TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

www.techniumscience.com

Vol. 74/2025

A New Decade for Social Changes

PLUS COMMUNICATION
International Communication & PR

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

Manners maketh man: An Analysis of the Song Translation Strategies in Sting's 'Englishman in New York'

Heather Adams[1], Ibai Aramburuzabala Arrieta[2]

[1]IDeTIC, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Edificio de Humanidades, Despacho 25, c/ Pérez del Toro 1, 35003 Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain,
[2]Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, c/ Pérez del Toro 1, 35003 Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

ibai.traduccion@gmail.com, heather.adams@ulpgc.es

Abstract. This paper undertakes an analysis of Sting's globally recognized 1987 song, "Englishman in New York," and its Spanish translation by Txus Bengoechea. The original lyrics offer a profound exploration of identity, individuality, and the experience of otherness within a foreign culture. This is exemplified through the figure of Quentin Crisp, an "Englishman in New York" who embodied multifaceted "alienation" – both geographic and social. The study is motivated by the inherent complexities of rendering a "singable" text from one language to another while preserving its core essence and nuanced message across linguistic and cultural borders. The theoretical framework integrates concepts of cultural and translational identity, drawing on perspectives that view identity as a dynamic process. The analysis also considers the legal and sociolinguistic implications of the term "alien". The study applies established theories of song translation, specifically Franzon's five strategic options for approaching lyrical adaptation and Low's Pentathlon Principle, which provides a practical framework for evaluating singable translations across multiple parameters. The methodology involves a line-by-line analysis of the juxtaposed original and translated lyrics, treating each line as a translation unit due to the inseparable nature of words and music in songs. This approach aims to identify the strategies employed in navigating the conflicting demands of musicality, naturalness, and semantic fidelity inherent in song translation.

Keywords. song translation, identity, otherness, singability, cultural adaptation

1. Introduction

The lyrics of Sting's "Englishman in New York," published in 1987, transcend those of the conventional pop song, offering an exploration of identity, individuality, and the experience of otherness within a foreign culture. The song achieved global recognition, not only for its distinctive musicality but also thanks to these lyrics, which pay homage to a remarkable individual. This paper aims to provide an analysis of "Englishman in New York" and its Spanish translation by Txus Bengoechea, which transmits the nuanced message of the original song across linguistic and cultural borders. By presenting the context of the original text, the theoretical underpinnings of cultural and translational identity, and the specific challenges of

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

song translation, we seek to identify the complexities inherent in rendering a "singable" text in a language other than the one if was originally written in while preserving its core essence.

The genesis of "Englishman in New York" lies in Sting's admiration for "Quentin Crisp, who is a friend and a hero" (Watrous, 1987). Crisp was an English writer, raconteur, and flamboyant homosexual who had relocated to New York City. Described by Sting as "one of the most courageous men I've ever met," served as the primary inspiration for the lyrics due to his unapologetic individuality in a society that often did not embrace such unique expression (Cheshire, 1987). The singer contrasted Crisp's courage with conventional, hyper-masculine figures, remarking, "We think of courageous as being this sort of Rambo moron with big muscles and a gun. Quentin is this incredibly effeminate, witty man and I think he's much more of a hero to me than Sylvester (Stallone)" (Cheshire, 1987). This highlights Sting's intention to explore "feminine qualities that can exist in man without being negative" (Watrous, 1987). Furthermore, the composer envisioned the song's musical structure as evoking the sensory experience of "walking down the street, passing different musical events," as if one were passing "a shop window and hear[ing] different kinds of music in each one" (Watrous, 1987). This intention underscores the multimodal approach adopted in the creation of the song, in which lyrics and music coalesce to paint a vivid picture of New York's eclectic auditory landscape.

Quentin Crisp (1908–1999) was an English icon renowned for his dis tinctive and openly homosexual lifestyle, particularly in an era when such openness was rare and often met with hostility. His move to New York in 1981 further cemented his identity as an "Englishman in New York," providing the literal and metaphorical backdrop for Sting's song. Crisp's "alienation," as described in an analysis of the song, was multifaceted: Firstly, he was a geographic and national 'alien' in the legal American English sense of a foreigner in a different country. Sting sings about his distinct British customs, such as 'I don't drink coffee I take tea my dear / I like my toast done on one side'. These lines not only establish his geographical origin but also act as cultural markers of his 'otherness' in an American context, where coffee is the norm and toast preferences are not typically distinctive. Beyond the geographic, Crisp's "alienation" also stemmed from his sexual identity, transforming what might be perceived as a stigma into a source of strength. The song, therefore, serves as a meditation on how identity is constructed and experienced in relation to "the other" and a universal anthem about authenticity in the face of conformity, where "alienation" is redefined not as a weakness, but as a virtue. This dual layer of "alienation"—as a cultural foreigner and as an individual defying social norm—forms the core thematic concern of the song and presents unique challenges for its cross-cultural translation.

2. Contextualization

This section will lay out theoretical tenets necessary to analyse the song and its translation for the specific purposes of this article. It will delve into concepts of identity, otherness, and interculturality, explore the legal and social implications of the term "alien," as well as defining the concept of "singability" and its theoretical dimensions within translation studies.

2.1. The Experience of the Foreigner, Identity, Otherness, and Interculturality

The figure of the "Englishman in New York" embodies a profound sense of foreignness and otherness. The term "alien" itself carries both legal and identitarian connotations, directly relevant to Crisp's experience. Legally, "alien" refers to a "foreign national" or "noncitizen," a

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

definition that applied to Quentin Crisp as a British person residing in New York. However, the song delves deeper into a more profound layer of 'alienation': the feeling of being an outsider, misfit, or socially marginalized. Crisp's experiences as a "flamboyant homosexual" and an individual who "lived his life as an individual in a society that often did not applaud such unique expression" (Cheshire, 1987) made him an embodiment of this multifaceted alienation. His distinct British customs, together with his explicitly named British accent, serve as cultural markers of his "otherness" in an American context.

The song's exploration of identity resonates with broader theoretical discussions. Identity is not a static entity but a constant "process", "of becoming rather than being" (Hall and du Gay, 2011:4). This dynamic view of identity highlights that it is "not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost', sustained or abandoned" (Hall and du Gay, 2011:2). The act of identification often builds on the "recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics" (Hall and du Gay, 2011:2). However, even when consolidated, identification "does not cancel difference. The total fusion it suggests is, in reality, a fantasy of incorporation" (Hall and du Gay, 2011:3). Crisp's ability to transform his "alienation" into a source of strength and a symbol of the freedom to be himself exemplifies this dynamic and constructed nature of identity. The song, therefore, becomes a universal anthem about authenticity in the face of conformity.

The concept of "otherness" is central to the song's narrative. Bhabha's (1994) concept of "the in-between of culture" and "cultural difference," offers a framework for understanding the spaces where such identities are negotiated. He emphasizes that cultural meanings are often formed in the "interstices of a double inscription" (Bhabha, 1994:108). Crisp, as the "Englishman in New York," exists in such an interstitial space, navigating between his British heritage and the American context, ultimately forging a unique identity. This "spacing between desire and fulfilment, between perpetuation and its recollection" (Bhabha, 1994: 108) becomes a site of cultural survival and transformation. The song promotes the acceptance and celebration of diversity ("Be yourself no matter what they say"), aligning with Bhabha's call to "translate the differences between them into a kind of solidarity" (Bhabha, 1994:170).

A key lexical reference related to foreign- or otherness used repeatedly in the song's chorus is that of "alien". This term has historically occupied, and continues to occupy, a central position in American legal nomenclature related to immigration, although its usage has evolved and been subject to considerable scrutiny. From a strictly legal perspective, the definition of "alien" is unequivocal and codified in US federal law. The cornerstone of this definition is found in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952. Specifically, Section 101(a)(3) of the INA stipulates that "the term 'alien' means any person not a citizen or national of the United States" (USCIS, 2019). This definition is corroborated by the Legal Information Institute (LII) at Cornell Law School, a reputable legal resource, which reiterates that an "alien" is "a legal term that refers to any person who is not a citizen or a national of the United States, as listed in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)" (Legal Information Institute, 2022).

The significance of this definition lies in its application to classify individuals within the U.S. immigration legal system. An "alien" is not a citizen by birth (jus soli or jus sanguinis) or by naturalization, which implies that they are subject to a different set of laws and regulations compared to U.S. citizens. Within this broad legal category, the INA establishes various subcategories, such as resident and nonresident, immigrant and nonimmigrant, asylee and refugee, and documented and undocumented (Legal Information Institute, 2022). Each of these subcategories carries different rights, responsibilities, and legal processes.

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

Historically, the use of the term "alien" in U.S. legislation dates back to the late 18th century. The infamous Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, enacted during a period of tensions with France, serve as an early and notable example of how the term was used to grant the federal government powers to deport "aliens" deemed dangerous (Fiveable, 2024). These acts illustrate how, from the nation's inception, the status of "alien" was linked to national security and the government's ability to control non-citizen populations. The *Cambridge Dictionary* also highlights this historical legal meaning, defining "alien" as "someone who lives in a country of which they are not a legal citizen" and citing its use in wartime contexts to refer to "citizens of enemy countries" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.).

Despite its entrenchment in law, the use of the term "alien" has been met with increasing criticism in public discourse and immigrant rights circles. The controversy stems from the fact that the term, outside its strictly legal context, evokes connotations of "strange," "extraterrestrial," or "foreign," which can contribute to the dehumanization and stigmatization of immigrant individuals. In response to these concerns, the Biden administration, through directives issued in 2021, promoted the replacement of "alien" with "noncitizen" in the documentation and language of federal immigration agencies, seeking a more respectful and neutral terminology (AILA, 2024). This shift reflects a recognition that, while the term has a legal basis, its sociolinguistic implications can be detrimental and perpetuate a narrative of "otherness" that contrasts with principles of inclusion and human dignity.

Translation studies itself engages profoundly with these concepts. Cronin (2006) argues that translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but a crucial process in understanding the inherent "complexity of language and culture" (Cronin, 2006:130). He posits that "it is because so much cannot be translated that much more remains to be translated" (Cronin, 2006:130), suggesting that the very existence of untranslatable elements highlights the unique cultural nuances that translation attempts to bridge. Cronin also introduces the "hologrammatic dimension" of translation, which involves "the ability to perceive the full complexity of the work in the ‘particular’ language, bearing constantly in mind the ‘world view’" (Cronin, 2006:133). This holistic perspective is particularly pertinent when translating a culturally resonant song like "Englishman in New York," where the individual's story intertwines with broader cultural and societal dynamics.

Furthermore, the discussion extends to "interlingual cover versions" of popular songs, as explored by Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva (2019:44). These covers, sung in a language other than the original, exemplify how songs "travel across linguistic and cultural borders," involving processes of "adaptation, appropriation, and rewriting of the lyrics from scratch" (Susam-Sarajeva, 2019:46). The phenomenon of music constructing identity is significant, as music can become "an intrinsic part of their lives, acts as a shortcut to their memories" (Susam-Sarajeva, 2008:188). This deep connection underscores the importance of culturally sensitive translation, particularly for songs that embody a strong sense of personal or national identity. The choice of language in lyrics can carry "symbolic meanings" (Davies and Bentahila and Öner, cited in Susam-Sarajeva, 2008:195), further emphasizing the role of translation in shaping challenging these meanings within new cultural contexts.

2.2. Song translation

Song lyrics are fundamentally "expressive texts" (Reiss, 2000; Low, 2016:20), differing significantly from informative or operative texts. Their primary function is not to convey facts but to express "the inspiration of the creator(s)" (Low, 2016:21). This expressive nature means that translators must endeavour "to successfully replicate their verbal actions, to

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

do in the TL [target language] whatever complex things the song-lyrics were doing in the SL [source language]" (Low, 2016:21). This task is further complicated by several inherent characteristics of songs.

Firstly, songs are "verbal-musical hybrids" (Low, 2013:229). The words are inseparable from the music, and the "assessment of what the ST is doing or trying to do needs to be based on the music as well as the words" (Low, 2016:21). The music dictates the rhythm, influences the tone, and even adds semantic value through "word-painting" or conveying mood (Low, 2016). This creates conflicting priorities for the translator: maintaining fidelity to the lyrics (sense), the music (rhythm, melody, harmony), and the intended performance (singability, naturalness) (Franzon, 2008). As Peter Newmark states, the words of vocal music "must be interpreted alongside its musical language, namely its pitch contours, its harmonic setting, its rhythmic and metrical characteristics as well as its performative features (the articulation, dynamics and expression projected by the singer)" (Newmark, 2012:61, cited in Low, 2016:21).

Secondly, song lyrics are "oral texts" (Low, 2016), designed to be heard rather than merely read, which distinguishes them from written prose. Oral texts are crafted "with a view to sounding good, sounding effective and sometimes sounding beautiful" (Low, 2016:22). This leads to the prominent use of "phonic figures of style" such as rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and repetition (Low, 2016). Unlike written texts, "oral texts cannot use spelling to distinguish between homophones" (Low, 2016:25), and "an effective oral text avoids the problems of comprehension arising from informational overloading, elaborate cross-reference, excessive speed and so forth" (Hervey & Higgins, 1992:136, cited in Low, 2016:25). This means song lyrics are often "very short, with or without the repetitions," consisting of "short lines, even short phrases," and "rarely find long or complex sentences" (Low, 2016:25). The immediate comprehensibility required during a fleeting listening experience places a premium on clarity and concision.

Finally, the inherent compromise between conflicting demands is a perpetual challenge. Franzon states that "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" (Franzon, 2008, 377).

For the purposes of this study, we have distilled all of the above into Franzon's approaches to strategic options and the lens through which Low looks at song translation. Franzon (2008) synthesizes the strategic choices available to a song translator, categorizing them into five options:

Leaving the song untranslated: Often used when the purpose is simply to understand lyrics, or when the original is deemed authentic and impactful in its source language (Franzon, 2008). Examples include cases where "the lyrics of this well-known song were left in English" in translations of books (Franzon, 2008:378).

Translating the lyrics but not taking the music into account: A semantically close, prose translation, often serving as a supplement for understanding, such as in concert programs or album inserts (Franzon, 2008).

Writing new lyrics to the original music with no overt relation to the original lyrics: This is considered a "replacement text" by Low (2013), distinct from translation or adaptation, as the meaning is "completely altered" (Low, 2013). Franzon (2008) notes this is common in popular music where music is paramount.

Translating the lyrics and adapting the music accordingly: This option allows for musical modifications to accommodate the translation, sometimes leading to a new composition (Franzon, 2008).

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

Adapting the translation to the original music: The most common form of singable translation, where the music remains unchanged, and the translator modifies the verbal rendering "by approximating more loosely, by paraphrasing or by deleting from and adding to the content of the source lyrics." (Franzon, 2008:386). This is where fidelity becomes variable, prioritizing functionality and performance (Franzon, 2008).

The theoretical underpinning for these choices lies in functionalist approaches to translation, particularly Skopos Theory (Reiss & Vermeer, 2013). As Christiane Nord (1997) asserts, "fidelity follows function" (Nord, 1997, referenced in Franzon, 2008:375) This means that the "intended purpose of the target text" (Franzon, 2008:375) should guide the translator's decisions, rather than a rigid adherence to source text form or meaning. In song translation, the primary purpose is often a "singing performance" (Franzon, 2008:375), which imposes "visual, acoustic, temporal or spatial constraints" (Snell-Hornby, 1997, cited in Franzon, 2008:375). This necessitates a contextual appropriateness over word-by-word equivalence (Franzon, 2008:375).

Franzon identifies several key motivations for the strategy of "writing new lyrics to the original music with no overt relation to the original lyrics" (Option 3), which he views as a "translational action" despite not being "translation proper in the linguistic sense". This approach is primarily driven by the priority of the music, where the original composition is considered the most important element, even if it means completely departing from the source lyrics' meaning. It is also widely used in popular music for marketability and the importation of musico-verbal material between cultures, serving to familiarize audiences with the music and potentially pave the way for closer lyrical translations later. Additionally, this strategy allows for the preservation of the source song's performance potential, such as characterization or humorous themes, even with entirely new words, and is deemed acceptable when the original lyrics lack direct relevance to the overall narrative (e.g., background music in films). Low refers to this as "replacement text," often created when a lyricist finds the original lyrics weak and aims to "write better words" to an existing tune.

Low's "Pentathlon Principle" (Low, 2005; Low, 2016) provides a practical framework for evaluating singable translations. This principle, likened to an Olympic pentathlete's need to excel in five events, requires balancing:

Singability (phonetic suitability): Ensuring words are easy to sing to particular note values, considering vowels and consonants (Low, 2005). Franzon (2008:391) notes this as the "most basic requirement," as its absence can make lyrics "may technically be impossible to sing."

Rhyme: Matching the rhyme scheme of the original, if applicable, or finding suitable alternatives in the target language (Low, 2005).

Rhythm: Aligning the translated lyrics with the pre-existing musical rhythm, including downbeats, bar-lines, and note-lengths (Low, 2016). This requires a "high degree of respect for this pre-existing musical rhythm" (Low, 2016:95).

Naturalness: Ensuring the translated text sounds authentic and idiomatic in the target language, avoiding the impression of being a "translation" (Low, 2016). This is crucial for fast and effective communication during performance, as "unnaturalness demands from the audience additional and superfluous processing effort" (Low, 2016:67).

Fidelity to the sense of the source text: Conveying the meaning and emotional content of the original lyrics (Low, 2005). However, Low (2013) notes that singable translations may stray from strict semantic fidelity, allowing for unforced deviations from the meaning of the source text.

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

3. Corpus

The corpus for this analysis consists of the original English lyrics of Sting's "Englishman in New York" and the Spanish translation of the song, created and performed by Bengoechea (2016), and can be found in the Appendix. Juxtaposing Sting's original lyrics with Bengoechea's translation, we will analyse the different aspects and precepts of Franzon and Low on a line-by-line rather than a word-based basis (Hurtado Albir, 2001), taking each line as a translation unit. This approach is justified here as the words are inseparable from the music, and their meaning, rhythm, and performative impact are intrinsically linked to the musical context, making the choice of words inextricable from the musico-verbal unit they form part of.

4. Data

In this section we will present the data observed in the Spanish translation of "Englishman in New York" using Franzon's Five Options in Song Translation and Low's Pentathlon Principle.

4.1. Franzon's Five Options

Table 1 gives the use of the different options for song translation outlined by Franzon.

Table 1. Incidence of Franzon's options for song translation

Options for Song Translation	%
Adapting translation	87.5
New lyrics	12.5
Translating without music	0
Adapting music	0
Not translating	0*

*As we shall see in table 6, there is one instance of non-translation of a word; this is not included here as our units of analysis are full lines.

Table 1 shows that the predominant option employed in this case was that of a translation adapted to fit with the music, representing nearly 90% of the lines translated. In just 12.5% of the lines, some new lyrics were observed to have been created, both to convey the idea of otherness and in order to fit the rhythm of the music.

In the category of adapting translation to match the beat, we can distinguish between cases of approximation, paraphrasing, omission or addition. Examples of each approach, together with the back translation into English of the Spanish version, are given in tables 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively.

Table 2: Approximation

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
A walking cane here at my side	apoyado en mi bastón...	leaning on my cane....
I take it everywhere I walk	Vaya donde vaya, siempre voy con él...	Wherever I go, I always go with it…

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

In the first example given in table 2, "apoyado en mi bastón" maintains the central image of the cane while adapting the syntactic structure to Spanish, transforming the spatial description ("here at my side") into a participial construction ("apoyado en") that is more natural and flows better in the context of the song. Meanwhile, "Vaya donde vaya, siempre voy con él", demonstrates a more creative approach that preserves the sense of omnipresence of the cane through a Spanish idiomatic structure ("vaya donde vaya") that emphasises the universality of the action.

Table 3: Paraphrasing

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
If "manners maketh man" as someone said	Si fuera a un - concurso de - urbanidad	If I went to an urbanity contest
Takes more than combat gear to make a man	(Para) ser hombre - no hace falta pelear	(To) be a man - you don't have to fight
Confront your enemies, avoid them when you can	Confronta a tu enemigo - pero sin luchar	Confront your enemy - but don't fight back.

By paraphrasing "manners maketh man" as a "concurso de urbanidad" (urbanity contest) in the first example in table 3, the target text prioritises naturalness and intelligibility for the Spanish-speaking audience. This adaptation negotiates fidelity to the original meaning in order to maintain the singability and rhythm essential in musical translation.

The second example, shows how “Takes more than combat gear to make a man” has been paraphrased as the Spanish equivalent of "(To) be a man - you don't have to fight", thereby prioritising fluency and naturalness in Spanish ("no hace falta pelear", no need to fight) over the literalness of "combat gear", maintaining the thematic essence for the audience

In the third example, the Spanish “Confronta a tu enemigo - pero sin luchar” simplifies the original's nuanced advice (“avoid them when you can”) to fit the music's rhythm and ensure naturalness.

Table 4: Omission

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
At night a candle's brighter than the sun	como un sol de noche brillarán	(they) will shine like the sun at night.

The translation shown in table 4 eliminates the complex comparative structure of the original line by deleting the word “candle” and linking the action “will shine” to the subjects in the previous line (i.e. gentleness and sobriety).

Table 5: Addition

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
A gentleman will walk but never run	Caballero andante - nunca correrá	Knight errant - he'll never run

The singability is achieved through natural, idiomatic Spanish ("Caballero andante") and rhythmic adaptability, ensuring the lyrics flow well with the music despite minor syllable count variations. This strategic compromise maintains the core message while creating a

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

"singing song" that resonates culturally and is easy to perform and understand. In this respect, it should be noted that the phrase "Caballero andante" (Knight errant) subtly evokes Cervantes' Don Quixote, adding intertextual depth and cultural resonance to the translated lyrics.

The only other of Franzon's strategies observed in the translated text was that of the writing of new lyrics, with a presence of 12.5%, corresponding to the lines "Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien". They are part of the chorus, and are repeated 4 times (out of the 32 lines in the song), accounting for all the occurrences of "new lyrics".

Table 6. New lyrics

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien	OH OH - SOY UN ALIEN, más raro que nadie	OH OH - I'M AN ALIEN, weirder than anyone else

As mentioned previously, we analysed the corpus on juxtaposing ST and TT lines, rather than word-by-word. In that sense, no line remained untranslated (hence the 0% percentage of "Not translated" in table 1). However, it is worth mentioning that part of this line contains a word (alien) that has been left untranslated. This raises the question of why this was done. By not translating "ALIEN" and adding "más raro que nadie" (weirder than anyone), the translation expands the concept of otherness, transcending the literal "legal alien" status. The target text opens the door to the broader idea of being an "alien" (in Spanish it only means "extraterrestrial", without any reference to being a foreigner), to which the new lyrics "más raro que nadie" to emphasise a profound sense of weirdness, although the word alien itself is not the equivalent Spanish form (which would be "alienígena"). This interpretation is consistent with Quentin Crisp's unique public persona and can be reinforced by his visual portrayal in the song's context. Adding new lyrics, the focus shifts to subjective alienation, prioritizing naturalness and performative impact in Spanish.

4.2 Low's Pentathlon Principle

Table 7 gives the data corresponding to the extent to which each of the parameters of Low's Pentathlon Principle are adhered to in the translated version.

Table 7. Incidence of Low's Pentathlon Principle parameters

	SINGABILITY	SENSE	NATURALNESS	RHYTHM	RHYME
% YES	100	87.5	90.625	100	37.5
% NO	0	12.5	9.375	0	62.5

As we can see from the data in Table 7, all the parameters included in the Pentathlon Principle are adhered to in this translation, and all but "rhyme" in the overwhelming majority of cases. "Singability" and "rhythm" are observed in every single line, underscoring the extent to which the music prevails over the precise verbal form of the lyrics in all cases. The sense of the original is maintained in 87.5% of the text, revealing a significant level of fidelity, particularly given the prevalence of the music. The Spanish text sounds natural to native speakers of Spanish in 90% of cases, and it is only in the area of "rhyme" where the translation yields a result of less than 50%. Tables 8 to 12 give examples to illustrate these cases.

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

Table 8. Fidelity to Sense

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
I'm an Englishman in New York	Soy inglés - resido en Nueva York	I am English - I live in New York
I'm an Englishman in New York (chorus)	Un inglés perdido en Nueva York	An Englishman lost in New York

The Spanish translation of the line "Englishman in New York" demonstrates conveys the song's core theme of cultural displacement and otherness through a semantic shift. While the first instance of “I’m an Englishman in New York” translation renders the phrase as "Soy inglés - resido en Nueva York," maintaining the semantic content in the first part of the sentence, but adding the new idea of residing in New York, the chorus goes a step further, "Un inglés perdido en Nueva York" (An Englishman lost in New York).

The Spanish translation reads very naturally, avoiding calques or awkward phrasing that would betray its translated origin, as we can see in the following examples:

Table 9. Naturalness

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
I don't drink coffee, I take tea, my dear	No quiero café - yo sólo tomo te	I don't want coffee - I only drink/have tea
I like my toast done on one side	y las tostadas por un lado.	and toast on one side.
And you can hear it in my accent when I talk	Por mi acento refinado lo sabrás:	You'll know it by my refined accent:
Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety	Corrección, modestia - a tí - te distinguirán	Propriety and modesty will distinguish you

In "No quiero café - yo sólo tomo té" for "I don't drink coffee, I take tea, my dear," the Spanish version employs a perfectly natural and common way to express preference, while the omission of "my dear" contributes to conciseness and fluidity that works seamlessly in a sung context. Similarly, "Y las tostadas por un lado" for "I like my toast done on one side" represents a straightforward and idiomatic rendering that sounds completely authentic in Spanish. The verb “gustar” (“like”) is omitted here as the object (the toast) could depend on either of the preceding ones (“quiero”, “I like” or “tomo”, “I take/have”) and the omission enables the line to flow naturally. The translation of "And you can hear it in my accent when I talk" as "Por mi acento refinado lo sabrás" reflects naturalness through strategic explicitation; while "refined accent" represents an addition not explicitly present in the original, it aligns perfectly with the persona of Quentin Crisp, the song's subject, and provides a culturally natural way of expliciting the original intent while maintaining the verse's performative flow.

"Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety" suggests that these virtues may paradoxically lead to fame or notoriety, while "Corrección, modestia - a tí - te distinguirán" proposes that these qualities will simply distinguish the individual in a positive way. This divergence prioritises musical coherence and linguistic naturalness over the preservation of the original ironic sense, sacrificing the conceptual tension between private virtue and public recognition in favour of a more direct assertion of personal distinction.

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

Table 10. Rhythm

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety	Corrección, modestia - a tí - te distinguirán	Propriety and modesty will distinguish you
You could end up as the only one	porque, al fin el único serás.	because, in the end, you will be the only one.
Gentleness, sobriety are rare in this society	Gentileza, sobriedad - raras en la sociedad	Gentleness, sobriety - rare in society

While an exhaustive assessment of rhythm would require the musical score or a precise mapping of how the Spanish lyrics align with the original melody's note values and stress patterns, a detailed musical analysis to this extent was not conducted for the purposes of this study. Instead, based on the lyrical structure and the translation strategies identified, the rhythmic strategy employed in the target text was inferred.

The syllabic structure of the target text reveals a meticulous attention to prosodic elements that ensures the translation maintains its musical viability. The rendering of "Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety" (11 syllables) as "Corrección, modestia - a tí - te distinguirán" (approximately 11-12 syllables) demonstrates how the translator successfully preserves syllable count while maintaining rhythmic compatibility with the original melody. Similarly, "You could end up as the only one" (9 syllables) becomes "porque, al fin el único serás" (10 syllables), where the minimal syllabic increase represents a typical and easily adaptable adjustment that singing can accommodate without compromising the musical flow. The translation of "Gentleness, sobriety are rare in this society" (11 syllables) as "Gentileza, sobriedad - raras en la sociedad" (approximately 12-13 syllables) shows a slight increase that, while noticeable, likely preserves the overall prosodic flow through careful attention to stress patterns and natural Spanish rhythm.

Table 11. Rhyme

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety	Corrección, modestia - a tí - te distinguirán	Propriety and modesty will distinguish you
You could end up as the only one	porque, al fin el único serás.	because, in the end, you will be the only one.

The original text has a regular rhythmic structure in 4/4, and alternates narrative verses and repetitive refrains. The syllabic meter is not rigid, which enables metrical or syllabic adjustments without breaking the musical flow. In the translated version, attempts have been made to replicate certain patterns found in the original.

The transformation of "Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety" and "You could end up as the only one" into "Corrección, modestia - a tí - te distinguirán" and "porque, al fin el único serás" demonstrates the use of assonant rhyme, which involves "repetition of stressed vowel sounds within words with different end consonants", to preserve the musical quality of the original. The assonant pairing of "distinguirán" and "serás" through their shared vowel sound (-rán vs. -rás) creates a subtle but effective rhyme scheme that maintains poetic coherence without forcing exact rhymes that might compromise semantic accuracy or linguistic naturalness.

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

Table 12. Singability

Original (EN)	Translation (ES)	Backtranslation
And you can hear it in my accent when I talk	Por mi acento refinado lo sabrás:	You'll know it by my refined accent:
A walking cane here at my side	apoyado en mi bastón…	leaning on my cane....
I take it everywhere I walk	Vaya donde vaya, siempre voy con él...	Wherever I go, I always go with it...

Considering the combined effect, the translation appears highly singable. The wording in each of the lines is chosen to fit the known melodic contours of the song. The naturalness of the Spanish phrasing would allow a singer to deliver the lyrics with conviction and clarity.

The rendering of "And you can hear it in my accent when I talk" as "Por mi acento refinado lo sabrás" exemplifies a perfect syllable count alignment, natural Spanish phrasing, and phonetic suitability that minimizes cognitive processing during performance. Similarly, "apoyado en mi bastón" for "A walking cane here at my side" achieves musico-verbal unity through its precise eight-syllable match and abundance of open syllables that enhance vocal flow, while simultaneously creating textual cohesion with preceding lines. Even when syllabic correspondence cannot be maintained, as evidenced in "Vaya donde vaya, siempre voy con él" (11 syllables) for "I take it everywhere I walk" (8 syllables), the translator prioritizes idiomatic naturalness and semantic fidelity over strict prosodic matching.

5. Discussion

The data resulting from the analysis carried out on our corpus by applying Low's Pentathlon Principle reveal the prevalence of the dominance of singability and rhythm in this translation, as both are adhered to in every single line (100%) of the translated text, underscoring the extent to which the music dictates the lyrical adaptation. This aligns with Franzon's assertion for song translation that singability is the "most basic requirement," without which lyrics may be "technically impossible to sing" (Franzon, 2008). Meticulous attention to the prosodic layer ensures that the Spanish lyrics align with the musical rhythm, as seen in the translation of "Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety" (11 syllables) as "Corrección, modestia - a tí - te distinguirán" (approximately 11-12 syllables) demonstrates careful preservation of syllable count for rhythmic compatibility. The choice of words with suitable phonetic qualities, such as an abundance of open syllables in lines like "apoyado en mi bastón" for "A walking cane here at my side," further enhances vocal flow and contributes to optimal musico-verbal unity.

Of the five options for song translation posited by Franzon (2008), only two are observed in this case. The predominant choice is "adapting the translation to the original music", accounting for 87.5% of the translated lines. This adaptation was achieved by a mix of approximation, paraphrasing for fluency and naturalness, omission to streamline complex structures for better oral comprehension and rhythmic fit, and addition, for cultural resonance and performability.

The second song translation strategy (Franzon, 2008) observed was that of writing new lyrics to the original music with no overt relation to the original lyrics", albeit to a much lesser extent (12.5% of lines), all of which corresponded to the chorus (repeated 4 times, out of a total of 32 lines). This degree of repetition reduces the real significance of the use of this strategy over and above its statistical presence. This line of the chorus ("OH OH - SOY UN ALIEN,

más raro que nadie", in Spanish) includes the only case of a non-translated word in the whole translated text, and would have been counted as such had a word-by-word analysis been carried out.

Franzon's remaining three strategies (translating without music, adapting music and not translating) were not observed in this translation, at least at the translation unit level of analysis. The complete lack of either of the first two underscores the primacy of musicality in this translation, and the only example of non-translation of a word ("alien") could be argued to obey the need to use a word that sits comfortably with the rhythm of the music in the oft-repeated chorus.

The pursuit of singability also significantly impacts other parameters of Low's Pentathlon Principle (Low, 2005; Low, 2016), as can be seen in the high level of naturalness (over 90%), a quality that is paramount for a "singing performance" to avoid the translated text sounding awkward or requiring "additional and superfluous processing effort" from the audience (Low, 2016). Bengoechea's translation consistently employs natural and idiomatic Spanish phrasing, as the examples in table 9 show. This prevalence of naturalness in the translated text does not, however, come at the cost of fidelity to the sense of the source text, which was observed in 87.5% of cases. Where deviations occur, they often serve to amplify key themes or enhance cultural resonance for the target audience. A notable example is the translation of "I'm an Englishman in New York" in the chorus as "Un inglés perdido en Nueva York" (An Englishman lost in New York). The addition of "perdido" (lost), while not explicitly present in the original, serves as an interpretive amplification that makes the underlying themes of alienation and cultural dislocation more explicit and emotionally resonant for the Spanish-speaking audience. This choice, which Low notes is permissible in singable translations as an "unforced deviation" (Low, 2013), deepens the song's affective dimensions and enhances its impact during performance. Finally, rhyme (37.5% adherence) is the least prioritised element in Bengoechea's translation, reflecting a common trade-off in song translation where perfect rhyme often yields to the demands of rhythm, naturalness, and meaning. This approach allows the translator to maintain poetic coherence and musical quality without forcing exact rhymes that could compromise linguistic naturalness or semantic accuracy. The translator leverages the original's non-rigid syllabic meter, allowing for metrical adjustments without interrupting the musical flow, while still attempting to replicate patterns when feasible.

6. Conclusions

This article presents findings from a study of Sting's "Englishman in New York" (1987) and a Spanish version of the same song, created and performed by Bengoechea in 2016. Sting's original composition was deeply rooted in his personal admiration for Quentin Crisp, a figure who embodied both geographic and social "alienation" and whose life transformed into a celebration of individuality and authenticity (Cheshire, 1987). This thematic core, coupled with Sting's ability to weave a poetic verbal representation of his muse with a distinctive, internationally popular musical score established a complex source text. The theoretical framework of the study draws, in the first place, on concepts of identity as a fluid construct (Hall and du Gay, 2011) and cultural difference as a site of negotiation (Bhabha, 1994), highlighting the song's universal resonance beyond its specific narrative. Subsequently, the analysis of the Spanish version presented is based on Franzon's strategies for song translation (2008) and Low's Pentathlon Principle (Low, 2005; Low, 2016), in order to determine the extent and ways in which the message of the original was respected (both in the depiction of

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

Quintin Crisp himself and in the sense of some form of alienation) as well as the faithfulness, or not, to the original music.

In creating his Spanish version of the lyrics, set to the same music, Bengoechea adopted the strategy of "adapting the translation to the original music" (Franzon, 2008), which is common for professional singable translations. This choice implicitly aligns with "Skopos Theory" (Reiss & Vermeer, 2013), prioritizing the target text's purpose – in this case, to be performed and enjoyed by Spanish-speaking audiences – over strict literal fidelity. No adjustments were made to the music to fit with the new lyrics, revealing an absolute prioritisation of this aspect of the hybrid original text. Despite this prevalence, the core message and imagery of the original are largely preserved, the resulting translation is overall very natural sounding in Spanish, rhythm is respected and singability ensured. The only slight casualty is rhyme, although efforts have been made to introduce assonance where possible.

Ultimately, Bengoechea's translation exemplifies that song translation is "inevitably a compromise between fidelity to the music, lyrics and performance" (Franzon, 2008). It is a creative act that transforms an existing artistic product, allowing its "essential values of music, lyrics and sung performance to be reproduced in a target language" (Franzon, 2008). By navigating these challenges, Bengoechea's rendition of "Englishman in New York" demonstrates how translation can serve as a bridge in intercultural communication, allowing the emotional and thematic richness of a song to resonate with new audiences, thereby contributing to the song's enduring global legacy. The ability to convey the spirit of Crisp's individuality and the essence of the "alien" experience in a new linguistic and cultural context is a testament to the translator's skill and the transformative power of singable translation.

7. Bibliography

[1] Alien and Sedition Acts (1798). [Online]. Available at: https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/alien-and-sedition-acts#:~:text=As%20a%20result%2C%20a%20Federalist,imprisonment%2C%20deportation%20during%20wartime.

[2] American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) (2024). “Think Immigration: From ‘Alien’ to ‘Noncitizen’: The subtle power of language in U.S. appellate courts,” Sep. 10, 2024. [Online]. Available at: https://www.aila.org/library/think-immigration-from-alien-to-noncitizen-the-subtle-power-of-language-in-u-s-appellate-courts.

[3] Bengoechea, T. (2016). *Englishman in New York.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIWGJeDDpww&ab_channel=TxusBengoechea

[4] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture.* Routledge.

[5] Cambridge University Press, “Alien.” *Cambridge Dictionary*. [Online]. Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/alien.

[6] Cheshire, B. (1987, October 21). Sting's ready to turn a new page... *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

[7] Cronin, M. (2006). Translation and Identity (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203015698

[8] Fiveable (2024). Alien – AP US History. [Online]. Available at: https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/apush/alien.

[9] Franzon, J. (2008). Choices in song translation. *The Translator*, *14*(2), 373-399. https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2008.10799263.

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

[10] Hall, S., & du Gay, P. (Eds.) (2011). Questions of cultural identity. SAGE Publications Ltd, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221907

[11] Hervey, S. & Higgins, I. (1992) *Thinking Translation*, London & New York, Routledge.

[12] Hurtado Albir, A. (2001). *Traducción y Traductología: Introducción a la traductología*. Cátedra.

[13] Legal Information Institute (2022). *Wex: US Law Dictionary*. Cornell Law School. [Online]. Available at: https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/alien.

[14] Low, P. (2005). The Pentathlon Approach to Translating Songs. In D. L. Gorlée (Ed.), *Song and Significance: Virtues and Vices of Vocal Translation* (pp. 185-212). Rodopi.

[15] Low, P. (2013). When Songs Cross Language Borders: Translations, Adaptations and 'Replacement Texts'. *The Translator*, *19*(2), 229-244. https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2013.10799543.

[16] Low, P. (2016). *Translating Song Lyrics and Texts*. Routledge.

[17] Nord, Christiane (1997) *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches* Newmark, Peter (2012) "Art Song in Translation", in Minors, H. (ed) *Music, Text and Translation*, London, Bloomsbury.

[18] Reiss, K. (2000). Translation Criticism- Potentials and Limitations: Categories and Criteria for Translation Quality Assessment (E.F. Rhodes, Trans.; 1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315760407

[19] Reiss, K., & Vermeer, H.J. (2013). Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained (C. Nord, Trans.; 1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315759715

[20] Snell-Hornby, Mary (1997) 'Written to Be Spoken: The Audio-Medial Text in Translation', in Anna Trosborg (ed.) *Text Typology and Translation*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 277-90.

[21] Sting. (1987). *Englishman in New York* [Song]. In *Nothing Like the Sun*.

[22] Susam-Saraeva, Ş. (2019). 'Interlingual cover versions: How popular songs travel round the world'. *The Translator*, *25*(1), 42-59. https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2018.1549710.

[23] Susam-Sarajeva, Ş. (2008). Translation and Music: Changing Perspectives, Frameworks and Significance. *The Translator*, *14*(2), 187-200.

[24] U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (2019), *Immigration and Nationality Act*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.uscis.gov/laws-and-policy/legislation/immigration-and-nationality-act

[25] U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (2019). *Immigration and Nationality Act*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.uscis.gov/laws-and-policy/legislation/immigration-and-nationality-act.

[26] Watrous, P. (1987, February). "Interview." *Musician*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.sting.com/news/title/Interview:%20MUSICIAN%20(1987).

TECHNIUM SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

APPENDIX

Sting	Bengoechea
I don't drink coffee, I take tea, my dear	No quiero café - yo sólo tomo te
I like my toast done on one side	y las tostadas por un lado.
And you can hear it in my accent when I talk	Por mi acento refinado lo sabrás:
I'm an Englishman in New York	Soy inglés - resido en Nueva York
See me walking down Fifth Avenue	Por la 5ª Avenida se me ve
A walking cane here at my side	apoyado en mi bastón.
I take it everywhere I walk	Vaya donde vaya, siempre voy con él...
I'm an Englishman in New York	Soy inglés - resido en Nueva York
Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien	OH OH - SOY UN ALIEN, más raro que nadie
I'm an Englishman in New York	Un inglés perdido en Nueva York
Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien	OH OH - SOY UN ALIEN, más raro que nadie
I'm an Englishman in New York	Un inglés perdido en Nueva York
If "manners maketh man" as someone said	Si fuera a un - concurso de - urbanidad
He's the hero of the day	de seguro ganaría.
It takes a man to suffer ignorance and smile	(Más) si eres hombre- mofa y befa has de aguantar
Be yourself no matter what they say	Sé tú mismo - no importa el qué dirán.
Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien	OH OH - SOY UN ALIEN, más raro que nadie
I'm an Englishman in New York	Un inglés perdido en Nueva York
Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien	OH OH - SOY UN ALIEN, más raro que nadie
I'm an Englishman in New York	Un inglés perdido en Nueva York
Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety	Corrección, modestia - a tí - te distinguirán
You could end up as the only one	porque, al fin el único serás.
Gentleness, sobriety are rare in this society	Gentileza, sobriedad - raras en la sociedad
At night a candle's brighter than the sun	como un sol de noche brillarán
Takes more than combat gear to make a man	(Para) ser hombre - no hace falta pelear
Takes more than a license for a gun	ni tener licencia de armas.
Confront your enemies, avoid them when you can	Confronta a tu enemigo - pero sin luchar
A gentleman will walk but never run	Caballero andante - nunca correrá
If "manners maketh man" as someone said	Si fuera a un - concurso de - urbanidad

Technium Social Sciences Journal
Vol. 74, 160-176, August, 2025
ISSN: 2668-7798
www.techniumscience.com

He's the hero of the day	de seguro ganaría.
It takes a man to suffer ignorance and smile	(Más) si eres hombre- mofa y befa has de aguantar
Be yourself no matter what they say	Sé tú mismo - no importa el qué dirán.