



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN STUDIES

From Text to Podcast: Translation and Adaptation of 36

Questions, The Podcast Musical

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June 2026

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family, who have been my biggest supporters not only throughout this degree but across my entire life. To my friends, both those I met during the degree and those who have been there from the very beginning, I am grateful for their constant belief in me. Thanks to my partner as my university experience would have been completely different without him by my side. Finally, thanks to my tutor for her guidance and support every step of the way. This TFG would not have been the same without any of them.

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Abstract

The emergence of the podcast musical as a new audio format presents challenges for translation. Thus far, no Catalan translation of this genre currently exists, nor have translation studies addressed it as a distinct field of study. This paper investigates how two songs from *36 Questions: The Podcast Musical* can be effectively translated into Catalan while preserving their narrative function, singability, and emotional impact. The central argument is that the podcast musical requires a translation approach that prioritizes singability and cultural mediation over semantic fidelity, given the absence of visual support. To test this, two songs from the musical will be translated, applying different song translation strategies. The analysis shows that techniques such as metric adaptation, stress pattern adjustment, and reformulation are essential to achieve an effective translation between Catalan lyrics and the original melody. The results serve as a practical reference for future Catalan translations of podcast musicals and support the recognition of this format as a future field of translation research.

Keywords: song translation, podcast musical, singability, metric adaptation, cultural mediation, 36 Questions

1. Introduction

In recent years, musical theatre has grown in popularity, leading to a high demand for theatre plays to be translated and adapted into a variety of languages. Yet, the translation of a musical play is particularly difficult, especially taking into account the fact that it is not only a matter of translating the text, but also of adapting the lyrics, rhythm, music and cultural background. As Capri (2020, p. 420) observes, “not many scholars have studied stage musicals, even though songs play a fundamental role in this type of performance, conveying meaning through verbal, audio and visual semiotic resources.” Indeed, France (2000, p. 96) goes further, stating that theater translation is still “probably the least explored field in Translation Studies”. Fortunately, a growing body of research has emerged recently, with experts and academics beginning to examine the difficulties of translating a musical across linguistic and cultural barriers (Donés Alos, 2016; Merz, 2014).

A new variety of musical theatre has emerged in this field: the podcast musical, which seeks to approach musicals in a different and more accessible way. As defined in Sam Norman’s (2025) website, podcast musicals are “musicals designed to exist only for the ears”.¹ They require a cohesive structure, engaging plot and clear articulation to ensure full audience comprehension of the narrative. The absence of a physical stage and visual elements to support the dialogue and script creates a challenge for the writers, demanding full reliance on linguistic elements.

By translating and adapting two songs from *36 Questions: The Podcast Musical* into Catalan, this study will pioneer this field. To date, no Catalan translation of this work exists, nor have translation studies addressed the podcast musical as a distinct genre. Unlike traditional plays, which rely on a physical stage and visual elements, *36 Questions* is a

¹ The podcast musical is a new format with limited academic analysis available; this internet source is cited as the best source currently accessible.

three-act podcast musical that tells the story of a decaying marriage through a combination of dialogue and original songs. The two selected songs, “For the record” and “Our word,” present different challenges: the first is a metaphorical ballad, and the second a dense argument song.

The objective of the thesis is to translate these two songs into Catalan, applying the translation strategies established in the theoretical framework. The principal aim is to provide a detailed account of the translation process, clarifying how a translator faces musical constraints and cultural elements to adapt a song as part of the narrative, moving beyond the lyrics’ analysis to consider the final result, and showing the implementation of strategies.

2. Review of Theoretical Background

2.1 The Difference between Conventional Songs and Musical Theatre Songs

Before examining the specific challenges of translating songs for podcast musicals, it is crucial to establish what a song is and how musical theatre songs differ from conventional ones. Franzon (2008, p. 376) defines songs as “piece(s) of music and lyrics – in which one has been adapted to the other, or both to one another – designed for a singing performance.” This general definition applies to songs outside of a dramatic context, not to those that serve a narrative function within a musical. Musical theatre songs differ from conventional songs, as Carpi (2020, p. 429) explains, because they are “interpreted as conversations between characters on stage: despite the unusual channel of communication, songs are considered interactions where information is shared.” This distinction is particularly relevant for podcast musicals, where the absence of visual elements places more emphasis on the text.

The lyrics must follow a set of rules so that the audience can follow the rhythm of the play and can adhere to the storyline. Following the same structure as conventional songs, García Paredes (2013) argues that the translated lyrics must not only convey semantic

meaning but also fit the music, preserving the original's function. This perspective aligns with Low's (2005) "pentathlon principle", which identifies five priorities in song translation: singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme. The translator must manage these demands in order to create a performable result.

2.2 Singability

This concept was coined by Johan Franzon, an important figure in the field of song translation. Franzon defines it as "the attainment of musico-verbal unity between the text and the composition. This is what makes the lyrics 'sing', so to speak, what makes them carry their meaning across and deliver their message in cooperation with the music" (2008, p. 375). In other words, 'singability' refers to the integration of lyrics and music, where the text fits the melody as if designed for it. A singable translation allows the performer to communicate the message naturally and the audience to understand it easily.

To make it singable, the translator must treat the source language as a flexible source that can be adapted to the structure of the original music. Franzon points to three major layers or techniques of singable lyrics adaptation. First, the prosodic match involves the number of syllables, the stress patterns, and the connection to the musical rhythm. Second, the poetic match involves the rhyme scheme, the length of the lines, and elements of structure, such as repetition. Third, the semantic-reflexive match refers to the meaning and narrative coherence in the context of the song (Franzon, 2008).

The most immediate and technical obstacles in musical theatre translation involve rhyme and rhythm, which equal the prosodic and poetic match according to Franzon (2008). The translator must work within a strict framework because the musical structure cannot be modified (Cotes Ramal, 2004). The translator's job is to maintain semantic meaning in the translated piece, making adjustments to fit the rhyme and rhythm. This process requires

creativity, and the translator frequently needs to use strategies like expansion, reformulation, and the use of cultural equivalences to adapt the meaning to the musical form.

For instance, when translating a song from a musical, “el traductor de canción no debe buscar una rima en su texto, sino adaptar el texto a la música que por sí misma impondrá una rima y un ritmo.” (Cotes Ramal, 2004, p. 78). Consequently, the goal of the translation is to write a text that feels integrated with the music, maintaining the impact of the original while maintaining its rhythmic structure. The main objective is to make sure that the translated song functions exactly as the original, presenting the characters and plot in the same way.

2.4 Cultural Mediation and Theatrical Cohesion

The translator of plays must act as a cultural mediator in addition to the difficulties of translating language and music. Jokes, idioms, historical references and social distinctions that are understood by the source-culture audience may be meaningless to the target audience (Baker, 1992). The translation must be accurate in meaning and cohesive to avoid misunderstanding the story, breaking the rhythm of the play and disturbing the audience’s involvement. In such cases the translator has to identify culture specific concepts or expressions and find equivalent terms in the target culture which can ensure full audience comprehension.

The translator must also maintain the overall coherence of the production. The translated text should keep the plot structure, the dialogues and the rhythm of the scenes. A touching moment should not lose its emotional impact, a line that is funny in the source language should also be funny in the target language. For musical theatre translation this requires not only fluency in both languages and knowledge of both cultures but also an understanding of rhythm, stress patterns and the musicality of the target text.

2.5 General Strategies

2.5.1 Literal translation

To face the challenges of singability and cultural mediation, translators employ a wide range of strategies. One such strategy is literal translation, which consists of a direct rendering of the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). If the direct translation aligns with the lyrics and the music, it is the easiest technique to employ. However, this approach is seldom the best choice. As Franzon (2008, p. 377) argues, “a song translation that strives to be semantically accurate can hardly be sung to the music written for the original lyrics, and a song translation that follows the original music must sacrifice optimal verbal fidelity.”

Some translators use literal translation not as a final product but as an initial tool. For instance, the first strategy I employed when translating the two selected songs was literal translation, which resulted in a prioritization of semantic accuracy. Yet, as previously mentioned, this approach was rarely viable for the final result nor could it be applied to all sentences or words. This is illustrated in the following example, where literal translation could be efficiently applied in the majority of lines.

English	Catalan
<i>When i was a little girl</i>	<i>Quan jo era molt petita</i>
<i>Like really little, like eight or so</i>	<i>Com molt petita, vuit anys o així</i>
<i>I was playing in my father's study</i>	<i>Jugava al despatx del meu pare</i>
<i>A place in the house</i>	<i>Un lloc de la casa</i>
<i>I wasn't supposed to go</i>	<i>On no podia anar</i>

Table 1. Translation of the first stanza of “Our Word”

As Donés Alós explains, a literal translation is usually first employed to understand the meaning, after which the translator must “contar sílaba a sílaba las frases para que

encaj(en) en la mayor medida con las sílabas – o golpes de voz una vez cantadas – del original.” (2016, p. 19). There are many problems with literal translation: the number of syllables in a word is typically different from language to language, the stress patterns are distinct, but the melodic form must be identical, and the rhyme schemes should be maintained. A literal translation may be semantically accurate but produce an unsingable text, consequently sounding unnatural in the target language.

2.5.2 Adaptation

Adaptation is the process in which a source text is modified to fit the culture, language and performance needs of an audience. Unlike literal translation, this strategy allows the translator to rewrite, change or replace things that are unfamiliar to the target audience. This approach is needed because songs must be coherent and also match the melody and rhythm. The translator must ensure the song is understandable. The goal is to make the song feel natural and familiar within the target language and culture. In other words, adaptation is understood as

the 'freest' form of translation. It is used mainly for plays (comedies) and poetry; the themes, characters, plots are usually preserved, the SL culture converted to the TL culture and the text rewritten. The deplorable practice of having a play or poem literally translated and then rewritten by an established dramatist or poet has produced many poor adaptations, but other adaptations have 'rescued' period plays. (Newmark, 1988, quoted in Merz 2014, p. 25)

The debate between “translation” and “adaptation” is crucial to the field. Fox Strangways (1921) argues that “if it pretends to translate, it must translate; but an adaptation is sometimes more to the point.” In the context of musical theatre, the translator’s principal function is to maintain consistency between the original’s plot function while adapting the musical and performative elements to a new cultural context. Consider the musical *Mamma Mia!*, which has been translated into multiple languages for different productions.

English	Spanish
<i>I've been cheated by you</i>	<i>Yo por tí me engañé</i>
<i>since I don't know when</i>	<i>hace tiempo lo sé</i>
<i>So I made up my mind,</i>	<i>y ya lo decidí</i>
<i>it must come to an end</i>	<i>ahora te dejaré</i>

Table 2. Official translation of the song “Mamma Mia” (ABBA, 2012).

The Spanish translation of the ABBA song “Mamma mia” had to adapt certain phrases not because the meaning changed, but because the original English syllables did not match the melodic structure of the music when sung in Spanish. In some cases, entire lines were rewritten to preserve the rhythm while maintaining the main message. As García Paredes (2013, p. 1) argues, translation requires a "three-pronged" analysis: knowing the origin of a work, understanding it, and adapting what is necessary for the new audience.

2.5.2 Reformulation or Equivalence

Reformulation or equivalence is the process of rewriting a source text in the target language so that the meaning of the source text is maintained. Reformulation, in contrast to literal translation and adaptation, focuses on naturalness rather than literal accuracy. This strategy is especially useful if the original text contains humor, idioms, or cultural references that would otherwise be lost. In a specific cultural context, a joke that would be confusing to the target audience can be replaced by another joke that is equivalent. This way the humorous effect can be maintained despite the transfer from one language to another through reformulation. The same happens with metaphors, idioms or cultural references.

(1a) Whatever kept the waters calm

(1b) El que fos per tal d'estar tots bé

For example, in the song “Our Word,” I reformulated the expression (1a) to (1b), which loses the original metaphor but preserves the function of describing lies that maintain family peace. Through case studies, Russell (2018) shows that these methods are necessary tools for achieving a successful translation. By applying reformulation or equivalence, a better engagement and comprehension of the audience can be achieved.

2.5.3 Cultural Equivalence

A common situation when translating a song is the adaptation of cultural references. As with reformulation, this occurs when a concept, expression, proper noun, joke or social practice is typical of a specific culture but unfamiliar to the target audience. Yet, it must not be confused with reformulation or adaptation as they differ in scope and focus. Reformulation prioritizes communicative effectiveness while maintaining the core meaning, whereas adaptation focuses not only on meaning but also on rhyme and rhythm. Cultural equivalence, by contrast, involves replacing cultural elements with others familiar to the target culture.

(2a) God bless you!

(2b) Salut!

For instance, when someone sneezes in English, people often say (2a), an expression that started as a religious tradition. In Catalan, however, the equivalent response is (2b) which carries a similar function but replaces the religious reference with a cultural alternative. This shows how cultural equivalence functions by replacing a certain element while preserving its function.

While some references might be understood in other languages, they often lose their impact on the audience because the associated context or humorous connotation does not transfer across cultures (Cotes Ramal, 2005, p. 83). Although cultural equivalence is less frequent than other strategies and not specific to musicals, translators may still encounter

references that need replacement, particularly in the dialogue parts that are often found in the middle of the songs. In such cases, the translator is required to look for a cultural equivalent in the target language so that it can be fully understood by the audience.

2.6 Song translation strategies

2.6.1 Restructuring of rhyme schemes

In some cases, the translator struggles to maintain the rhyme scheme of the SL into the TL. For instance, a translator may change an AABB pattern, to ABAB pattern, or abandon rhyme altogether in certain sections.² However, although this is a valid and accepted strategy, some scholars argue that “it is always best to keep as close to the original rhyme scheme as possible in order to stay true to the original piece.” (Russell, 2018, p. 44).

The following example illustrates the restructuring of rhyme schemes I had to apply in the translation of the song “For the Record”. The original lyrics follow an ABCB rhyme pattern, which I restructured into an ABAB pattern to preserve semantic meaning while introducing a new rhyme scheme.

English	Catalan
<i>For the record this is self-destructive</i> A	<i>Perquè consti això m'està destrossant</i> A
<i>For the record I'm aware of that</i> B	<i>Perquè consti tot això ja ho sé</i> B
<i>For the record I've been picturing her body</i>	<i>Perquè consti me l'he estat imaginant</i> A
C	<i>Tumbada al sofà portant res més que un</i>
<i>Draped over the sofa wearing nothing but</i>	<i>corset</i> B
<i>her hat</i> B	

² The AABB scheme refers to a pattern in which consecutive lines rhyme, whereas the ABAB scheme indicates a pattern in which alternate lines rhyme.

Table 3. Example of restructuring of rhyme schemes in “Our Word”

The need for rhyme scheme restructuring comes from basic language differences. English has a wide range of rhyming words because of its mixed Germanic and Romance roots while some languages like Polish have more restrictive morphological structures that limit rhyme possibilities (Merz, 2014, p. 37). Therefore, a rhyme scheme that sounds natural and effortless in English may be impossible to reproduce in Polish or Spanish without making forced or unnatural word choices.

2.6.2 Metric Adaptation

Another problem for the song translator is the difference in the number of syllables in source and target languages. As Franzon (2008) writes, the most basic requirement of singability is to achieve a prosodic match, which means to fit the translated lyrics into the original music in terms of syllabic count, stress and intonation. English has a tendency to be monosyllabic, while languages like Spanish or Catalan are more polysyllabic. A literal translation will therefore require the addition or deletion of syllables to fit the melody. “In general, the longer the musical lines, the easier it may be for translators to accommodate the syntax of their particular language.” (Franzon, 2008, p. 387).

(3a) I love you

(3b) T'estimo

(4a) I was thinking about you

(4b) Estava pensant en tu

For instance, the English sentence (3a) contains three syllables, and its Catalan equivalent, (3b) has also three syllables. However, a longer phrase like (4a), which has six syllables, becomes (4b) with seven syllables in Catalan, requiring the translator to add a note or adapt the sentence.

There are a number of specific techniques used by translators to deal with metric adaptation. Longer phrases, sustained notes and melismas allow the tempo to incorporate extra syllables without changing the melodic structure.³ Adding syllables may involve dividing a single note into two or more shorter notes of equal duration, or using an existing melisma by assigning different syllables to each note (Cotes Ramal, 2005, p. 79). On the other hand, reduction can be done by combining two notes into one, removing syllables and words, or through a coalescence of vowels, which López (2002, p. 20) defines as “a union of the end vocal of the last syllable of a word with the initial vocal of the first syllable of the next word, as part of the singability of the verse”. This event is also known as “synalepha”, and it is very useful when translating to Catalan or Spanish, as these languages have a large number of words that end or begin with vowels, which makes it easier to apply.

There are limitations to these techniques, as excessive expansion can make the lyrics feel rushed, while excessive reduction can make them incomprehensible. These adaptations may change the original language and word order, but are sometimes necessary to ensure that the translated lyrics can be sung naturally to the original melody. The translator must therefore consider the possible options and choose the best technique to apply.

2.6.3 Change of stress patterns

A further important approach to song translation is the change of lexical or phrasal stress patterns so that they match the melodic structure of the original music. Stress pattern adjustment is concerned with the distribution of stress, and this is important because two languages can have the same word but place the stress differently.

(5) Argument

³ Melismas are multiple notes sung on a single syllable.

For example, although they do not share the same meaning, the English word (5) has the stress on the first syllable (ar-gument) while its Catalan equivalent has the stress on the last syllable (argu-ment). The same thing applies to the stress patterns in song lyrics. The translator will need to adapt the word or expression and find an equivalent that matches the stress.

According to Lai (2021, p. 7) who draws on Low's Pentathlon Principle, "Low points out that languages like English demand more focus on syllabic stress. He asserts that rhythm is not equivalent to poetic metre and that song translation requires attention to be paid to vowel lengths as well as rests to create a match for the existing music" (Low, 2005, p. 197). This means that a translator may not rely on syllable count alone. For example, a short vowel on a long, sustained note sounds unnatural. Looking for the proper match often requires vowel coalescence or an alteration of note values. Low (2005) also points out that excessive stress emphasis should not be applied in order to avoid sounding unnatural, because this may disrupt understanding.

3. 36 questions: The Podcast Musical

3.1 The Concept of Podcast Musical

The idea of podcast "originated with Apple's iPod as a way to listen to content hosted online" (Van Damme & Yaeger, 2016, p. 3). It can be defined as "a digital audio file that can be downloaded from a website to your smartphone or other media player" (Van Damme & Yaeger, p. 2). This medium gives institutions a unique chance to share personal stories in an intimate way, just like radio has done since it first started. It requires minimal investment to set up compared to traditional broadcasting, so it is an effective way to tell stories that can help get people more involved.

Within this framework, the concept of “podcast musical” emerges as an original form that represents musical theatre by just relying on audio elements. While conventional stage musicals convey meaning through “verbal, audio and semiotic resources” (Capri, 2020, p. 1), the podcast format erases the visual mode, placing the entire narrative weight on sound and lyrics.

This format allows the audience access to the play regardless of their location. The economic factor also plays an important role, as theatre plays are not affordable for everyone. Podcast musicals, instead, provide a lower-cost alternative in which in some cases the access to the audio requires minimal investment. This is due to the cost of the materials needed for producing the play, as stage-musicals often demand an expensive set-design, costumes, technique, etc. By just relying on the audio, these elements can be omitted, making the play more economic and accessible.

3.2 Plot Summary

The appearance of podcast musicals is very recent, *36 Questions* being the first one released in 2017. This podcast musical was “written and composed by Chris Littler and Ellen Winter, with the crucial help of sound designer Joel Raabe, being the first outing from the new podcast channel, Two-Up, run by Zack Akers and Skip Bronkie.” (Locker, 2017)

The plot of *36 Questions: The Podcast Musical* centers on the marriage of Jase and Judith. The story begins when Jase discovers that his wife of two years, whom he knew as “Natalie Cook”, has lied about her entire identity, including her name. In an effort to save their relationship, Judith tracks Jase down at his childhood home, where he has gone to be alone after learning the truth, and proposes they answer the “36 Questions That Lead to Love”, a psychological experiment designed to foster intimacy between strangers.

The questions reveal the truths of their marriage, Judith's history of being a pathological liar, the trauma of her childhood, as they progress through the story. What begins as an experiment with voice recordings as the storytelling mechanism of the show, turns into a conflict with the reality of whether love can survive such a basic break of trust. The story jumps back and forth in time, from their first encounter to a sad ending that leaves the future of their relationship unclear and complicated.

4. Process of Translation

4.1 “For the Record”

4.1.1 Strategies

The first song chosen for this study is titled “For the record”, a metaphorical ballad that plays a crucial role in the storyline of the musical. The song is about the main characters' decision to do the “36 Questions That Lead to Love”, a psychological experiment that is supposed to build intimacy between strangers. This song presents some challenges from a translation perspective. It is a combination of personal monologue, rhythmic repetition and moments of spoken dialogue incorporated in the musical structure. The strategies applied to the translation of this song are presented in the following table, which provides a summary of the most frequently used techniques.

Strategy	English	Catalan
Literal Translation	<i>And of course I have sympathy</i>	<i>I es clar que tinc compassió</i>
Reformulation	<i>I'm screwed</i>	<i>Estic fotut</i>

Cultural Equivalence	<i>Go Sea Wolves!</i>	<i>Som-hi Barça!</i>
Restructuring of rhyme schemes	<i>But the questions will make one thing clear: There's nothing left of my old life to spare</i>	<i>Les respostes deixaran ben clar: No queda res de mi ja per salvar</i>
Metric adaptation	<i>For the record this is self-destructive</i>	<i>Perquè consti això m'està destrossant</i>
Expansion	<i>Nothing but her hat (5)⁴</i>	<i>Res més que un corset (6)</i>
Reduction	<i>For the pathological liar who did this to me (14)</i>	<i>Per la mentidera que m'ha fet això (11)</i>
Change of stress pattern	<i>Each one of her responses will remind me how she lied</i>	<i>I que això em recordi perquè vaig triar marxar</i>

Table 4. Strategies used in “For the record”

4.1.2 Challenges

The first step before beginning the translation work was a close reading of the source lyrics to understand the rhythmic structure of each stanza, which was crucial for an effective translation as prescribed by Franzon's (2008) concept of a prosodic match between lyrics and melody.⁵ Literal translation was the initial strategy implemented throughout the process, as it allowed me to first prioritize semantic meaning over rhythm or rhyme accuracy. Although it was the quickest and most straightforward way to begin, literal translation was not viable for

⁴ The numbers between brackets specify the number of syllables in each line.

⁵ A stanza is a group set of lines within a song or a poem.

the final result or even the first draft. As previously mentioned, I used it as an initial approach before adapting the lyrics to the demands of the melody and rhythm. However, it is important to note that the previous internalization of the melody of the song already started to cause unconscious modifications and adaptations of the original lyrics, even in the earliest versions, especially to make syllable count match with the original phrases. The following example was the first version of the translation of the second stanza.

English	Catalan
<i>For the record this can still go my way</i>	<i>Perquè consti això ho puc fer a la meva</i>
<i>For the record I can keep my pride</i>	<i>Perquè consti puc mantenir l'orgull</i>
<i>All I have to do is keep us focused on the questions</i>	<i>Només he de centrar-me en les preguntes que ella em faci</i>
<i>Each one of her responses will remind me how she lied</i>	<i>I que això em recordi tot el que ella em va enganyar</i>

Table 5. First translation of the second stanza of “For the record”

In this stanza, my primary focus was on preserving the original meaning, with less attention paid to rhymes or stress patterns. However, as previously mentioned, I did not prioritize semantic meaning in some parts of the stanza, as for instance, the translation of the expression *For the record*, which was adapted to *Perquè consti*. I already knew this was a repetitive part throughout the song and I had previously internalized the rhythm and syllable count, so I unconsciously prioritized the reformulation of this expression in order to fit the different parts in which it was repeated. In the final version of this stanza, other strategies were employed, most notably metric adaptation. To achieve metric adaptation, a technique I frequently applied was vowel coalescence in the Catalan version. As a result, the final version

of the stanza ensured that the syllable count of the target lyrics matched that of the source lyrics.

English	Catalan
<i>For the record this can still go my way</i> (10)	<i>Perquè consti sé que puc canviar-ho</i> (10)
<i>For the record I can keep my pride</i> (9)	<i>Perquè consti_encara puc guanyar</i> (9) ⁶
<i>All I have to do is keep us focused on the questions</i> (14)	<i>Només_he de centrar-me_en les preguntes que_ella_em faci</i> (14)
<i>Each one of her responses will remind me how she lied</i> (14)	<i>I que_això_em recordi perquè vaig triar marxar</i> (13)

Table 6. Final translation of the second stanza of “For the record”

The last line introduces two strategies: reformulation and a change in stress patterns. Reformulation allowed the ABCB rhyme scheme to be preserved, resulting in a rhyme adaptation through the words *guanyar* in the second line and *marxar* in the fourth line, together with a slight shift in meaning. Additionally, the original lyrics placed stress on the word *one* found in the last line, a pattern that could not be maintained in the final translation. In the English original, the stress falls on the word *one*. In Catalan, however, the second syllable of *això* carries the stress, rather than the preceding word *que*, which would have been the natural equivalent. To resolve this, I created a synalepha across *I/que_ai/xò_em*. This change resulted in a reduction of the final number of syllables to thirteen, which allowed to adapt the rhythm of the lyrics accordingly. Another instance of this strategy can be perceived in the following example:

English	Catalan
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⁶ The symbol “_” is used to mark a coalescence of vowels between different words or the fusion of two syllables which are pronounced as one.

<i>I came up with this plan at 4AM on interstate 10</i> (15)	<i>Vaig improvisar-ho tot aquesta matinada</i> (14)
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Table 7. Example of reduction in “For the record”.

In English, this line contains specific spatial and temporal information: the protagonist conceived the plan at a precise hour on a specific American highway. A literal translation into Catalan would have been excessively long and very difficult to fit into the melodic phrase. The line was reduced to *Vaig improvisar-ho tot aquesta matinada* in which I had to delete the specific cultural road reference, and shift the time from 4am to 3am, to improve the rhythmic flow and syllable count. Regarding metric adaptation, the words *came up* of the original lyrics are pronounced as one. This is due to the coalescence of vowels, which allowed the reduction of syllables in the Catalan version and could be translated into two syllables instead of three.

To achieve metric adaptation, sometimes is necessary to adapt some of the words through the use of melismas or lengthening the vowel duration. In the following example, the Catalan translation was reduced to eleven syllables instead of fourteen, as the original line. The words *pathological liar* in the original song are delivered quickly and feel rushed, so I decided to translate them as *mentidera*, a word that fits the original melody while avoiding that rushed sensation. Additionally, I lengthened the vowel *a* in *això*, creating a metric adaptation through expansion.

English	Catalan
<i>For the pathological liar who did this to me</i> (14)	<i>Per la mentidera que m'ha fet això</i> (11)

Table 8. Example of lengthening vowel duration in “For the record”

Cultural adaptation, although it was not a frequent strategy, was also implemented during the translation, particularly during the dialogue part. I adapted the fictional sports team *Sea Wolves* as *Barça* (FC Barcelona), a reference instantly recognizable to a Catalan audience. The substitution keeps the function of the line, cheering for a team, using a cultural equivalent. This is a common choice in the field of translation, where audience comprehension prevails over lexical fidelity.

English	Catalan
<i>JUDITH: What do you think?</i>	<i>JUDITH: Què et sembla?</i>
<i>JASE: About what?</i>	<i>JASE: El què?</i>
<i>JUDITH: My jersey. Go Sea Wolves!</i>	<i>JUDITH: La meva samarreta. Som-hi Barça!</i>

Table 9. Example of Cultural adaptation in “For the record”

Finally, reformulation was employed in cases where a direct translation would have resulted in a loss of emotional intensity. This strategy aligns with what Low (2005) describes as the necessary compromise between semantic fidelity and singability in song translation. The following example was adapted through reformulation:

English	Catalan
<i>For the record</i>	<i>Perquè consti</i>
<i>Mmhmm</i>	<i>Mmhmm</i>
<i><u>I'm screwed</u></i>	<i><u>Estic fotut</u></i>
<i>Mmhmm</i>	<i>Mmhmm</i>

Table 10. Example of reformulation in “For the record”

The Catalan term also carries a colloquial and slang connotation as the original English expression. This compensates for other moments in the translation where semantic variation was lost due to metric constraints. The emotional effect on the listener is the same, preserving the same impact as in the original line.

4.2 “Our Word”

4.2.1 Strategies

The second song chosen for this study is titled “Our Word”, a dense argument song that serves as a confession from the protagonist. The song is about a young girl’s childhood mistake, breaking a boat in a bottle, and her parents’ instruction to lie about it, which starts a habit of lying and keeping secrets in the family. It is a combination of intimate storytelling, changing rhyme schemes and repeated stanzas. The translation of this song was more demanding in terms of melodic structure, as it follows a strict and repetitive rhythm which does not allow for many alterations. The strategies applied to the translation of this song are presented in the following table, which provides a summary of the most frequently used techniques.

Strategy	English	Catalan
Literal Translation	<i>A place in the house</i>	<i>Un lloc de la casa</i>
Reformulation	<i>Whatever made the steak taste better</i> <i>Whatever kept the waters calm</i>	<i>El que fos per tal d’arreglar les coses</i> <i>El que fos per tal d’estar tots bé</i>

Cultural Equivalence	<i>Made up school awards to please my mom</i>	<i>Per ma mare fingia excel·lents</i>
Restructuring of rhyme schemes	<i>We can make everything okay This is all we have to say</i>	<i>Podem fer que surti tot bé Això es tot el que direm</i>
Metric adaptation	<i>And it shattered on the ground (7) When I slammed the door (5)</i>	<i>I va caure al terra quan (7) Vaig donar un fort cop (5)</i>
Expansion	<i>Three times I nearly came to ruin (8)</i>	<i>Vaig estar a punt d'acabar malament (10)</i>
Reduction	<i>Three times went crying to my parents (9)</i>	<i>Vaig 'nar plorant als meus pares (8)</i>
Change of stress pattern	<i>His study was filled with nautical decor</i>	<i>El despatx era ple de coses nàutiques</i>

Table 11. Strategies used in “Our Word”

4.2.2 Challenges

Following the same process as with “For the Record”, the first step before beginning the translation was a close reading of the lyrics and internalization of the melody through constant repetition of the original piece. This song differs from the previous one in several aspects: the melody is highly repetitive, the lyrics and semantic meaning play a crucial role

given its confessional intention, and the stress patterns are very distinct, limiting the number of possible changes. Once I was familiar with the melody and lyrics, I began with a literal translation, staying as close to the original meaning as possible. The following example shows the first and final version of the first stanza.

English	Catalan
<i>When I was a little girl</i> (7)	<i>Quan jo era molt petita</i> (8)
<i>Like really little, like eight or so</i> (9)	<i>Com molt petita, vuit anys o així</i> (9)
<i>I was playing in my father's study</i> (10)	<i>Jugava al despatx del meu pare</i> (10)
<i>A place in the house</i> (5)	<i>Un lloc de la casa</i> (6)
<i>I wasn't supposed to go</i> (7)	<i>On no podia anar</i> (6)

Table 12. Translation of the first stanza of “Our Word”

Few alterations to meaning were made. These include the addition of some words such as *molt* to add emphasis to the word *petita* and *anys* to specify the age in the second line of the Catalan translation. I also had to adapt or reformulate some concepts. For example, the word *study* does not carry the same connotation in English as in Catalan. In English, *study* is often used for referring to a private room for working, reading, or writing, whereas in Catalan this definition would fit more with the concept *despatx*.

Metric consistency was maintained in the second and third line, whereas in the other lines some changes were applied. The first line, for example, could not match the exact same numbers of syllables due to a change in the stress pattern. The original line places the stresses on the pronoun *I* and in the second syllable of the word *little*, the translation was adapted marking the stresses in the pronoun *jo*, the second syllable of the word *era*, and including an additional stress in the first syllable of the word *petita*. This allowed the pronunciation to be more fluid in order to adapt to the original melody. Finally, the last two lines of the stanza are

pronounced as a continuous sequence, leading to a final count of twelve syllables, equally maintained in the Catalan translation.

The strategy of change in the stress patterns was also applied in other parts of the translation. In the following example, the syllable count of the original lyrics corresponds to eleven, whereas the translated version I did was adapted to twelve. This demanded a change in rhythm and stress in the word *nàutiques*, which originally places the stress in the first syllable of the word, but in the translation I needed to place it in the last syllable, resulting in a slight change in pronunciation to *nautiqués*.

English	Catalan
<i>His study was filled with nautical decor</i> (11)	<i>El despatx era ple de coses nautiques</i> (12)

Table 13. Example of change in stress pattern in “Our Word”

The example below presents two main strategies applied: deletion and reformulation. Certain expressions in the English version had to be translated and reformulated into Catalan to ensure they would be familiar to the target audience. The first line of the stanza uses the expression *screw-ups*, which in Catalan would be a colloquial equivalent to *errades*. After considering different options to translate this colloquialism, I opted for deleting it and substitute it for “el que feia”, making a slight change in its meaning.

English	Catalan
<i>So i hid screw-ups from my father</i>	<i>Amagava el que feia del meu pare</i>
<i>Made up school awards to please my mom</i>	<i>Per me mare fingia excel·lents</i>
<i>Whatever made the steak taste better</i>	<i>El que fos per tal d'arreglar les coses</i>
<i>Whatever kept the waters calm</i>	<i>El que fos per tal d'estar tots bé</i>

Table 14. Example of reformulation and deletion in “Our Word”

The last two lines of the stanza contain two metaphors requiring reformulation. The expressions *Whatever made the steak taste better* and *Whatever kept the waters calm* refer to any lie or omission that prevent arguments or tensions within the protagonist’s family. Both were translated as *El que fos per tal d’arreglar les coses* and *El que fos per tal d’estar tots bé* to match their figurative meaning so that they could be understood by the Catalan audience. These reformulations complicated the preservation of the original ABAB rhyme scheme. I decided to prioritize meaning over rhyme consistency and opted for completely deleting the rhyme pattern. I chose instead to preserve the repetition of the word *Whatever* in the beginning of the two last lines of the stanza, and adapted it as *El que fos*, to maintain the effect of the repetition.

English	Catalan
<i>Three times went crying to my parents (9)</i>	<i>Vaig ‘nar plorant als meus pares (8)</i>

Table 15. Example of Reduction in “Our word”

The example above contains two clear instances of reduction. First, the final number of syllables. Second, the elision of the initial vowel in the word *anar*. This elision aligns with the informal, confessional tone of the original song and reflects how the line would naturally be sung, the vowel is dropped to maintain the rhythm. To align the melody to the rhythmic structure in the translated version, I decided to apply expansion through a melisma in the vowel *a* in the word *plorant*. This technique helped to extend the line to equal the number of syllables in the translated version.

Finally, the following instance was one of the hardest to translate. Initially I tried to prioritize semantic meaning over metric adaptation, but this led to constant changes in the

lyrics and inconsistency in the syllable count. The line also contains a cultural reference that needed to be adapted.

English	Catalan
<i>Made up school awards to please my mom</i> (9)	<i>M'inventava excel·lents per fer-los contents</i> (11)

Table 16. First version of the example of Cultural Equivalence in “Our word”

This was the first translated version of the line. The term *school awards* is specific to the source culture and would be difficult for the target audience to understand if translated literally as *premis escolars*, since this is not a common term or practice in the target culture. Instead, I adapted it to *excel·lents* to fit more accordingly to the audience. Yet, the number of syllables was not maintained, and I was dissatisfied with the deletion of the term *to please my mom* which I had rendered as *per fer-los contents*. I considered it important to specify that it was her mother she wanted to please. After trying different options, I chose to reorder the line, placing the indirect object *my mom* at the beginning, followed by the verb *fingia* and the noun *excel·lents*.

English	Catalan
<i>Made up school awards to please my mom</i> (9)	<i>Per ma mare fingia excel·lents</i> (9)

Table 17. Final version of the example of Cultural Equivalence in “Our word”

5. Conclusion

In this dissertation I have translated two songs from *36 Questions: The Podcast Musical* into Catalan, a genre that has not been examined in translation studies and for which no official

Catalan translation previously existed. By applying the strategies analysed in Low's Pentathlon Principle (2005) and Franzon's (2008) framework for song translation, this paper has shown that effective translation of a podcast musical is not only possible but requires a balance between semantic fidelity, singability, and cultural mediation.

Several key findings emerged from the analysis of "For the Record" and "Our Word". First, metric adaptation was achieved through vowel coalescence and syllable reduction in order to fit the original melody, especially considering the polysyllabic nature of Catalan in contrast with English. Second, reformulation was necessary to maintain the same emotional effect as the original, as literal translation would have led to unnatural lyrics. Third, if the stresses at the word level were not identical in the two languages, the translated lyrics could be adapted to the musical stresses of the original. Fourth, although less employed, cultural equivalence was used to replace the unfamiliar references with recognizable equivalents for the Catalan audience.

This study has several limitations. It analyzes only two songs from a single podcast musical and focuses on the English-Catalan translation. The findings may not generalize to other languages or to podcast musicals with different musical styles. The translations have not been tested with native Catalan listeners, so the question of how listeners perceive the translations remains open.

Finally, this paper argues that the podcast musical deserves recognition as a distinct genre within translation studies. By providing the first Catalan translation of songs from *36 Questions*, I have taken an initial step toward filling this gap and hope to encourage further research into the translation of audio musical plays.

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Appendix

“For the record”

<i>For the record this is self-destructive</i>	<i>Perquè consti això m'està destrossant</i>
<i>For the record I'm aware of that</i>	<i>Perquè consti tot això ja ho sé</i>
<i>For the record I've been picturing her body</i>	<i>Perquè consti me l'he estat imaginant</i>
<i>Draped over the sofa wearing nothing but</i>	<i>Tumbada al sofà portant res més que un</i>
<i>her hat</i>	<i>corset</i>
<i>For the record</i>	<i>Perquè consti</i>
<i>Mmhmm</i>	<i>Mmhmm</i>
<i>I'm screwed</i>	<i>Estic fotut</i>
<i>Mmmhmmm</i>	<i>Mmmhmmm</i>
<i>For the record this can still go my way</i>	<i>Perquè consti sé que puc canviar-ho</i>
<i>For the record I can keep my pride</i>	<i>Perquè consti encara puc guanyar</i>
<i>All I have to do is keep us focused on the</i>	<i>Només he de centrar-me en les preguntes</i>
<i>questions</i>	<i>que ella em faci</i>
<i>Each one of her responses will remind me</i>	<i>I que això em recordi perquè vaig triar</i>
<i>how she lied</i>	<i>marxar,</i>
<i>That's the answer!</i>	<i>Bona idea!</i>
<i>Mmhmmm</i>	<i>Mmmhmmm</i>
<i>That's what I'll do...</i>	<i>Això faré...</i>
<i>Mmmhmmm</i>	<i>Mmmhmmm</i>
<i>I'll use the</i>	<i>Farem les</i>

<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Questions as a life line.</i>	<i>Preguntes per coneixe'ns.</i>
<i>And of course I have sympathy</i>	<i>I es clar que tinc compassió</i>
<i>For the pathological liar who did this to me</i>	<i>Per la mentidera que m'ha fet això</i>
<i>And yes I admit, I wish I could touch her...</i>	<i>Si soc sincer amb mi, només vull tocar-la...</i>
<i>But the questions will make one thing clear:</i>	<i>Les respostes deixaran ben clar:</i>
<i>There's nothing left of my old life to spare</i>	<i>No queda res de mi ja per salvar</i>
<i>No matter how much I may—</i>	<i>No importa res més, només...</i>
JUDITH: Ta-da.	JUDITH: Ta-chán!
JASE: (<i>Alarmed</i>) What's up?	JASE: (<i>S'espanta</i>) Què tal?
JUDITH: What do you think?	JUDITH: Què et sembla?
JASE: About what?	JASE: El què?
JUDITH: My jersey. Go Sea Wolves!	JUDITH: La meva samarreta. Som-hi Barça!
JASE: Yeah. Haha. Go Sea Wolves. Anyway. I was just setting the table here. I don't know why I did that. That's weird.	JASE: Si. Jaja. Som-hi Barça. En fi... Emm... He parat taula per sopar. No sé... No sé, perquè. És raro.
JUDITH: It makes perfect sense to me. It's kind of like a weird first date. Which is why we really ought to have more booze.	JUDITH: Té molt sentit. És com una primera cita "rara". I per això, necessitem més beguda!

JASE: I have whiskey - but, um, did you- did you want wine? JUDITH: Do you have wine? JASE: Yeah. The glass shattered on the chiller last night but I think the reds are okay. I'll just uh- yeah, I'll get them. I'll be right back. <i>(To Henry)</i> Stay with Judith, Henry. JUDITH: Hey, Henry. I can't imagine all the horrible stuff you've heard about me. Well, it's all true. But you don't seem like the kind of duck who holds a grudge. You're not a whiskey drinker, are you? No. You keep your wits about you. I like that. <i>For the record I did not expect this</i> <i>I really thought that it would be a harder</i> <i>sell</i> <i>I came up with this plan at 4am on</i> <i>interstate 10</i> <i>How was I to know that it would work so</i> <i>well?</i> <i>For the record</i>	JASE: Tinc Whisky... Però tu vols... vols vi? JUDITH: Tens vi? JASE: Sí. L'altre dia es van trencar tots els gots, però crec que amb les copes ja farem. Vaig a... Mmm... Sí. Porto vi. Ara torno. <i>(A</i> <i>Henry)</i> Queda't amb la Judith, Henry. JUDITH: Hola, Henry. No em puc imaginar totes les coses dolentes que hauràs sentit sobre mi. Doncs son totes veritat. Espero que no em guardis rencor. No sols beure whisky, veritat? No. Mantens bastant la calma. M'agrada. <i>Perquè consti això no m'ho esperava</i> <i>Al meu cap sonava</i> <i>complicat</i> <i>Vaig improvitzar-ho tot aquesta</i> <i>matinada</i> <i>Per una vegada tinc la sort del</i> <i>meu costat</i> <i>Perquè consti</i>
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<i>I haven't thought a lot about the way I'll answer</i>	<i>No he pensat què contestar-li quan pregunti</i>
<i>I guess I'm still afraid that I might lie</i>	<i>Potser tinc por a dir-li la veritat</i>
<i>If only I could make him see if I was given the choice</i>	<i>Si tan sols pogués triar entre explicar la meva història</i>
<i>Of telling him the truth or sticking knives into my eyes</i>	<i>O que com a càstig em clavessin vidre als ulls</i>
<i>I'd pick the knives</i>	<i>No hi ha dubte...</i>
<i>Mmmhmmm</i>	<i>Mmmhmmm</i>
<i>But I'll survive</i>	<i>Perdo els ulls</i>
<i>Mmmhmmm</i>	<i>Mmmhmmm</i>
<i>I'll treat the</i>	<i>Farem les</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Questions as a pastime!</i>	<i>Preguntes per coneixe'ns.</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Thirty-six</i>	<i>Trenta-sis</i>
<i>Questions just like last time</i>	<i>Preguntes per coneixe'ns.</i>
<i>And maybe it's wrong to say</i>	<i>I sé que és complicat</i>
<i>But his defense and distance will not</i>	<i>Però que ell es negui no em farà parar</i>

<i>Sway me from believing this is possible</i>	<i>De creure que podem intentar-ho</i>
<i>If he didn't love me anymore</i>	<i>I si ja no l'importo gens</i>
<i>Then why the hell did he open the front door?</i>	<i>Per què ha obert la porta perquè entrés?</i>
<i>I think it's a sign that he-</i>	<i>És una senyal de que...</i>

“Our Word”

<i>When I was a little girl</i>	<i>Quan jo era molt petita</i>
<i>Like really little, like eight or so</i>	<i>Com molt petita, vuit anys o així</i>
<i>I was playing in my father's study</i>	<i>Jugava al despatx del meu pare</i>
<i>A place in the house</i>	<i>Un lloc de la casa</i>
<i>I wasn't supposed to go</i>	<i>On no podia anar</i>
<i>My father fancied himself a sailor</i>	<i>Un mariner es creia el meu pare</i>
<i>His study was filled with nautical decor</i>	<i>El despatx era ple de coses nautiques</i>
<i>He kept a boat in a bottle</i>	<i>Tenia un vaixell a una ampolla dalt d'un</i>
<i>On the top of a shelf</i>	<i>armariet</i>
<i>And it shattered on the ground</i>	<i>I va caure al terra quan</i>
<i>When I slammed the door</i>	<i>Vaig donar un fort cop</i>
<i>I told my mother everything</i>	<i>Vaig dir-li a me mare tot</i>
<i>I told her I was so, so sorry</i>	<i>Vaig dir-li que ho sentia molt</i>
<i>She told me: don't cry</i>	<i>Em va dir: no ploris</i>
<i>When he comes home tonight</i>	<i>Quan vingui aquesta nit</i>

<i>We can make everything okay</i>	<i>Podem fer que surti tot bé</i>
<i>This is all we have to say</i>	<i>Això es tot el que direm</i>
<i>We don't remember a boat in a bottle</i>	<i>No sabem res d'un vaixell a una ampolla</i>
<i>It must've fallen off its shelf alone</i>	<i>S'haurà caigut de l'armariet tot sol</i>
<i>We know you loved it, we're so sad it's broken</i>	<i>Entenem que t'agradés, ho sentim molt</i>
<i>But neither one of us was even home</i>	<i>Però ni tan sols érem a casa, no</i>
<i>And it's our word</i>	<i>Som nosaltres</i>
<i>Yes, our word</i>	<i>Sí, nosaltres</i>
<i>Against his</i>	<i>Contra ell</i>
<i>So I hid screw-ups from my father</i>	<i>Amagava el que feia del meu pare</i>
<i>Made up school awards to please my mom</i>	<i>Per ma mare fingia excel·lents</i>
<i>Whatever made the steak taste better</i>	<i>El que fos per tal d'arreglar les coses</i>
<i>Whatever kept the waters calm</i>	<i>El que fos per tal d'estar tots bé</i>
<i>I was told to keep their secrets</i>	<i>Em van manar guardar secrets</i>
<i>And in turn, they'd keep mine</i>	<i>I com a canvi ells ho farien també</i>
<i>As I got older, I got dumber</i>	<i>Em vaig fer gran i em vaig fer tonta</i>
<i>I couldn't help but cross the line</i>	<i>I simplement, se'm va anar de la mà</i>
<i>Three times I nearly wrecked my life</i>	<i>Vaig estar a punt de perdre-ho tot</i>
<i>Three times I nearly came to ruin</i>	<i>Vaig estar a punt d'acabar malament</i>
<i>Three times went crying to my parents</i>	<i>Vaig 'nar plorant als meus pares</i>

<i>Who said they'd make it go away</i>	<i>I em van dir que passaria</i>
<i>Yes, this is all we had to say</i>	<i>Sols van dir que acabaria</i>
<i>We never rented a house in sedona</i>	<i>Mai vam llogar una casa a sedona</i>
<i>We didn't see camille the day she died</i>	<i>No vam veure a camille quan va morir</i>
<i>We haven't been on our boat</i>	<i>Ja fa uns quants anys</i>
<i>In some years now</i>	<i>Que no anem a la barca</i>
<i>So we don't care what you found inside</i>	<i>I així es com tots ho vam decidir</i>
<i>And it's our word</i>	<i>Som nosaltres</i>
<i>Yes, our word</i>	<i>Sí, nosaltres</i>
<i>It's our word</i>	<i>Som nosaltres</i>
<i>Yes, our word</i>	<i>Sí, nosaltres</i>
<i>Against theirs</i>	<i>Contra ells</i>