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Translator's Freedom and the Most Suitable Method in Music-Linked Translation — On the Basis of A. Marianowicz's *Fiddler on the Roof* Translation

1. Music-Linked Translation

Musical is a unique form of theatrical performance. Translating musicals is a demanding art as, unlike in most other types of translation, numerous peculiar aspects need to be taken into account. One of the questions that arise in MLT research is that of translator's freedom: should it be limited or not. My answer to this question is based on the analysis of Antoni Marianowicz's version of *Fiddler on the Roof* lyrics.

Musicals combine music, songs, spoken dialogue and dance in order to influence the audience's emotions and imagination. Translating musicals is an old art which, throughout the years, has acquired a number of names, e.g. equirhythmical, singable, singing, vocal (Dinda L. Gorlee) or music-linked (Harai Golomb). For the sake of clarity let me choose the latter and use it in the paper. Music-Linked Translation (MLT) is not a standard translation, it cannot be easily defined as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language (TL)" (Catford 1965: 20). It is rather an adaptation of target lyrics to the musical line (Franzon 2005: 265). A musical song is a genre allied to a pre-existing linguistic text, but is underlying to the musical text and seldom intended to exist independently. This utmost importance of the original music is MLT's main distinguishing feature. Musical translation recreates the musico-verbal relations and interactions in the TL. It consists in translating the Music-Linked Verbal Text (MLV) in the SL to a MLV in the TL keeping the music (to which the source MLV was originally set) intact. The unchangeability of the pre-existing music

imposes constraints on translators, who use a number of methods to overcome the difficulties they encounter.

Of the many people who practice the MLT, relatively few have recorded their considerations on how it is done and how it should be done. Andrew Kelly, an approved translator, offers a list of injunctions for ML translators to follow:

- “Respect the rhythms;
- find and respect the meaning;
- respect the style;
- respect the rhymes;
- respect the sound;
- respect your choice of intended listeners; and
- respect the original” (Kelly in Low 2005: 198).

A different piece of advice comes from Shirley Emmons and Stanley Sonntag, who thus stated the general objectives of the MLT:

- “The target text must be singable — otherwise any other virtues it has are meaningless;
- The TT must sound as if the music had been fitted to it, even though it was actually composed to fit the source text;
- The rhyme-scheme of the original poetry must be kept because it gives shape to the phrases;
- Liberties must be taken with the original meaning when the first three requirements cannot be met” (1979: 189).

Building on the above presented pieces of advice Peter Low created his own *Pentathlon Principle*, according to which the translator’s major difficulty is to balance the criteria that are in conflict. He claims that MLT should aggregate not only a few chosen criteria but all five of them: *singability*, *sense*, *naturalness*, *rhythm* and *rhyme*.

2. Pentathlon Principle

Singability is the criterion of utmost importance. Each singer is aware how significant it is for the product to be usable. To highlight his point, Low quotes a singer Arthur Graham, who wrote: “the singer needs words that may be sung with sincerity” (Low 2005: 192). A composer Edvard Grieg shares this view: “regardless of how beautiful the poetry and the music, if the declamation is found wanting, the song will be put aside and ignored” (Low, 192). *Singability* parallels a concept widely recognized in drama translation, namely the practical necessity of *performability*. Just as drama translation requires words that can be performed as part of an integrated whole, song-translation requires “singable” lyrics.

In the MLT one should also pay attention to retaining the *sense*, i.e. the original meaning. Therefore, precise words can be replaced by near-synonyms, narrow terms by super ordinate terms, particular metaphors by other metaphors that function

similarly in the context. Low associates the criterion of *sense* with the translators' duty towards the author of the ST. The duty is greatest "when the ST deserves particular respect, because it has genuine poetic merit and/or because the value of the original song rests heavily on it" (Low, 194). Thus, the criterion of *sense* resembles translating poetry as it requires mediation in the pragmatic, semantic and formal differences between poetic discourse in the SL and the TL engaged in translation.

Naturalness demands the use of the TL in a reasonably natural way. It involves various considerations, especially with reference to the register and the word order. Low associates it mainly with the duty to the audience (the receivers of a musical). A translation that is lacking in *naturalness* may be characterized as unable to communicate effectively on first encounter. Unnaturalness demands from the audience additional processing effort. Since in songs the processing time cannot be lengthened at will, the MLV is useless unless it can be understood while it is performed.

Rhythm in a song conditions the way in which the MLV will be performed. The translator's duty to the composer requires a high degree of respect for this pre-existing rhythm. Some translators view this issue as a need for a line of the TT to equal the ST in the number of syllables. Nida speaks of "precisely the right number of syllables" (1964: 177). Low claims that although an identical syllable-count is desirable, in practice, if need be, a translator might wish to add or subtract a syllable. Sometimes not the number of syllables in a verse is crucial, but the synchronization of notes stressed by the composer and the corresponding stressed syllables.

The final criterion included in *Pentathlon Principle* is that of *rhyme*. Low claims that giving too high priority to this issue ("enslavement to the rhyming dictionary") has led to many faulty and in fact unusable TTs. He advocates the following reasoning:

"Yes, I will have some rhyme. But I will seek some more margin of flexibility ... In this case the rhymes won't have to be as perfect or numerous as in the ST, and the original rhyme-scheme need not be observed. I will try to get a top score, but not at too great a cost to other considerations (such as meaning)" (Low, 199).

Besides, if one chooses to rhyme, it does not necessarily mean that every rhyme has to be a perfect rhyme. Skilled translators have in hand a variety of imperfect rhymes that are a better option as they incur less semantic loss. Low mentions Apter who speaks of "rhyme's cousins — off-rhyme (line-time), weak rhyme (major-squalor), half rhyme (kitty-knitted) and consonant rhyme (slit-slat) — alone or in combination with other devices like assonance and alliteration" (Low, 199).

It is the invaluable role of the translator to encompass singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme, so that an effect on the audience, equal to the original one, is achieved. Antoni Marianowicz in his translation of *Fiddler on the Roof* managed to integrate the five aspects of a good MLT by applying a number of translation techniques.

3. Translation techniques adapted by Marianowicz in *Fiddler on the Roof*

The most frequently used technique is that of *adaptation*. Since the lyrics need to be singable, such “free” form of translation as adaptation is frequently applicable. “Little Bird, Little Chavala/You were always such a pretty thing.” Had the presented quotation not been lyrics, the translator could render its meaning more or less literally causing seemingly no loss to its quality, e.g. “Ptaszynko, Mała Chawele/ Byłaś zawsze takim drobnym cudeńkiem.” Yet the presented translation does not meet any criterion of a good MLT but for that of sense. The singability, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme are blurred. This perfectly justifies the use of adaptation (“Kwiatku mój, Chawele!/Kto cię tylko znał, każdy kochał cię”). It was the translator’s choice in the vast majority of translation units, in some cases it almost comprised the whole lyrics (e.g. translation of *Anatevka*).

Paraphrase was the second most frequently used technique. It was applied to those translation units that required rephrasing or explaining in other words or another way, as the meaning rendered literally could harm any of the criteria of a good MLT. The use of a different word order, vocabulary or tense resulted in a successful translation.

Table 1. Examples of paraphrase

SL/English	TL/Polish
I don't understand what's happening today	Nie pojmuję, co tu się dzieje
How can I hope to make you understand	Być może ktoś zrozumieć zechce mnie
And this trouble in the town	I niepokój w mieście trwa
What is this about your daughter marrying my husband?	Coś słyszała, że mój Lejzor żeni się z twą córką

Whenever it was possible, without causing harm to the meaning, Marianowicz translated *literally*. It happened in case of the words and phrases that are semantically universal in the English and Polish cultures: papa, tradition, days, love, etc.

Table 2. Examples of literal translation

SL/English	TL/Polish
The Papa, the Papa! Tradition	To tata, to tata! Tradycja!
Swiftly flow the days	Szybko płyną dni
Do you love me?	Czy mnie kochasz?
How can you let your daughter/ take my place?	Jak możesz pozwolić./Zajmować moje miejsce córce twej

In the Polish version of *Fiddler on the Roof* there are numerous *shifts/transpositions*. Antoni Marianowicz changed the grammar from SL to TL with no loss of meaning. For instance, the interrogative form of “When did she get to be a beauty?” was changed into a positive statement “Ona się w piękność zamieniła” or the active form “For twenty-five years I’ve washed your clothes” was changed into the infinitive “Dwadzieścia pięć lat dbać o twój dom.”

Whenever there was a loss of meaning, sound-effect or pragmatic effect in one verse, Marianowicz *compensated* it in another one.

“Golde, The first time I met you/
was on our wedding day” — “Gołdo, gdy ciebie ujrzałem/
— na ślubie pierwszy raz”

or

“Feed a wife and children, say his daily prayers?” —
“Bo chcą jeść codziennie! Żona oraz dzieci / Kto modlitwę swą odmawiać rano zwykł?”

Since the aspect of naturalness is crucial for the high quality of Music-Linked Translation, the strategy of *naturalization* was applied with precision. Marianowicz adapted the SL words to the normal pronunciation and morphology of the TL. For instance: the female name “Tzeitel” was first adapted to the Polish morphology of feminine names: “-a” ending. Then it was adjusted to the TL pronunciation: the nonexistent in Polish consonant cluster “tz” was changed into “c,” whereas the diphthong “ei” into “aj,” to form “Cajtla.” Other examples of naturalization are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Examples of naturalization

SL/English	TL/Polish
Chavala	Chavele
Golde	Gołda
Mazel Tov, Mazel Tov	Mazeltow, Mazeltow
Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle dum	Dejdel didel dejdel digi digu didel dejdel dum

In some instances a *synonym* was provided. It happened when no clear one-to-one TL equivalent was available and the SL word was not crucial to the text. For instance in “Holy books” — “księga książ.”

A few words/phrases were *borrowed* by Marianowicz from the SL, for example “L’chai-m” or “na zdrowie.” Both were non-English (Yiddish, Polish) already in the original lyrics. The former, a traditional Jewish toast, was transferred into MLT as it was crucial to the style of the song. In the latter case, the author did not consider it necessary to translate the phrase, as it was already a TL phrase incorporated into the SL.

A quite seldom used strategy was that of *reduction*. It took place when the SL adjective plus a general noun was reduced to the TL noun: “twenty-five years” — “czwierćwiecze.”

Apart from the analysis of translation strategies themselves, additional attention needs to be paid to how Antoni Marianowicz rendered the values of a good MLT characterized by the Pentathlon Principle. The translation strategies analysed above were used in order to aggregate the five most important criteria of a good MLT: rhythm, naturalness, rhyme, singability and sense.

4. Marianowicz's *Fiddler on the Roof* in *Pentathlon Principle* perspective

The original-like *rhythm*, which conditions the way in which the MLV will be performed, was obtained by preserving the exact number of syllables in a given translation unit/verse. E.g:

Right	in	the	mi	ddle	of	the	town
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Wsa	mym	by	ser	cu	mias	ta	stał

Naturalness of the MLT was achieved by the right approach to word order and register. The word order does not strictly copy the ST, conversely, it obeys the TL word order formation rules. E.g. "I promise you'll be happy. And even if you're not" – "Na pewno da ci szczęście. A jeśli nie to co?" The register of the MLT is contextually appropriate, informal with humoristic elements, e.g. "He's handsome! He's young! All right, he's 62" – „To cud jak we śnie... na lat 62." Therefore, no additional processing effort is demanded on the part of the audience. The actors–audience communication is effective and natural.

Another important criterion of a good MLT, *rhymes*, were approached with flexibility and sense. The translator did not try to accurately reproduce the ST rhyme pattern. What Marianowicz did was rhyme to a certain extent. He rhymed to the point where singability, naturalness and sense were not distorted.

Table 4. Examples of rhymes

SL/English	TL/Polish
"May God bless you and grant you long l i v e s ."	„Niech Bóg sprzyja, niech szczęście on da.
May the Lord fulfill our Sabbath prayer for you	Niechaj w szabas Pan wysłucha modłów t y c h!
May God make you good mothers and w i v e s ."	Z was uczyni wzór matek i żon
May He send you husbands who will care for you."	I niech da wam mężów co się kocha i c h."

In the MLT it is also relevant to retain the *sense*. Thus, the translator paraphrased a number of translation units. He mediated in the pragmatic, semantic and formal differences between the SL and the TL, e.g.:

"I don't remember growing older/ When did they?" –
 "Kiedy i jak się dorosły mi/ Mogli stać?"

The final, yet of utmost importance, criterion of MLT is *singability*. In order to make the MLT function well as an oral text, Antoni Marianowicz employed the eleven translation strategies with care. What is more, he deliberately approached the rhyme scheme with flexibility as opposed to the rhythm, which strictly follows the original. Thus, the translator managed to make the lyrics sound excellent when delivered at a performance speed.

5. Conclusions

The results of my analysis of Marianowicz's translation of *Fiddler on the Roof* lyrics prove that, although not much has been published on the subject of the MLT, what has been written is true. The MLT does need adaptation more than any other translation strategy. Adaptation, as a liberal technique best satisfies the needs of musical translation. It allows the translator to act in concordance with the Pentathlon Principle. Thus, it should not come as a surprise to anyone that Antoni Marianowicz applied this strategy frequently. What is more, another frequently used strategy, paraphrase, confirms the need for "liberal" strategies in the MLT. These techniques let the translator render the style, atmosphere and wit of the original score without copying the original. On the contrary, some of the translations were completely free from the original, almost entirely adapted to the Polish audience.

Marianowicz's approach to the rhythm stands in opposition to the way he dealt with the meaning. The original-like rhythm was preserved in translation thanks to the strict following of the number of syllables in verse. Due to this "conservatism," the original-like dynamics has been achieved. It is the conjunction of the opposites, liberalism and conservatism in the treatment of different aspects of the original lyrics that made Marianowicz's version of Harnick's texts natural and easily singable. In other words, the conditions of a good MLT have been met.

Judging on the presented analysis and conclusions, the answer to the question of translator's freedom is two-fold. On the one hand, it should indeed be limited. In fact, it is limited by the original music and rhythm. On the other hand, translator's freedom is boundless. It seems that to render singability, naturalness, rhyme and sense, one is allowed to diverge from the original as much as one wishes. Limiting translator's freedom in this respect may result in faulty and unusable TTs, the opposite of any translator's objective. Marianowicz used his freedom wisely. The ability to combine liberalism and conservatism made his version of *Fiddler on the Roof* a masterpiece in the field of musical translation. It appears that the golden means in the MLT is the smart confluence of two opposing approaches.

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