I want all of England your praises to sing.

[600] Ivi, pp. 48-49.

Next week, on the twentieth of May,
I proclaim Liza Doolittle Day!
All the people will celebrate the glory of you,
And whatever you wish and want I gladly will do".

"Thanks a lot, King," says I, in a manner well-bred;
"But all I want is 'enry 'iggins 'ead!"
"Done," says the King, "with a stroke.
Guard, run and bring in the bloke!"
Then they'll march you, 'enry 'iggins, to the wall;
And the King will tell me "Liza, sound the call."
As they raise their rifles higher,
I'll shout: "Ready! Aim! Fire!"

Oh, oh, oh, 'enry 'iggins!
Down you'll go!
'enry 'iggins!
Just you wait!

A.6 "Rain in Spain"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [601]

Eliza:

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

Higgins:

I think she's got it!

I think she's got it!

Eliza:

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

Higgins:

By George, she's got it!

By George, she's got it!

Now once again, where does it rain?

Eliza:

On the plain!

On the plain!

Higgins:

And where's that soggy plain?

Eliza:

In Spain! In Spain!

Eliza, Higgins & Pickering:

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

[601] Ivi, pp. 54-58.

Higgins:

In Hartford, Heresford, and Hampshire…

Eliza:

Hurricanes hardly happen.

Higgins:

"How kind of you to let me come!"

Eliza:

How kind of you to let me come!

Higgins:

Now once again, where does it rain?

Eliza:

On the plain! On the plain!

Higgins:

And where's that blasted plain?

Eliza:

In Spain! In Spain!

Eliza, Higgins & Pickering:

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

A.7 "I Could Have Danced All Night"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [602]

Eliza:

Bed! Bed! I couldn't go to bed!
My head's too light to try to set it down!
Sleep! Sleep! I couldn't sleep tonight.
Not for all the jewels in the crown!

I could have danced all night!
I could have danced all night!
And still have begged for more.
I could have spread my wings
And done a thousand things
I've never done before.

I'll never know
What made it so exciting;
Why all at once
My heart took flight.
I only know when he began to dance with me,
I could have danced, danced, danced, all night!

First Maid:

It's after three, now,

Second Maid:

Don't you agree, now,

Both Maids:

She ought to be in bed?

[602] Ivi, pp. 59-62.

Eliza:

I could have danced all night!
I could have danced all night!
And still have begged for more.
I could have spread my wings
And done a thousand things
I've never done before.

Maids:

You're tired out.

Second Maid:

You must be dead.

First Maid:

Your face is drawn.

Second Maid:

Your eyes are red.

Both Maids:

Now say goodnight, please.
Turn out the light, please.
It's really time
For you to be in bed.

First Maid:

Do come along,
Do as you're told.

Second Maid:

Or Mrs. Pearce
Is apt to scold.

Both Maids:

You're up too late, Miss,

And sure as fate, Miss,

You'll catch a cold.

Eliza:

I'll never know

What made it so exciting;

Why all at once

my heart took flight.

I only know when he

Began to dance with me.

I could have danced, danced danced, all night!

First Maid:

Put down your book.

Second Maid:

The work'll keep.

Both Maids:

Now settle down

And go to sleep.

Mrs. Pearce:

I understand, dear.

It's all been grand, dear.

But now it's time to sleep.

Eliza:

I could have danced all night,

I could have danced all night.

And still have begged for more.
I could have spread my wings
And done a thousand things
I've never done before.

I'll never know
What made it so exciting;
Why all at once
my heart took flight.
I only know when he
Began to dance with me
I could have danced, danced, danced, all night!

A.8 "Ascot Gavotte"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [603]

All:

Ev'ry duke and earl and peer is here;
Ev'ry one who should be here is here.
What a smashing, positively dashing
Spectacle…the Ascot op'ning day.

At the gate are all the horses
Waiting for the cue to fly away.
What a gripping, absolutely ripping
Moment at the Ascot op'ning day.

Pulses rushing!
Faces flushing!
Heart beats speed up!
I have never been so keyed up!

And second now
They'll begin to run.
Hark!
A bell is ringing,
They are springing
Forward
Look! It has begun!

What a frenzied moment that was!
Didn't they maintain an exhausting pace?
'Twas a thrilling, absolutely chilling
Running of the Ascot op'ning race!

[603] Ivi, p. 65.

A.9 "On the Street Where You Live"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [604]

Freddy:

When she mentioned how her aunt bit off the spoon,
She completely done me in.
And my heart went on a journey to the moon,
When she told about her father and the gin.
And I never saw a more enchanting farce,
Than that moment when she shouted, "move your bloomin'..."

Mrs. Pearce:

Yes, sir?

Freddy:

Is Miss Doolittle at home?

Mrs. Pearce:

Whom shall I say is calling?

Freddy:

Freddy Eynsford-Hill. If she doen't remember me, tell her
I'm the chap who was sniggering at her.

Mrs. Pearce:

Yes, sir.

Freddy:

And would you give her these?

Mrs. Pearce:

Yes, sir.

[604] Ivi, pp. 73-75.

Freddy:

You needn'y rush. I want to drink in this street where she lives.

Mrs. Pearce:

Yes, sir.

Freddy:

I have often walked down this street before;
But the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before.
All at once am I sev'ral stories high.
Knowing I'm on the street where you live.

Are there lilac trees in the heart of town?
Can you hear a lark in any other part of town?
Does enchantment pour out of ev'ry door?
No, it's just on the street where you live!

And oh! The towering feeling
Just to know somehow you are near!
The over-powering feeling
That any second you may suddenly appear!

People stop and stare. They don't bother me.
For there's nowhere else on earth that I would rather be.
Let the time go by; I won't care if I
Can be here on the street where you live.

A.10 "You Did It"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [605]

Pickering:

Tonight, old man, you did it!
You did it! You did it!
You said that you would do it,
And indeed you did.

I thought that you would rue it!
I doubted you'd do it!
But now I must admit it
That succeed you did.

You should get a medal
Or be even made a knight.

Higgins:

It was nothing. Really nothing.

Pickering:

All alone you hurdled
Ev'ry obstacle in sight.

Higgins:

Now, wait! Now, wait!
Give credit where it's due:
A lot of the glory goes to you.

Pickering:

But you're the one who did it,
Who did it, who did it.

[605] Ivi, pp. 87-90.

As sturdy as Gibraltar,
Not a second did you falter,
There's no doubt about it,
You did it!

I must have aged a year tonight.
At times I thought I'd die of fright.
Never was there a momentary lull.

Higgins:

Shortly after we came in,
I saw at once we'd easily win,
And after that I found it deadly dull.

Pickering:

You should have heard the ooh's and ah's;
Ev'ryone wondering who she was.

Higgins:

You'd think they'd never seen a lady before.

Pickering:

And when the Prince of Transylvania
Asked to meet her,
And gave his arm to lead her to the floor,
I said to him: "You did it!
You did it! You did it!"
They thought she was ecstatic
And so damn'd aristocratic,
And they never knew that
You did it!

Higgins:

Thank Heavens for Zoltan Karparthy.
If it weren't for him I would have died of boredom.
He was there, all right. And up to his old tricks.

Mrs. Pearce:
Karparthy? That dreadful Hungarian?
Was he there?

Higgins:
Yes.

That blackguard who uses the science of speech
More to blackmail and swindle than teach
He made it the devilish business of his…
"To find out who this Miss Doolittle is!"

Ev'ry time we looked around,
There he was, that hairy hound
from Budapest.
Never leaving us alone;
Never have I ever known
A ruder pest!
Fin'lly I decided it was foolish
Not to let him have his chance with her.
So I stepped aside and let him dance with her.

Oozing charm from ev'ry pore,
He oiled his way around the floor.
Ev'ry trick that he could play,
He used to strip her mask away.
And when at last the dance was done,
He glowed as if he knew he'd won!
And with a voice to eager,
And a smile too broad,

He announced to the hostess
That she was a fraud!

Mrs. Pearce:
No!

Higgins:
Yavol!

"Her English is too good," he said,
"Which clearly indicates that she is foreign."
"Whereas others are instructed in their native language,
English people aren'."
"And although she may have studied with an expert
Di'lectician and grammerian,
I can tell that she was born Hungarian!"
"Not only Hungarian – but - of royal blood! Ahe is a princess!"

Servants:
Congratulations, Professor Higgins!
For your glorious victory!
Congratulations, Professor Higgins!
You'll be mentioned in history!

One Servant & Pickering:
This ev'ning, Sir, you did it!
You did it! You did it!
You said that you would do it
And indeed you did!

This evening, Sir, you did it!
You did it! You did it!
We know that we have sait it,
But you did it and the credit

For it all
Belongd to
You!

Rest of Servants
(simultaneously to One Servant & Pickering):
Congratulations,
Professor Higgins!
For your glorious
Victory!

Congratulations,
Professor Higgins!
Sing a hail and
hallelujah!
Ev'ry bit of credit
For it all belongs to
you!

A.11 "Show Me"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe) [606]

Freddy:

Speak and the world is full of singing,
And I'm winging
Higher than the birds.

Touch and my heart begins to crumble,
The heaven's tumble,
Darling, and I'm...

Eliza:

Words! Words! Words!
I'm so sick of words!
I get words all day through;
First from him, now from you!
Is that all you blighters can do?

Don't talk of stars
Burning above.
If you're in love,
Show me!
Tell me no dreams
Filled with desire.
If you're on fire,
Show me!

Here we are together in the middle of the night!
Don't talk of spring!

[606] Ivi, pp. 98-99.

Just hold me tight!
Anyone who's ever been in love'll tell you that
This is no time for a chat!

Haven't your lips
Longed for my touch?
Don't say how much;
Show me! Show me!
Don't talk of love lasting through time.
Make me no undying vow.
Show me now.

Sing me no song!
Read me no rhyme!
Don't waste my time;
Show me!

Don't talk of June!
Don't talk of fall!
Don't talk at all:
Show me!

Never do I ever want to hear another word.
There isn't one I haven't heard.
Here we are together in what ought to be a dream;
Say one more word and I'll scream!

Haven't your arms
Hungered for mine?
Please don't expl'ine;
Show me! Show me!
Don't wait until wrinkles and lines
Pop out all over my brow.
Show me now!

A.12 "Get Me to the Church on Time"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe)[607]

Jamie, Higgins & Male Chorus:

There's just a few more hours,
That's all the time you've got.
A few more hours
Before they tie the knot.

Doolittle:

There are drinks and girls all over London,
and I've gotta track 'em down in just a few more hours…
I'm getting married in the mornin'!
Ding, dong! The bells are gonna chime!
Pull out the stopper,
Let's have a whopper,
But get me to the church on time!

I gotta be there in the mornin',
Spruced up and lookin' in me prime.
Girls, come and kiss me,
Show how you'll miss me,
But get me to the church on time!

If I am dancin'
Roll up the floor.
If I am whistlin'
<u>Whewt</u> me out the door!

For I'm getting' married in the mornin'.
Ding, dong! The bells are gonna chime.
Kick up an rumpus,

[607] Ivi, pp. 104-106.

But don't lose the compass;
And get me to the church,
Get me to the church,
For Gawd's sake, get me to the church on time!

Doolittle and Everyone:
I'm getting married in the morning.
Ding, dong!Tthe bells are gonna chime!

Doolittle:
Drug me or jail me,
Stamp me and mail me.

All:
But get me to the church on time!

I gotta be there in the mornin'
Spruced up and lookin' in me prime.

Doolittle:
Some bloke who's able
Lift up the table.

All:
And get em to the church on time.

If I am flyin'
Then shoot me down.

Doolittle:
If I am wooin',
Get her out of town!

All:

For I'm getting' married in the mornin',

Ding, dong! The bells are gonna chime!

Doolittle:

Feather and tar me,

Call out the Army;

But get me to the church,

All:

Get me to the church,

Doolittle:

For Gawd's sake, get me to the church on time!

Higgins:

Starlight is reelin' home to bed now.

Mornin' is smearin' up the sky.

All:

London is wakin',

Daylight is breakin';

Good luck, old chum.

Good health, goodbye.

Doolittle:

I'm getting' married in the mornin'

Ding, dong! The bells are gonna chime!

Hail and salute me,

Then haul off and boot me.

And get me to the church,

Get me to the church,

For Gawd's sake, get me to the church on time.

A.13 "A Hymn to Him"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe)[608]

Higgins:

What in all of heaven could have promted her to go?
After such a triumph at the ball?
What could have depress'd her;
What could have possess'd her?
I cannot understand the wretch at all!

Women are irrational, that's all there is to that!
There heads are full of cotton, hay, and rags!
They're nothing but exasperating, irritating,
vacillating, calculating, agitating,
Maddening, and infuriating hags!

Pickering, why can't a woman be more like a man?
Yes...
Why can't a woman be more like a man?
Men are so honest, so thoroughly square;
Eternally noble, historic'ly fair;
Who, when you win, will always give your back a pat.
Why can't a woman be like that?

Why does ev'ryone do what the others do?
Can't a woman learn to use her head?
Why do they do ev'rything their mothers do?
Why don't they grow up like their father instead?

Why can't a woman take after a man?
Men are so pleasant, so easy to please;

[608] Ivi, pp. 110-112.

Whenever you're with them, you're always at ease.
Would you be slighted if I didn't speak for hours?

Pickering:
Of course not!

Higgins:
Would you be livid if I had a drink or two?

Pickering:
Nonsense.

Higgins:
Would you be wounded if I never sent you flowers?

Pickering:
Never.

Higgins:
Why can't a woman be like you?

One man in a million may shout a bit.
Now and then there's one with slight defects;
One, perhaps, whose truthfulness you doubt a bit.
But by and large we are a marvelous sex!

Why can't a woman take after like a man?
Men are so friendly, good-natured and kind.
A better companion you never will find.

If I were hours late for dinner, would you bellow?

Pickering:
Of course not!

Higgins:

If I forgot your silly birthday, would you fuss?

Pickering:

Nonsense.

Higgins:

Would you complain if I took out another fellow?

Pickering:

Never.

Higgins:

Why can't a woman be like us?

Why can't a woman be more like a man?
Men are so decent, such regular chaps.
Ready to help you through any mishaps.
Ready to buck you up whenever you are glum.
Why can't a woman be a chum?

Why is thinking something women never do?
Why is logic never even tried?
Straight'ning up their hair is all they ever do.
Why don't they straighten up the mess that's inside?

Why can't a woman behave like a man?
If I was a woman who'd been to a ball,
Been hailed as a princess by one and by all;
Would I start weeping like a bathtub overflowing?
And carry on as if my home were in a tree?
Would I run off and never tell me where I'm going?
Why can't a woman be like me?

A.14 Without You

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe)[609]

Eliza:

What a fool I was! What dominated fool!
to think that you were the earth and the sky.
What a fool I was! What an addlepated fool!
What a mutton-headed dolt was I!
No, my reverberated friend,
you are not the beginning and the end!

Higgins:

You impudent hussy! There isn't an idea in your head or a word in your mouth that I haven't put there!

Eliza:

There'll be spring ev'ry year without you.
England still will be here without you.
There'll be fruit on the tree;
And a shore by the sea;
There'll be crumpets and tea
without you.

Art and music will thrive without you.
Somehow Keats will survive without you.
And there still will be rain
on that plain down in Spain,
even that will remain
without you.
I can do
without you.

[609] Ivi, pp. 120-122.

You, dear friend, who talk so well,
You can go to Hartford, Hereford and Hampshire.

They can still rule the land without you.
Windsor Castle will stand without you.
And without much ado
we can all muddle through
without you.

Higgins:
You brazen wretch!

Eliza:
Without your pulling it, the tide comes in;
without your twirling it, the Earth can spin.
Without your pushing them, the clouds roll by.
If they can do without you, ducky, so can I!

I shall not feel alone without you.
I can stand on my own without you.
So go back in your shell,
I can do bloody well
Without...

Higgins:
By George, I really did it!
I did it! I did it!
I said I'd make a woman
and indeed I did!

I knew that I could do it!
I knew it! I knew it!
I said I'd make a woman

and succeed I did!

Eliza, you're magnificent! Five minutes ago you were a mill-stone round my neck. Now you're a tower of strength, a consort battleship! I like you like this!

A.15 "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face"

(Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe)[610]

Higgins:

Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn!
I've grown accustomed to her face.
She almost makes the day begin.
I've grown accustomed to the tune
She whistles night and noon.
Her smiles, her frowns,
Her ups, her downs
Are second nature to me now;
Like breathing out and breathing in.
I was serenely independent and content before we met;
Surely I could always be that way again - and yet
I've grown accustomed to her look;
Accustomed to her voice:
Accustomed to her face.

Marry Freddy! What an infantile idea! What a heartless,
wicked, brainless thing to do! But she'll regret, she'll regret it.
It's doomed before they even take the vow!

I can see her now:
Mrs. Freddy Eynsford-Hill,
In a wretched little flat above a store.
I can see her now:
not a penny in the till,
And a bill collector beating at the door.

She'll try to teach the things I taught her.
And end up selling flow'rs instead;

[610] Ivi, pp. 124-126.

Begging for her bread and water,
While her husband has his breakfast in bed!

In a year or so,
when she's prematurely grey,
And the blossom in her cheek has turned to chalk,
She'll come home, and lo!
He'll have upped and run away,
With a social climbing heiress from New York!

Poor Eliza!
How simply frightful!
How humiliating!
How delightful!

How poignant it'll be on that inevitable night
When she hammers on my door in tears and rags.
Miserable and lonely, repentant and contrite.
Will I take her in or hurl her to the wolves?
Give her kindness, or the treatment she deserves?
Will I take her back, or throw the baggage out?

I'm a most forgiving man,
The sort who never could, ever would,
Take a position and staunchly never budge.
Just a most forgiving man.

But I shall never take her back!
If she were crawling on her knees!
Let her promise to atone!
Let her shiver, let her moan!
I'll slam the door and let the hell-cat freeze!

Marry Freddy! Ha!

But I'm so used to hear her say,
"Good morning" ev'ry day.
Her joys, her woes,
Her highs, her lows,
Are second nature to me now;
Like breathing out and breathing in.
I'm very grateful she's a woman
And so easy to forget;
Rather like a habit
One can always break - and yet,
I've grown accustomed to the trace
Of something in the air;
Accustomed to her…
Face.

Appendix B - *Once*

B.1 "Leave"

(Guy)

"I can't wait forever"
Is all that you said
Before you stood up
But you won't disappoint me
I can do that myself
But I'm glad that you've come
Now if you don't mind

Leave, leave
And free yourself at the same time
Leave, leave
I don't understand, you've already gone

And I hope you feel better
Now that it's out
What took you so long?
And the truth has a habit
Of falling out of your mouth
Well, now that it's come
If you don't mind

Leave, leave
And please yourself at the same time
Leave, leave
Let go of my hand
You said what you came to now
Leave, leave
Let go of my hand

You said what you have to now

Leave, leave

Da, da

Oh, leave, leave

Let go of my hands

You said what you have to now

Leave, leave

B.2 “Falling Slowly”

(Boy and Girl)

I don’t know you but I want you
All the more for that
Words fall through me and always fool me
And I can’t react

And games that never amount
To more than they’re meant
Will play themselves out

Take this sinking boat and point it home
We’ve still got time
Raise your hopeful voice, you have the choice
You’ve made it now

Falling slowly, eyes that know me
And I can’t go back
And moods that take me and erase me
And I’m painted black

Well, you have suffered enough
And warred with yourself
It’s time that you won

Take this sinking boat and point it home
We’ve still got time
Raise your hopeful voice, you have the choice
You’ve made it now

Take this sinking boat and point it home
We’ve still got time

Raise your hopeful voice, you have the choice
You've made it now

Falling slowly, sing your melody
I'll sing along
Call and I'll sing along

B.3 “The Moon”

(Guy – Girl contributes to the choral section)

Cut the bonds with the moon
And let the dogs gather
Burn the gauze in the spoon
And suck the poison up

And bleed

Shut the door to the moon
And let the birds gather
Play no more with the fool
And let the souls wander

And bleed
From the soul

If you don’t slow down, slow down
If you don’t slow down, slow

Cut the bonds with the moon

And watch the dogs gather

B.4 “Ej Padá, Padá Rosička”

(Girl)

Baruška:

Zpívat!

Men:

Ej padá, padá rosička

Women:

Ej padá, padá rosička

Men:

Ej padá, padá rosička

Women:

Spaly by moje očička

Men:

Spaly by moje

Women:

Spaly by aj tvoje

Men:

Spaly by ony oboje

All:

Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey

Men:

Aj, prší, prší napo?ád

Women:

Zkažte pozdravit napořád

Men:

Zkažte pozdravení

Women:

Mému potěšení

Men:

Že už ho musím zanechat

Aj, prší, prší napořád

Women:

Zkažte pozdravit napořád

Men:

Zkažte pozdravení

Women:

Mému potěšení

Men:

Že už ho musím zanechat

All:

Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey

B.5 “If You Want Me”

(Girl – Boy contributes to the choral section)

Are you really here?
Or am I dreaming?
I can’t tell dreams from truth
For it’s been so long
Since I have seen you
I can hardly remember your face anymore

But when I get really lonely
And the distance causes only silence
I think of you smiling
With pride in your eyes, a lover that sighs

If you want me
Satisfy me
If you want me
Satisfy me

Are you really sure
That you believe me
When others say I lie?
I wonder if you could
Ever despise me
When you know, I really try

To be a better one to satisfy you
For you’re everything to me
And I do what you ask me
If you let me be free

If you want me
Satisfy me

If you want me

Satisfy me

If you want me

Satisfy me

If you want me

Satisfy me

B.6 “Broken-Hearted Hoover Fixer Sucker Guy”

(Guy)

Ten years ago I fell in love with an Irish girl
She took my heart
But she went and screwed some guy that she knew
And now I’m in Dublin with a broken heart
Oh, broken-hearted hoover fixer sucker guy
Oh, broken-hearted hoover fixer sucker, sucker guy
One day I’ll go there and win her once again
But until then I’m just a sucker of a guy

B.7 "Say It to Me Now"

(Boy)

Scratching at the surface now
And I'm trying hard to work it out
And so much has gone misunderstood
And this mystery only leads to doubt
And I didn't understand
When you reached down to take my hand

And if you have something to say
You'd better say it now

'Cause this is what you've waited for
Your chance to even up the score
And as these shadows fall on me now
I'll win somehow

'Cause I'm picking up the message, Lord
And I'm closer than I've ever been before
So if you have something to say
Say it to me now
Just say it to me now

B.8 "Abandoned in Bandon"

(Bank Manager)

In County Cork in the country green
In a lonesome town called Bandon
A boy lives there and he dreams of County Clare
The holiday that he just had done

Oh, he walked over hills and skipped over rivers
All the time his hand in his love
But his love's not here and never close at hand
His heart's abandoned in Bandon

Two counties. One love
Too many complications
And not enough hand in glove
Not enough hand in glove

He took a dive outta town an' kept on driving'
His Western love – his navigation
But the car broke down outside of Castletown
He pulled into the gas station

He dialed that name and imagined them kissin'
As that sweet Clare voice filled his ears
But his love's not here and never close at hand
His car's all bust 'cause he bust the gears

Two counties. One love
Too many complications
And not enough hand in glove
Not enough hand in glove
Abandoned in Bandon

B.9 "Gold"

(Guy – Girl contributes to the choral section)

And I love her so
I wouldn't trade her for gold
I'm walking on moon beams
I was born with a silver spoon

And I'm gonna be me
I'm gonna be free
Well, I'm walking on moon beams
And staring out to sea

If a door be closed
Then a road for home start building
And tear your curtains down
For sunlight is like gold

And you better be you
Do what you can do
When you're walking on moon beams
Staring out to sea

'Cause if your skin was soil
How long do you think before they start digging?
If your life was gold
How long would you think you'd stay livin'?

Hey!
Hey!

And I love her so
I wouldn't trade her for gold

B.10 “Sleeping”

(Boy)

Are you sleeping?
Still dreaming?
Still drifting off alone.
I’m not leaving with this feeling
So you’d better best be told
And how in the world did you come
To be such a lazy love?

It’s so simple, and fitting
The path that you are on
We’re not talking, there’s no secrets
There’s just a note that you have gone
And all that you’ve ever owned
Is packed in the hall to go

And how am I supposed to live without you?
A wrong word said in anger and you were gone

I’m not listening for signals
It’s all dust now on the shelf
Are you still working? Still counting?
Still buried in yourself?
And how in the world did we come
To have such an absent love?

And how am I supposed to live without you?
A wrong word said in anger and you were gone
And how am I supposed to live without anyone?

And how in the world did you come

To be such a lazy love?

And where did you go?

B.11 “When Your Mind’s Made Up”

(Boy - Girl contributes to the choral section)

So, if you want something
And you call, call
Then I’ll come running
To fight
and I’ll be at your door
When there’s nothing worth running for

When your mind’s made up
When your mind’s made up
There’s no point trying to change it
When your mind’s made up
When your mind’s made up
There’s no point trying to stop it, you see

You’re just like everyone
When the shit falls
All you wanna do is run away
And hide all by yourself
When there’s far from, there’s nothing else

When your mind’s made up
When your mind’s made up
There’s no point trying to change it
When your mind’s made up
When your mind’s made up
There’s no point even talking
When your mind’s made up
When your mind’s made up

There’s no point trying to fight it
When your mind’s, your mind

Love, love
There's no point trying to change it
When your love

So if you ever want something
And you call, call
Then I'll come running

B.12 "The Hill"

(Girl)

Walking up the hill tonight
When you have closed your eyes
I wish I didn't have to make
All those mistakes and be wise

Please try to be patient
And know that I'm still learning
I'm sorry that you have to see
The strength inside me burning

But where are you my angel now?
Don't you see me crying?
And I know that you can't do it all
But you can't say I'm not trying

I'm on my knees in front of him
But he doesn't seem to see me
With all his troubles on his mind
He's looking right through me

And I'm letting myself down
By satisfying you
And I wish that you could see
That I have my troubles too

Looking at you sleeping
I'm with the man I know
I'm sitting here weeping
While the hours pass so slow

And I know that in the morning
I'll have to let you go
And you'll be just a man
Once I used to know

But for these past few days
Someone I don't recognize
This isn't all my fault
When will you realize?

Looking at you leaving
I'm looking for a sign

B.13 "Trying to Pull Myself Away"

(Guy)

Breaking up in the station, a final train
I don't even know if I'll ever see you again
Is it a choice that we even have?

Bang, bang down on piano 'til I smash the keys
Living alone with the melodies
Everything's gone and I don't know where

And the rule of thumb don't apply anymore
'Cause the house is burning

I'm trying to pull myself away
I'm caught in a pattern and I can't escape
I'm trying to pull myself away

Lately when I get lost there's this thing I know
Even the dogs have somewhere to go
Everything comes if you just let it be

Work, work, brighten the corners that'll never see
Untangle the thoughts that you know what they mean
I hope that the answer didn't come too late

And the rule of thumb don't apply on me
'Cause the tables are turning

I'm trying to pull myself away
I'm caught in a pattern and I can't escape
I'm trying to pull myself away
Caught in a pattern and I can't escape, can't escape

Everything's gone, everything's gone, everything's gone
Trying to pull myself away
Everything's gone, everything's gone, everything's gone

Everything's gone, everything's gone, everything's gone
Everything's gone, everything's gone, everything's gone
Trying to pull myself away (Everything's gone, everything's gone, everything's gone)
Everything's gone, everything's gone

B. 14 "All the Way Down"

(Guy)

You have broken me
All the way down
Down upon my knees

And you have broken me
All the way now
You'll be the last, you'll see

And some fight you gave
When I pushed you away from me

And every morning
When you're turning
I'll be far to sea

And you have broken me
All the way down
You'll be the last, you'll see (Oh, no)
(Da dum da, da da)

And what chance had we got
When you missed every shot for me

And in the morning
When you're turning
I'll be out of reach
And in the darkness
When you find this
I'll be far to sea

And you have broken me

All the way down
You'll be the last, you'll see

Oh da
Da da da
Da da dum da, da

B. 15 “Fallen from the Sky”

(Guy)

You must have fallen from the sky
You must have shattered on the wrong way
You brought so many to the light
And now you’re by yourself

There comes a point in every fight
Where giving up seems like the only way
When everyone has said goodbye
And now you’re on your own

And if you need somewhere to fall apart
Somewhere to fall apart

When the rules of Cain
The rights you made
The hours did crawl
For those to blame
The broken glass
The fool that asked
The moving arrow to stop

You must have fallen from the sky
You must have come here in the pouring rain
You took so many through the light
And now you’re on your own

And if you need somewhere to fall apart
Somewhere to fall apart

Well the ruins of man
The bloody rag

Be the fool the bull
The powdered hag
The nights that make
The rattle rag
The wolves that follow the outed man
The falling star
The way we are
Divine
The rules that never ever multiply

You must have fallen from the sky
You must have come here on the wrong way
You came among us every time
But now you're on your own

And if you need somewhere to fall apart
Somewhere to fall apart
Well they call you saint
The basket case
The rules of thumb
You have to break
The raging skull
The rag to the bull
The nails that drag
In either hand
Well I will make
My work of that
I know this place
I know this task
You must have fallen from the sky

B.16 "Lies"

(Guy, Girl)

I think it's time, we give it up
And figure out what's stopping us
From breathing easy, and talking straight
The way is clear if you're ready now
The volunteer is slowing down
And taking time to save himself

The little cracks they escalated
And before we knew it was too late
For making circles and telling lies

You're moving too fast for me
And I can't keep up with you
Maybe if you slowed down for me
I could see you're only telling
Lies, lies, lies
Breaking us down with your
Lies, lies, lies
When will you learn

The little cracks they escalated
And before you know it is too late
For making circles and telling lies

You're moving too fast for me
And I can't keep up with you
Maybe if you'd slowed down for me
I could see you're only telling
Lies, lies, lies
Breaking us down with your
Lies, lies, lies

When will you learn

So plant the thought and watch it grow
Wind it up and let it go

Appendix C - *Six: The Musical*

C.1 "Ex-Wifes"

(Company Number)

Catherine Of Aragon:

Divorced

Anne Boleyn:

Beheaded

Jane Seymour:

Died

Anne Of Cleves:

Divorced

Katherine Howard:

Beheaded

Catherine Parr:

Survived

Catherine Of Aragon:

And tonight, we are…

All:

Live

Catherine Of Aragon:

Listen up, let me tell you a story

Anne Boleyn:

A story that you think
You've heard before

Jane Seymour:
We know you know our names
And our fame and our faces

Anne Of Cleves:
Know all about the glories
And the disgraces

Katherine Howard:
I'm done 'cause all this time
I've been just one word
In a stupid rhyme

Catherine Parr:
So I picked up a pen and a microphone

All:
History's about to get overthrown

Catherine Of Aragon:
Divorced

Anne Boleyn:
Beheaded

Jane Seymour:
Died

Anne Of Cleves:
Divorced

Katherine Howard:

Beheaded

Catherine Parr:

Survived

All:

But just for you tonight

We're divorced, beheaded

LIVE!

Welcome to the show

To the histo-remix

Switching up the flow

As we add the prefix

Ev'rybody knows that

We used to be six wives

Raising up the roof

'Til we hit the ceiling

Get ready for the truth

That we'll be revealing

Everybody knows

That we used to be six wives

...but now we're ex-wives

Catherine Of Aragon:

Make some noise!

All you ever hear

And read about

Anne Boleyn:

Is our ex and the way it ended

Jane Seymour:

But a pair doesn't beat a royal flush

Anne Of Cleves:

You're gonna find out

How we got unfriended

Katherine Howard:

Tonight we gonna do ourselves justice

'Cause we're taking you to court

Catherine Parr:

Ev'ry Tudor Rose has its thorns

And you're gonna hear 'em live in consort

Catherine Of Aragon:

Divorced

Anne Boleyn:

Beheaded

Jane Seymour:

Died

Anne Of Cleves:

Divorced

Katherine Howard:

Beheaded

Catherine Parr:

Survived

All:

But just for you tonight

We're divorced, beheaded

Live!

Welcome to the show

To the histo-remix

Switching up the flow

As we add the prefix

Ev'rybody knows that

We used to be six wives

Dancing to the beat

Till the break of day. Once

We're done, we'll start again

Like it's the Renaissance

Ev'rybody knows

That we used to be six wives

...but now we're ex-wives

Catherine Of Aragon:

Remember us from your PBS?

Others:

Divorced

Catherine Of Aragon:

My name is Catherine Of Aragon

Was married 24 years, I'm a paragon

Of royalty, my loyalty is to the Vatican

So if you try to dump me

You won't try that again

Others:

Beheaded

Anne Boleyn:

I'm that Boleyn girl

And I'm up next, see

I broke England from the Church

Yeah, I'm that sexy

Why did I lose my head?

Well my sleeves may be green

But my lipstick's red!

Others:

Died

Jane Seymour:

Jane Seymour, "the only one he truly loved"

Others:

Rude

Jane Seymour:

When my son was newly born

I died, but I'm not what I seem

Or am I?

Stick around and you'll

Suddenly see more...

[All:]

Divorced

Anne Of Cleves:

Ich bin Anna of Cleves

Others:

Ja?

Anne Of Cleves:

When he saw my portrait he was like...

Others:

"Ja!"

Anne Of Cleves:

But I "didn't look as good

As I did in my pic"

Funny how we all discuss that

But never Henry's little...

Katherine Howard:

Prick up your ears, I'm the Katherine

Who lost her head

Others:

Beheaded

Katherine Howard:

For my promiscuity outside of wed

Lock up your husbands

Lock up your sons

K Howard is here

And the fun's begun

Others:

Survived

Catherine Parr:

Five down, I'm the final wife

I saw him to the end of his life

I'm the survivor, Cath'rine Parr

I bet you wanna know how I got this far

I said I bet you wanna know

How we got this far

All:

Do you wanna know how we got this far? Then

Welcome to the show

To the histo-remix

Switching up the flow

As we add the prefix

Ev'rybody knows that

We used to be six wives

Get your hands up

Get this party buzzing

You want a queen Bee

Well there's half a dozen

Ev'rybody knows that

We used to be six wives

But now we're ex-wives!

One

Two

Three

Four

Five

SIX!

C.2 “No Way”

(Catherine Of Aragon)

Catherine Of Aragon:

No no no no no no no way

There’s no way

You must agree that baby

In all the time I’ve been by your side

I’ve never lost control

No matter how many times I knew you lied

Have my golden rule

Got to keep my cool

Yeah, baby

All:

You know she’s got to keep her cool

Catherine Of Aragon:

And even though you’ve had your fun

Running around with some

All:

Pretty young thing

Catherine Of Aragon:

And even though you’ve had one son

With someone who don’t own a

All:

wedding ring

Catherine Of Aragon:

No matter what I heard

I didn’t say a word, no, baby

All:

You know she never said a word

Catherine Of Aragon:

I put up with your

All:

Shh

Catherine Of Aragon:

Like ev'ry single day

All:

Woah, woah

Catherine Of Aragon:

But now it's time to

All:

Shh

And listen when I say

You must think that I'm crazy

You wanna replace me baby

There's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

Catherine Of Aragon:

If you think for a moment

I'd grant you annulment, just hold up

There's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

Catherine Of Aragon:

No way

No way

There's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

Catherine of Aragon:

No way

No way

There's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

Catherine of Aragon:

There's no way

So you read a bible verse that I'm cursed

'Cause I was your brothers wife

You say it's a pity 'cause quoting leviticus

I'll "end up kiddyless" all my life

Well, daddy, weren't you there

When I gave birth to Mary?

You don't remember?

Others:

Daughters are so easy to forget

Catherine Of Aragon:

You're just so full of

All:

Shh

Catherine Of Aragon:

Must think that I'm naïve

All:

Woah, woah

Catherine Of Aragon:

I won't back down won't

All:

Shh

Catherine Of Aragon:

And no I'll never leave

You must think that I'm crazy

You wanna replace me baby

There's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

Catherine Of Aragon:

If you thought it'd be funny to

Send me to a nunnery, honey there's

All:

No way

No way

No way

Catherine Of Aragon:

There's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

No way

No way

Catherine Of Aragon:

There's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

Catherine Of Aragon:

There's no way

Dance it out, girls!

Hey

Give it up for Maria on the drums!

You've got me down on my knees

Please tell me what you think I've done wrong

Been humble, been loyal, I've tried

To swallow my pride all along

If you can just explain

A single thing I've done to cause you pain, I'll go

No?

You've got nothing to say

I'm not going away

There's no way

You must think that I'm crazy

You wanna replace me baby

There's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

Catherine Of Aragon:

You made me your wife

So I'll be queen to the end of my life

No yeah yeah!

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n- no way

No way

No way

Catherine Of Aragon:

No no no no no no no no no no no no no no no way

All:

No way

No way

There's no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no way

Catherine Of Aragon:

There's no way

C.3 “Don’t Lose Ur Head”

(Anne Boleyn)

Anne Boleyn:

Grew up in the French court

Oui oui bonjour

Life was a chore

So

Others:

She set sail

Anne Boleyn:

1522 came straight to the UK

All the British dudes lame

Others:

Epic fail!

Ooh Ooh

Anne Boleyn:

I wanna dance and sing

Others:

Politics

Anne Boleyn:

Not my thing

Others:

Ooh ooh

Anne Boleyn:

But then I met the king

And soon my daddy said
"You should try and get ahead!"
He wanted me, ha! Obviously
Kept messaging me like every day
Couldn't be better then he sent me a letter
And who am I kidding
I was prêt à manger

Others:
Ooh ohh

Anne Boleyn:
Sent a reply

Others:
Ooh ohh

Anne Boleyn:
Just saying "Hi"

Others:
Ooh ohh

Anne Boleyn:
"You're a nice guy
I'll think about it maybe
XO baby"

Others:
Uh-oh

Anne Boleyn:
Here we go

Others:

You sent him kisses?

Anne Boleyn:

I didn't know I would move in with his missus

Others:

What?!

Anne Boleyn:

Get a life!

Others:

You're living with his wife!

Anne Boleyn:

Like, what was I meant to do?
Sorry, not sorry 'bout what I said
I'm just trying to have some fun
Don't worry, don't worry
Don't lose your head
I didn't mean to hurt anyone
L-O-L Say "Oh, well!"
Or go to hell!
I'm sorry, not sorry 'bout what I said
Don't lose your head

Three in the bed
And the little one said
"If you wanna be wed

All:

Make up your mind!"

Anne Boleyn:

Her or me, chum

Don't wanna be some

Girl in a threesome

Are you blind?

Others:

Ooh ooh

Anne Boleyn:

Don't be bitter

Others:

Ooh ooh

Anne Boleyn:

'Cause I'm fitter

Others:

Ooh ooh

Anne Boleyn:

Why hasn't it hit her?

He doesn't wanna bang you

Somebody hang you

Others:

Uh-oh

Anne Boleyn:

Here we go

Others:

Your comment went viral

Anne Boleyn:

I didn't really mean it

But rumours spiral

Others:

Wow Anne, way to make the country hate you!

Anne Boleyn:

Mate, what was I meant to do?

Sorry, not sorry about what I said

I'm just trying to have some fun

Don't worry, don't worry

Don't lose your head

I didn't mean to hurt anyone

L-O-L Say "Oh, well!"

Or go to hell!

I'm sorry, not sorry 'bout what I said

Don't lose your head

Tried to elope

But the Pope said "Nope!"

Our only hope was

Others:

Henry

Anne Boleyn:

He got a promotion

Caused a commotion

Set in motion

Others:

The C of E

The rules

Anne Boleyn:

Were so outdated

Us two wanted to get X-rated

Others:

Soon

Excommunicated

Anne Boleyn:

Ev'rybody chill

It's totes God's will

Hols up! Let me tell you how it went down.

Henry's out every night on the town

Just sleeping around like

Others:

"What the hell?"

Anne Boleyn:

If that's how it's gonna be

Maybe I'll flirt with a guy or three

Just to

Others:

make him jel

Anne Boleyn:

Henry finds out and he goes mental

He screams and shouts like

Others:

So judgemental!

Anne Boleyn:

"You damned witch"

Bro, just shut up!

I wouldn't be such a b...

If you could get it up

Others:

Uh-oh

Anne Boleyn:

Here we go

Others:

Is that what you said?

Anne Boleyn:

And now he's going 'round like

"Off with her head!!"

Others:

No!

Anne Boleyn:

Yeah, I'm pretty sure he means it

Others:

Seems it

Anne Boleyn:

What was I meant to do?

Others:

What was she meant to do?

Anne Boleyn:

Like, what was I meant to do?

Others:

What was she meant to do?

Anne Boleyn:

No, but what was I meant to do?

Others:

What was she meant to do?

Anne Boleyn:

Oh my gosh guys seriously he actually wants to chop my head off!

I mean…I guess he just really liked my head.

5, 6, 7, 8!

All:

Sorry, not sorry about what I said

Anne Boleyn:

I'm just trying to have some fun

All:

Don't worry, don't worry

Don't lose your head

Anne Boleyn:

I didn't mean to hurt anyone

All:

L-O-L Say! Oh, well!!

Or go to hell!

Anne Boleyn:

Sorry, not sorry about what I said

Others:

Sorry, not sorry about what she said

All:

Sorry, not sorry about what I said

Anne Boleyn:

Don't lose your head

C.4 "Heart of Stone"

(Jane Seymour)

Jane Seymour:

You've got a good heart
But I know it changes.
A restless tide, untameable.
You came my way,
And I knew a storm could come too.
You'd lift me high, or let me fall.

But I took your hand,
Promised I'd withstand
Any blaze you blew my way.
'Cause something inside
It solidified
And I knew I'd always stay.

You can build me up,
You can tear me down,
You can try but I'm unbreakable.
You can do your best,
But I'll stand the test.
You'll find that I'm unshakable.
When the fire's burnt,
When the wind has blown,
When the water's dried,
You'll still find stone.
My heart of stone.

You say we're perfect,
A perfect family.
You hold us close, for the world to see.
And when I say "you're the only one I've ever loved"

I mean those words truthfully.

But I know, without my son
Your love could disappear.
And though it isn't fair
But I don't care
'Cause my love will still be here.

You can build me up,
You can tear me down,
You can try but I'm unbreakable.
You can do your best,
But I'll stand the test.
You'll find that I'm unshakable.
When the fire's burnt,
When the wind has blown,
When the water's dried
You'll still find stone.
My heart of stone.

Soon I'll have to go,
I'll never see him grow.
But I hope my son will know
He'll never be alone,
'Cause like a river runs dry
And leaves its scars behind.
I'll be by your side
'Cause my love is set in stone

Yeah (+ Ad Lib.)

Others:
You can build me up,
You can tear me down,

You can try but I'm unbreakable.
You can do your best,
But I'll stand the test.
You'll find that I'm unshakable.

All:
The fire's burnt,
The wind has blown,
The water's dried,

Jane Seymour:
You'll still find stone
Ooh Yeah!
My heart of stone.

All:
You can build me up,
You can tear me down,
You can try but I'm unbreakable.
You can do your best,
But I'll stand the test.
You'll find that I'm unshakable.
The fire's burnt,
The wind has blown,
The water's dried,

Jane Seymour:
You'll still find stone
My heart of stone.

C.5 “Haus of Holbein”

(Company Number)

Anna of Cleves:

Welcome to the house

All:

To the Haus of Holbein

Ja, ooh ja, das ist gut

Ooh ja, ja

The Haus of Holbein

Catherine Parr:

Hans Holbein goes around the world

Catherine of Aragon:

Painting all of the beautiful girls

Jane Seymour:

From Spain,

Katherine Howard:

To France

Anna of Cleves:

And Germany

All:

The king chooses one

Anne Boleyn:

But which one will it be?

Catherine of Aragon:

You bring the corsets

Anne Boleyn:

We'll bring the cinches

Anna of Cleves:

No one wants a waist over nine inches

Jane Seymour:

So what the make up contains lead poison?

Katherine Howard:

At least your complexion will bring all the boys in

All:

Ignore the fear and you'll be fine

We'll turn this vier into a nine

So just say "ja" and don't say "nein"

'Cause now you're in the house

In the Haus of Holbein!

Ja, ooh ja, das ist gut

Ooh ja, ja

The Haus of Holbein

Anne Boleyn:

We must make sure the princesses look great

When their time comes for the Holbein portrait

Catherine of Aragon:

We know what all the best inventions are

To hold everything up

Katherine Howard:

Ja, it's wunderbar

Jane Seymour:

For blonder hair, then you just add a

Magical ingredient (from your bladder)

Catherine Parr:

Try these heels, so high it's naughty

Jane Seymour:

But we cannot guarantee that you'll still walk at forty

All:

Ignore the fear and you'll be fine

We'll turn this vier into a nine

So just say "ja" and don't say "nein"

'Cause now you'xre in the house

In the Haus of Holbein!

Ooh ja, das ist gut

Ooh ja, ja

The Haus of Holbein

C.6 “Get Down”

(Anne Of Cleves)

Anne Of Cleves:

Sittin’ here all alone

On a throne

In a palace that I happen to own

Bring me some pheasant

Keep it on the bone

Fill my goblet up to the brim

Sippin’ on mead and I spill it on my dress

With the gold lace trim

Not very prim and proper

Can’t make me stop

I wanna go hunting, any takers?

I’m not fake ‘cause I’ve got acres and acres

Paid for with my own riches

Where my hounds at? Release the bitches!

Others:

Woof

Anne Of Cleves:

Ev’ryday

Head back for a round of croquet, yeah

‘Cause I’m a player

And tomorrow, I’ll hit replay

All:

You

Anne Of Cleves:

You said that I tricked ya

All:

'Cause I

Anne Of Cleves:

I didn't look like my profile picture

All:

Too

Too bad I don't agree

So I'm gonna hang it up for ev'ryone to see

And you can't stop me 'cause

I'm the queen of the castle

Get down, you dirty rascal

Get down

Get down

Get down you dirty rascal

Get down

Get down

'Cause I'm the queen of the castle

When I get bored

I go to court

Pull up outside in my carriage

Don't got no marriage

So I have a little flirt with the footman

As he takes my furr

As you were

Making my way to the dance floor

Some boys make an advance

I ignore them

'Cause my jam comes on the lute

Lookin' cute

All:

Das ist gut

Anne Of Cleves:

All eyes on me

All:

No criticism

Anne Of Cleves:

I look more rad than

All:

Lutheranism

Anne Of Cleves:

Dance so hard that I'm causin' a sensation

Okay ladies, let's get in reformation

All:

You

Anne Of Cleves:

You said that I tricked ya

All:

'Cause I

Anne Of Cleves:

I didn't look like my profile picture

All:

Too

Anne Of Cleves:

Too bad I don't agree

So I'm gonna hang it up for ev'ryone to see

And you can't stop me 'cause

I'm the queen of the castle

Get down, you dirty rascal

Get down

Get down you dirty rascal

Get down

Get down

'Cause I'm the queen of the castle

Now I ain't sayin' I'm a gold digger

But check my prenup, and go figure

Got

All:

Gold chains

Anne Of Cleves:

Symbolic of my faith to the higher power

In the

All:

Fast lane

Anne Of Cleves:

My horses can trot up to twelve miles an hour

Let me explain

I'm a Wienerschnitzel, not an English flower
No one tells me I need a rich man
Doin' my thing in my palace in Richmond

All:
You
You said that I tricked ya

Jane Seymour & Katherine Howard:
Tricked ya

All:
'Cause I
I didn't look like my profile picture
Too, too bad I don't agree
So I'm gonna hang it up for everyone to see
And you can't stop, you can't stop me 'cause

Anne Of Cleves:
I'm the queen of the castle
Get down, you dirty rascal

All (+ Anne Of Cleves: Ad Libs.):
Get down
Get down
Get down you dirty rascal
Get down
Get down

Anne Of Cleves:
'Cause I'm the queen of the castle!

C.7 "All You Wanna Do"

(Katherine Howard)

Katherine Howard:

So yeah, I can't even begin to think of how I compete with you all…Oh wait, like this.

Others:

All you wanna do

All you wanna do, baby

Katherine Howard:

I think we can all agree

I'm the ten amongst these threes

Others:

All you wanna do

All you wanna do, baby

Katherine Howard:

And ever since I was a child

I'd make the boys go wild

Others:

All you wanna do

All you wanna do, baby

Katherine Howard:

Take my first music teacher

Henry Mannox

I was young, it's true

But even then I knew

The only thing you wanna do is...

**Kiss* Ahh*

Broad, dark, sexy Mannox
Taught me all about dynamics
He was twenty-three
And I was thirteen
Going on thirty.

We spent hours strumming the lute
Striking the chords and blowing the flute
He plucked my strings all the way to G
Went from major to minor
C to D.

Tell me what you need
What you want
You don't need to plead
'Cause I feel
The chemistry
Like I get you
And you get me and

Maybe this is it
He just cares so much
It feels legit
We have a connection
I think this guy is different

'Cause
All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby's
Touch me, love me
Can't get enough, see

All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby's

Please me, squeeze me
Birds and the bees me

Run your fingers through my hair
Tell me I'm the fairest of the fair

All:
Playtime's over

Katherine Howard:
The only thing you wanna do is
**Kiss* Ahh*

Then there was another guy, Frances.
And at the time, I was living at my Step-Grandma's house.
He was working for her - working so hard.
So he asked me to be his little piece of ass…istant.

Serious, stern and slow
Gets what he wants and he won't take no
Passion in all that he touches
The sexy secretary to the dowager duchess

Helped him in his office had a duty to fulfill
He even let me use his favourite quill
Spilled ink all over the parchment
My wrist was so tired
Still I came back the next day
As he required

You say, I'm all you need
All you want, you don't need to plead
'Cause I feel the chemistry

I get you and you get me and

I know, this is it
He just cares so much
This one's legit
We have a real connection
I'm sure this time is different

'Cause
All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby's
Touch me, love me
Can't get enough, see

All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby's
Please me, squeeze me
Birds and the bees me

You can't wait a second more
To get my corset on the floor

All:
Playtime's over

Katherine Howard:
The only thing you wanna do is...
**Kiss* Ahh*

Yeah, that didn't work out. It turns out some guys just employ women to get them into their private chambers. It was a different time back then.
So, I decided to have a break from boys. Just focus on my career.
Then my dad got me this amazing work placement in court.

And you'll never guess who I met.

Tall, large, Henry the Eighth
Supreme head of the Church of England

Globally revered
Although you wouldn't know it from the look of that beard

Made me a lady in waiting, hurled
Me and my family up in the world
Gave me duties in court and he swears it's true
That without me he doesn't know what he'd do

You say, I'm all you need
All you want, we both agree
This is the place for me
I'm finally where I'm meant to be

Then he starts saying all this stuff
He "cares so much", he calls me "love"
He says we have a "connection"
I guess it's not so different

'Cause
All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby's
Touch me, love me
Can't get enough, see

All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby's
Seize me, squeeze me
Birds and the bees me

There's no time for when or how
'Cause you've just got to have me now

All:
Playtime's over

Katherine Howard:
The only thing you wanna do is...
**Kiss* Ahh*

So we got married…Woo!...

With Henry, it isn't easy
His temper's short and his friends are sleazy
Except for this one courtier
He's a really nice guy just
So sincere

The royal life isn't what I planned
But Thomas is there to lend a helping hand
So sweet, makes sure that I'm okay
And we hang out loads when the King's away

This guy, finally
Is what I want, the friend I need
Just friends, no chemistry
I get him and he gets me

And there's nothing more to it
He just cares so much, he's devoted
He says we have a connection…

I thought this time was different
Why did I think he'd be different?

But it's never, ever different

'Cause
All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby's
Touch me, when will
Enough be enough, see?

All you wanna do
All you wanna do, baby's
Squeeze me, don't care
If you don't please me

Bite my lip and pull my hair
As you tell me I'm the fairest of the fair

Others:
Playtime's over

All:
Playtime's over
Playtime's over

Katherine Howard:
The only thing
The only thing
The only thing you wanna do is...
**Kiss* Ahh*

C.8 "I Don't Need Your Love"

(Catherine Parr)

Catherine Parr:

Dear Tom…

You know I love you, boy

In every single way

Though I love you, boy

I'll miss you ev'ry day

Oh I love you, boy

I wish that I could stay with you

And keep the life I made with you

And even though this feels so right

I'm holding back the tears tonight

It's true I'll never be over you

'Cause I have built a future in my mind with you

And now the hope is gone

There's nothing left for me to do

You know it isn't true

But I must say to you

That I don't need your love, no, no

I don't need your love, no, no

It'll never be better than it was, no, no

But I don't need your love, no, no

I've got no choice

With the King I stay alive

Never had a choice

Been a wife twice before, just to survive

I don't have a choice

If Henry says "It's you", then it's you

No matter how I feel

It's what I have to do
But if, somehow, I had that choice
No holding back, I'd raise my voice

I'd say "Henry, yeah it's true
I'll never belong to you
'Cause I am not your toy, to enjoy 'til there's something new
As if I'm gonna give up my boy, my work, my dreams
To care for you"

"Ha, darling, get a clue
There's nothing you can do
I don't need your love, no, no
No, I don't need you love, no, no
There's nothing left to discuss, no, no
'Cause I don't need your love, no, no"

But the thing is, I can't say that. Not to the king. So this is goodbye.
All my love, Catherine.

So I sent that letter to my love
Got married to the king
Became the one who survived
I've told you about my life
The final wife
But why should that story
Be the one I have to sing about
Just to win? I'm out!
That's not my story
There's so much more

Remember that I was a writer
I wrote books and psalms and meditations
Fought for female education

So all my women could independently

Study scripture

I even got a woman to paint my picture

Why can't I tell that story?

'Cause in his-story

I'm fixed as one of six

And without him

I disappear

We all disappear

Anne Boleyn:

Wait, I don't get it

C.9 “Six”

(Company Number)

Catherine Parr:

We’re one of a kind

Katherine Howard:

No category

Anne Of Cleves:

Two many years

Jane Seymour:

Lost in his story

Anne Boleyn:

We’re free

Catherine Of Aragon:

To take our crown in glory

All:

For five more minutes…

We’re six

Catherine Of Aragon:

He got down on one knee

But I said “No way!”

Packed my bags

And moved into a

Nu-nu-nunnery!

Joined the gospel choir

Our riffs were on fire

At the top of the charts

Is where I'm gonna stay

Anne Boleyn:

Henry sent me a poem
All about my green sleeves
I changed a couple of words
Put it on a sick beat
The song blew their minds
Next minute, I was signed
And now I'm writing lyrics
For Shakesy P

Jane Seymour:

Since my first son
My family's grown
We made a band
And got quite well known
You could perhaps call us
The Tudor Von Trapps
I'm just kidding
We're called the
Royalling Stones

All:

We're one of a kind
No category
Too many years
Lost in history
We're free to take
Our crowning glory
For five more minutes
We're SIX!

Anne Of Cleves:

What a shame

That, my face

It cost me the crown

So I moved to the

All:

Haus Of Holbein!

Anne Of Cleves:

In my hometown

His friends were super arty

But I showed them how to party

Now on my tour of Prussia

Everybody "Gets down"

Katherine Howard:

Music man tried it on

And I was like "Bye!"

So I thought, "Who needs him?

I can give it a try"

I learned everything

Now all I do is sing

And I'll do that until I die

Catherine Parr:

Heard all about these rockin' chicks

Loved every song

And each remix

So I went out and found them

And we laid down an album

Now "I don't need your love"

All I need is SIX!

All:

We're one of a kind
No category
Too many years
Lost in his story
We're free to take
Our crowning glory
For five more minutes
We're SIX!
Woah, woah
We're SIX!
Woah oh oh, we're SIX
Woah, woah
For five more minutes

It's the end of the show
Of the histo-remix
We switched up the flow
And we changed the prefix
Ev'rybody knows
That we used to be six wives
But we want to say
Before we drop the curtain
Nothing is for sure
Nothing is for certain
All that we know is that
We used to be six wives

But now we're one of a kind
No category
Too many years
Lost in his-story
We're free to take
Our crown in glory
For three more minutes...

We're one of a kind

No category

Too many years

Lost in his-story

We're free to take

Our crowning glory

For two more minutes

We're SIX!

Woah, woah

We're SIX!

Woah oh oh, we're SIX

Woah, woah

For five, four, three

Two, one more minute…

We're SIX!

C.10

“Megasix”

(Company Number)

Katherine Howard:

_____! Do you wanna hear one more song?

(Audience reaction)

Ok Maria, hit it!

Catherine Of Aragon:

Stay on your feet, _____!

C’mon, clap your hands!

Anna Of Cleves:

Everybody clap your hands!

Catherine Parr:

But most importantly

Get ready to dance!

Anne Boleyn:

Make some noise for Maggie!

(Guitar Solo)

Anna Of Cleves:

Big ups for Bessie!

(Bass Solo)

Jane Seymour:

Let’s show some love for Joan!

(Keys Solo)

Catherine Of Aragon:

And Señorita Maria!

(Drum Solo)

All:

Are you ready?

_____, here we go!

Catherine Of Aragon:

You must think that I'm crazy

You wanna replace me?

Baby, there's

All:

n-n-n-n-n-n-no way

If you thought you could leave me

You must think I'm naive

Please believe me, there's

All:

N-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-not sorry!

Anne Boleyn:

Sorry, not sorry 'bout what I said

I'm just tryi'na have some fun

Catherine Of Aragon:

N-n-no way

Anne Boleyn:

Don't worry, don't worry, don't lose your head

I didn't mean to hurt anyone

Jane Seymour:

You can

Anne Boleyn:

L-O-L

Jane Seymour:

You can

Anne Boleyn:

say "Oh, well!"

Jane Seymour:

You can try, but I'm unbreakable

Katherine Howard:

All you wanna

All:

Do your best

But I'll stand the test

You'll find that I've...

Jane Seymour:

Got a heart of

All:

Sto-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-one

Anna Of Cleves:

All alone, on a throne

In a palace that I happen to own

Katherine Howard:

The only thing you wanna do

Anna Of Cleves:

Too bad I don't agree, 'cause

I'm the queen of the castle

Get down, you dirty rascal-al

Katherine Howard:

All you wanna do, all you wanna do, baby

Is sing along to your favourite queen's song

All you wanna do, all you wanna do, baby's

Love me, love me

L-l-l-l

Katherine Howard & Catherine Parr:

L-l-l-l-

Catherine Parr:

Love

No, no

I don't need your love, no, no

It's time to rise above, whoa, whoa

All:

We don't need your love

'Cause we're so much more than...

Catherine Of Aragon:

Divorced!

Anne Boleyn:

Beheaded!

Jane Seymour:

Died!

Anna Of Cleves:

Divorced!

Katherine Howard:

Beheaded!

Catherine Parr:

Survived!

All:

We're...

SIX!

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Methodological Note

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