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# Translation Fidelity Assessment: Analysis of the Potential of Low's Pentathlon as a Basis for Melic Translation Standards

**Abstract.** The article attempts to apply Peter Low's Pentathlon Principle as a cornerstone for standardizing the fidelity of melic translation. It was found that four of its factors (sense, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme) are relatively quantifiable and allow for a relatively objective text assessment. However, since the last one (singability) can be understood as a derivative of the remaining indicators, for evaluation purposes of the proposed Extended Model, it was replaced by a new element in the form of Style. On this basis, a five-level rating system was introduced for each analysed verse, summed by a weighted average. The new, enhanced combination was tested on two Polish translations of the Coldplay song "A Sky Full of Stars". To maximize the objectivity of quantification, each text was rated by several testers. It was confirmed that in its improved version, Low's Pentathlon could be a promising quality assessment mechanism, particularly in high-level translations.

**Keywords:** Low's Pentathlon, lyrical translation, melic translation, translation fidelity assessment

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## 1. Introduction

Quality measurement is a must in the contemporary, increasingly internationalized world. When it comes to understanding the concept of melic translation standards, the current status may be compared to the introduction of Michelin Stars used in restaurants (Freeman, 2017) or International Credit Ratings utilized by S&P or Moody's (Klingebiel & Schmulker, 2007). Namely, it used to be what could be described as an "unregulated market", with no universal and standardized system that could be applied to tell a good food venue from a great one or to determine whether an enterprise is financially likely to repay a loan if granted one. This in turn has increased the overall level of both chefs and firms, introduc-

ing clear criteria concerning particular score tiers. No such formal mechanism exists in the sector of lyrical text translation so far.

Indeed, the approach to conveying the message of song lyrics in one language to another has become the subject of many analyses in the research community (e.g. Kusuma & Yuliasri, 2020; Lopez Fierrez, 2020; Nordfjellmark, 2020; Fitri et al., 2022). In many cases, said scientists have utilized Low's Pentathlon system to try and assess the quality. There is, in fact, the central theme that most of those papers had in common: while they have identified theoretical patterns, no in-depth evaluation as such took place. This may be because, while Low's model may be considered something of an industry cornerstone, it has a different application and is more of a set of rules to follow rather than a codified assessment model.

While he did propose a limited structure of quantification (2008), Low mostly concentrated on rhymes in a qualitative manner and stated himself that he has "not developed similar scoring-systems for these [remaining] four 'pentathlon events'" (2008, p. 12). That is also the scientific niche that I aim to address with this research.

The idea of this paper is to take this a step further and repurpose Low's model into a working standardized Translation Fidelity Assessment (TFA) tool that could be utilized to test the quality of a particular text's iteration in another language. The key is to provide a solution with a clear scoring system, applicable across cultures and languages. While the main target would be song lyrics, the range of evaluated factors allows for an easy application within other formats.

Concerning delimitations, while I am aware of other concepts of melic translation principles such as Bryll (2006) or Rajewska (2004), their downside is the popularity lesser than that of Low's model, and for a tool to be recognized internationally, it should optimally be based on a mechanism more commonly known within the global melic translation community. Delabastita's works (1993), while a canon of linguistics in their own right, revolve around the mechanics of translation strategies (substitution, adaptation, permutation, etc.) and may not be considered fit for quantification-based assessment.

Regarding the structure of the work, I will set the scene with key definitions and then proceed with a literature review, concentrating on works around Low's Pentathlon theory. It is worth pointing out that while there is a lot of research on standards as such, only few attempts at formal quantification have been identified. Then, I will discuss the TFA model based on Lowian 5-factor system, and discuss the mechanical details of the tool on a step-by-step basis. Then, its practical application will be shown in a case study, with the assessment of two Polish translations of the English song "A Sky Full of Stars" by Coldplay. The findings will be then summarized.

## 2. Literature Review

There are numerous authors working with Low's Pentathlon to assess translation quality, but their shared trait is that they mostly stop at analysis, without attributing specific value based on named criteria, with one article managing to evaluate and give scores to two of Low's factors.

Kusuma & Yuliasri (2020) analyse English songs translated into Javanese, going over 328 data points based on Low's Pentathlon. Their analysis attempted to identify whether or not a given verse has managed to meet the Lowian criteria on a mostly binary basis, thus proposing something of a simplified quality assessment system. The article also identifies 3 strategies of conveying rhymes, i.e. transferring a) full pattern + sound, b) just the pattern, or c) half rhyming or not rhyming at all. The strategies have been implemented into the TFA tool assessment criteria.

Lopez Fierrez (2020) uses Low's principles to analyze a selection of songs. Again, however, the Pentathlon is used only as a point of reference and to determine if, and to what degree, a given criterion has been met, resorting to mostly as a set of analytical yes/no answers.

A more practical (assessment-wise) approach is used by Fitri et al. (2022). They concentrated on using the already-mentioned Low's system of assessing the quality of rhymes and rhythm, identifying translation methods and providing an in-depth analysis of open- and closed-rhyme structures. While they succeeded, their method still only touched on 2 out of 5 factors within the Pentathlon. This further underlines the need for a more versatile system that would encompass all the factors.

## 3. Low's Pentathlon Revisited

Concerning the standards of translation proposed by Low, he created 5 key principles to follow, namely Singability, Naturalness, Sense, Rhythm and Rhyme, presented in the order from the most to least important as understood by their author (Low, 2005). Their brief descriptions are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Low's key elements of Pentathlon model

Priority	Item	Summary
1	Singability	Quality of how well the translated lyrics align with the music for performance, prioritizing musical coherence over strict semantic accuracy

Priority	Item	Summary
2	Sense	Degree and efficiency of conveying the original meaning
3	Naturalness	The level of seamlessness and unforcedness of language used
4	Rhythm	Maintaining the balance of accents and the number of syllables
5	Rhyme	The presence and consistency of rhyme schemes

Source: Adapted from Low (2005)

### 3.1. Enhanced Factors

In terms of practical application, assessing value in a quantitative manner when it comes to sense, rhyme and rhythm is a feasible task. However, because Singability may be understood as more mechanical, for the purposes of the Translation Fidelity Model, it has been altered slightly as described later in the text, so that the enhanced structure is more versatile, with the option to apply in texts other than song lyrics, such as translated poetry. Following Low, Lopez Fierrez (2020) emphasizes that singability is to be understood as the aim of those who translate songs and that the remaining 4 principles are its source and base. In practice, this one dimension is a resultant of the others, thus creating seemingly unnecessary repetition if added within the quantitative scheme. Because of this, the Singability aspect of the model has been replaced with Style, corresponding with *panache*, translation strategy consistency, and cultural embeddedness. The new five factors are as seen in Table 2.

Another slight change was made to the assessment of Rhyme. In the revisited model, aside from just analysing the consistency of rhymes and their structure, additional attention is put to how closely the translated version corresponds with the original (for example, extra points are given for introducing a word the sound of which resembles that of its counterpart) as per the findings of Kasuma et al. (2020).

Table 2. Key elements of the Translation Fidelity Assessment

Priority	Item	Summary
1	Sense	Degree and efficiency of conveying the original meaning
2	Naturalness	The level of seamlessness and unforcedness of language used
3	Rhythm	Maintaining the balance of accents and the number of syllables
4	Rhyme	The presence and consistency of rhyme schemes
5	Style	How good the literariness of the translation is, the consistency of the translation strategy, the cultural embeddedness, and the <i>panache</i>

Source: Own work

For the needs of illustration of the above dimensions in practice, I chose the Polish translation of the famous Chinese song “The Moon Represents My Heart” (Chin. “月亮代表我的心”) due to being a relatively simple love ballad with comprehensible structure, making it a perfect test subject and a study aid (Latham, 2007).

**Table 3.** Lyrics of “月亮代表我的心” and Polish translation

SL version	SL (Source Language) meaning	TL (Target Language) version	TL meaning
你问我爱你有多深 我爱你有多深 我的情也真 我的爱也真 月亮代表我的心	You ask me how deep my love for you is How much do I love you My affection is real My love is real The moon represents my heart	Czy kocham Cię, Ty wiedzieć chcesz Jak ja uwielbiam Cię Najprawdziwsza jest Moja miłość, wiedz: Serce me jak księżyc łśni	Do I love you, you want to know, How much do I adore you It is truest, That love of mine, know that My heart shines like the moon
轻轻的一个吻 已经打动我的心 深深的一段情 教我思念到如今	Just one soft kiss is enough to move my heart. The time when our love was deep, Has made me miss you until now.	Pocałuj i już wiem Że jesteś tylko Ty Czułości chwila, i Myślę o Tobie do dziś	Kiss me and I already know That there is only you A moment of tenderness, and I think about you to this day

Source: Sun (1973), own work

### 3.1.1. Sense

This factor measures the level of how closely the translated text corresponds with the contents of the original. A given verse’s highest level of retaining Sense would mean that the meaning has been conveyed fully and precisely, without deviating from the semantic field of the original. For example, the OL’s “How much do I love you” interpreted as “How much do I adore you” in the TL would receive a perfect score of 5/5 (following the criteria specified in Table 3). However, the verse “The moon represents my heart” translated as “My heart shines like the moon”, while still relatively close, operates in a wider semantic field, thus gaining a 4/5. Finally, the line “The time when our love was deep” has been interpreted as “A moment of tenderness, and”, ventures farther still from the original meaning. It does make sense, but loses a lot of the original context of past experiences, meaning that there is somewhat of a correlation, resulting in a 3/5. A 2/5, which does not come up in the above translation, would mean that some minimal connection can be made between OL and TL versions, whereas a 1/5 would be given to a text that bears no resemblance to the original text at all.

### 3.1.2. Naturalness

This dimension determines whether the text sounds natural in the target language, i.e. whether the structure does not appear odd to the native speaker, if there are unsubstantiated inversions, or if non-existent word combinations have been used. To illustrate this, the line “Kiss me and I already know” is a 5/5 due to sounding like an everyday speech, with no deviations. An example of 4/5 can

be found in the form of “That love of mine, know that”, where the application of “*wiedz*” (“know that”) in its imperative form makes it sound a tad less natural. Then, a 3/5 would be given to “My heart shines like the moon” due to the TL version using strong inversions and additionally creating a syllabic cluster (i.e. “*jak-księżyc*”) thus losing on elegance. A 2/5 would signify that very little attention has been put into adhering to the original structure, and a 1/5 could show an utter disregard to the TL’s rules and dynamics.

### 3.1.3. Rhythm

In regards to that factor, the key is to assess how close the translation got to the original in terms of both the number of syllables, their rhythmic distribution, but also accents. For example, a majority of the above translation maintains a steady 5/5 due to a) maintaining a 1:1 structure as compared to the OL version, 2) retaining the distribution within line, and 3) making sure that the accents and pressure is where they originally were. The exception here is “My heart shines like the moon”, where the syllabic cluster mentioned in the section slightly distorts the original rhythm despite the number and allocation of syllables being correct, thus receiving a 4/5. A 3/5 would be given to a line with visible distortions in accents, but which nonetheless keeps the number of syllables at least mostly right. Similarly, a 2/5 would in consequence comprise clear mistakes in the number of syllables and the rhythm being out of place. Finally, 1/5 would mean that the original structures have been ignored whatsoever. Following Low’s own advice — the number of syllables can at times be sacrificed if due to TL characteristics, this benefits the overall rhythm.

### 3.1.4. Rhyme

The essence of that item is to determine the closeness of rhymes of the original text and whether they exist at all. A 5/5 would be given to a rhyme that not only follows the source structure (i.e. AABB, ABAB, etc.), but also sounds similarly to the original word, with “*zhen*” (真) rhyming with “*jest*”, “*xin*” (心) with “*Ty*”, etc. A 4/5 would retain the stanza’s structure, but not sound alike. A 3/5 would drop the original structure at times but still offer a cohesive alternative. A 2/5 would show that no clear plan regarding rhyme structures was utilized, and a 1/5 would not have a clear rhyme structure at all. It is worth pointing out that while this factor is assessed line-by-line, the evaluator must take the whole stanza into account, be it a 4-line quatrain or a 3-line tercet, to name just a few.

### 3.1.5. Style

Style is an addition to Low's traditional model, and has been introduced for the needs of this article. It is, by design, an extension of Naturalness, Rhythm and Rhyme and determines how unforced the translation sounds and assesses its language quality and as well overall *panache*. Points are awarded for clarity, lack of repetitions, and the application of the characteristics of the target language and culture. This is best illustrated by the words of the late Stanisław Barańczak, a Polish author, who said that "an interpreter must be a poet's poet" (1990, p. 7), namely requiring a comprehensive understanding of TL cultural and linguistic capital. In the end, the result is conveying not just the meaning and structure, but also the soul of what one is translating. My personal belief here is that melic translation is just merely a craft, but must be treated as art in itself, and thus be poetic and creative. An example of a 5/5 in the text above is how well the lines "My affection is real / My love is real" have been interpreted as "It is truest, / that love of mine", showing thoughtfulness and capturing the essence of the original message.

## 3.2. Assessment Mechanism

Unlike Low's original model, its enhanced version in the form of TFA is designed specifically to evaluate the translation fidelity of lyrical texts, both songs and poems. In principle, this is achieved by assessing the characteristics of each and every verse as compared to the original on a 1:1 basis. Each verse is analysed regarding its sense, naturalness, rhythm, rhyme, and style mentioned above, then assigned points from 1 to 5 (lowest to highest), and then combined as a percentage under weighted average, with modifiers set up according to the levels of priority presented by Low-related research (Nordfjellmark, 2020). For the needs of quantification, these have been set at 30%, 25%, 20%, 15%, and 10% respectively.

Then, an average for each factor is derived, summing up the values of all the verses. It is crucial to take note that should a chorus or a stanza come up in the work more than once, only the first instance counts towards the final score, so any line repetitions should be omitted (unless of course they have been translated differently each time). The precise criteria are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Assessment criteria of the TPA model

Criterion Grade	Sense	Naturalness	Rhythm	Rhymes	Style
5 (max)	The meaning of the verse is accurately and fully conveyed, preserving all the nuances and subtleties of the original text.	The verse sounds natural, as if originally written in the target language, without errors. Word accents are preserved, and there is no forced inversion. There are no syllabic clusters.	The rhythm of the verse is fully in line with the original, maintaining a smooth and natural feel.	The verse perfectly preserves the rhyme patterns of the original, including maintaining the sound of the rhyme between the languages, creating a harmonious and consistent structure with the original.	The style of the verse perfectly captures the character, elegance and subtleties of the original, preserving its unique features and aesthetic qualities. The poetic quality of the text is fully preserved, and references to the culture of the target language are apt and woven into the text in a natural way. The language used in the verse is appropriate to the context.
4	The meaning is almost completely consistent with the original, with minor deviations that do not significantly affect the overall content.	The line sounds natural, with minor places that could be better developed. Minor changes in accent, justified inversions allowed.	The rhythm of the verse is almost identical to the original, with minor deviations that do not significantly affect the flow.	The composition retains most of the rhyme structure from the original, with some deviations that do not significantly affect the reception.	The style of the verse is almost entirely consistent with the original, with minor spots that could be better refined. The poetic quality of the text is well conveyed, with many of the subtleties of the original preserved. The language used in the poem is rich, with minor flaws.
3	The meaning is generally well conveyed, although some elements may be slightly distorted or simplified.	The verse is fairly natural, but can sometimes sound foreign / awkward. Inversions present.	The rhythm of the verse is mostly consistent with the original, at times sounds clunky.	The verse contains rhymes, but they do not always follow the original pattern and are at times forced.	The style of the verse is fairly consistent with the original, although it may lack sophistication. The poetic quality of the original is partially preserved.
2	The meaning is partially transferred, but contains many errors or simplifications that change the meaning of the original line.	The line is understandable, but still sounds unnatural and contains noticeable errors. The accents are incorrect and the inversion sounds forced.	The rhythm of the verse is inconsistent, the number of syllables does not correspond well to the original.	The composition contains rhymes, but only in the form of half-rhymes, and/or patterns that are visibly irregular and often forced.	The style of the verse is partially consistent with the original, but contains numerous errors and shortcomings. The language used in the poem is correct, but lacks finesse and elegance.
1 (min)	The verse significantly distorts or omits key elements of the original line. The meaning is hard to understand or inconsistent with the original.	The verse sounds artificial and unnatural, and contains numerous grammatical and stylistic errors.	The verse has a severely disrupted rhythm that interferes with the reception and understanding of the text.	The composition completely omits rhyme patterns of the original or rhymes whatsoever, which noticeably affects the structure of the whole text.	The style of the verse is inconsistent, with numerous linguistic errors and inconsistency with the original. The language used in the poem is poor and inadequate.

Source: Own work, based on Low's Pentathlon

## 4. Case Study

For the needs of assessment, a song has been picked to be evaluated by the author using the TFA score model above. Two translations of the song “A Sky Full of Stars” have been picked to best illustrate the difference in quality and in consequence, different grades. In the second stage, 10 specialists has been chosen to use the TFA score model to evaluate the translation fidelity of a song lyrics. The group part is introduced in order to confirm that the assessment model works in a relatively consistent way, with little deviation between the individual evaluations. They picked assessors are all meeting the following requirements: have background in either linguistics or literature, have previously had contact with lyrical texts, and are fluent in English and Polish (i.e. the source and the target language). They meet the standards delineated by Dolata-Zaród (2009) of having subject-, linguistic- and cultural- competence.

The translations picked are publicly available on YouTube. The first one (as seen in Table 5) was created in adherence to Lowian Principles. The second one (in Table 6) is more of an arrangement rather than a 1:1 translation attempt. They have been chosen in order to best show the assessment range of the analyzed TFA model.

### 4.1. Translation 1

Table 5. The song “A Sky Full of Stars” and its Polish translation

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)	TL Meaning
‘Cause you’re a sky, ‘cause you’re a sky full of stars	Jesteś jak noc, jesteś jak noc, pełna gwiazd	You’re like the night, you’re like the night, full of stars
I’m gonna give you my heart	Ja Tobie serce me dam	I’m gonna give you my heart
‘Cause you’re a sky, ‘cause you’re a sky full of stars	Jesteś jak noc, jesteś jak noc, pełna gwiazd	You’re like the night, you’re like the night, full of stars
‘Cause you light up the path	Bo rozświetlasz mój szlak	For you light up my path
I don’t care, go on and tear me apart	Rób, co chcesz, roztrzaskaj mnie w drobny mak	Do what you want, shatter me to small pieces
I don’t care if you do	Nie dbam o to dziś już	I don’t care anymore today
‘Cause in a sky, ‘cause in a sky full of stars	Bo w moim śnie, bo w moim śnie pełnym gwiazd	‘Cause in my dream, ‘cause in my dream full of stars
I think I saw you	Znalazłem Cię znów	I found you again
‘Cause you’re a sky, ‘cause you’re a sky full of stars	Jesteś jak noc, jesteś jak noc, pełna gwiazd	You’re like the night, you’re like the night, full of stars

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)	TL Meaning
I wanna die in your arms	Przy Tobie umrzeć bym chciał	By your side I'd like to die
'Cause you get lighter the more it gets dark	Bo im jest ciemniej, tym większy Twój blask	Because the darker it gets, the greater your glow
I'm gonna give you my heart	Ja Tobie serce me dam	I will give you my heart

Source: Coldplay (2014), Z Obcego na Nasze (2022)

As seen in Table 4, the version in the Target Language (hereinafter TL) is closely following the original language version (hereinafter SL). Looking at Low's enhanced principles in the TFA model, Sense is maintained to a high degree, with key deviations that could be described as 1) the lyrical subject is referred to as "night" instead of a "sky" (albeit both complete with stars, thus preserving the SL's semantic context), and 2) small time-related infractions in the form of doing something again or at a given day of the week.

Moving on to the next factor, Naturalness, the TL contains several trade-offs for the sake of retaining the original rhythm. In most cases, this presents itself in the form of inversions. While the use is completely understandable and acceptable in melic translations, one could argue that the overabundance in a single song does negatively affect the final shape and harms the unforcedness of the music flow. Another matter is that at times, the syllabic pressure of some words sounds altered.

The third factor assessed is Rhythm. Arguably, the TL mirrors the structure of SL on a 1:1 ratio, adapting a series of 1- and 2-syllable words, thus counterplaying the lengthiness of words that is characteristic of Slavic languages, particularly in the adjective section (Migdalski, 2016). This allows the structures to be consistent and rhythmical, easily accommodating the original melody.

Similarly, the reduced Naturalness enabled greater access to convenient Rhymes, i.e. the next element. It can be seen that 100% of assessed rhymes not only follow the original structure (AAAA monorhyme, followed by ABAB 4-line stanza and another AAAA monorhyme), but also mimic the original sound. As a result, "stars" correspond with "gwiazd" [phonetically — IPA: *gvʲjazd*], dam [*dām*], szlak [*ʃlak*], etc.

Finally comes the last factor, the Style. It is worth emphasizing that it was not included in Low's original Five and has replaced his Singability, which I deemed to be mostly a derivative of Naturalness, Rhyme, and Rhythm. The style of the analysed passage is consistent, with no unnecessary repetitions, and several creative verse solutions, providing a relatively high final level of 4s and 5s.

**Table 6.** Assessment of the Polish translation of the “A Sky Full of Stars”

Target Language (TL)	Sense	Naturalness	Rhythm	Rhymes	Style	Mark
Jesteś jak noc, jesteś jak noc, pełna gwiazd	5	4	5	5	5	95%
Ja Tobie serce me dam	5	4	4	5	4	89%
Jesteś jak noc, jesteś jak noc, pełna gwiazd	5	4	5	5	5	95%
Bo rozświetlasz mój szlak	5	4	5	5	4	93%
Rób, co chcesz, roztrzaskaj mnie w drobny mak	5	5	5	5	5	100%
Nie dbam o to dziś już, u-uuu uuuuu	5	4	5	5	4	93%
Bo w moim śnie, bo w moim śnie pełnym gwiazd	4	4	5	5	4	87%
Znalazłem Cię znów	4	4	5	5	4	87%
Jesteś jak noc, jesteś jak noc, pełna gwiazd	5	4	5	5	5	95%
Przy Tobie umrzeć bym chciał	5	4	5	5	5	95%
Bo im jest ciemniej, tym większy Twój blask	5	4	5	5	4	93%
Ja Tobie serce me dam	5	4	4	5	5	91%
TOTAL	4,83	4,08	4,83	5,00	4,50	92,7%

Source: Coldplay (2014), Z Obcego na Nasze (2022), own work

When the TFA model is applied, the outcome is as shown in Table 6. Each verse is graded on a scale from 1 to 5, and then a weighted average is made on that basis, with values as per section 2.2 of this article. The resulting individual assessment awards a high 4,83 in Sense (weighted at 35% of the final score) and full marks on the Rhymes section. This is offset by a slightly above 4/5 on Naturalness (chiefly due to inversions and trade-offs in the fields of accent placement), resulting in a high total mark of 92,8%.

## 4.2. Translation 2

The second text is technically an adaptation rather than a translation, under the definitions mentioned by Rędzioch-Korkuz (2021). As such, one may expect a looser adherence to the SL version, but in this case, it remains relatively high.

**Table 7.** The song “A Sky Full of Stars” and its Polish translation

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)	TL meaning
‘Cause you’re a sky, ‘cause you’re a sky full of stars	Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie,	‘Cause you are a star, you are a star in the sky
I’m gonna give you my heart	chcę tylko patrzeć na ciebie,	I just want to look at you

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)	TL meaning
'Cause you're a sky, 'cause you're a sky full of stars	bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie,	'Cause you're a star, you're a star in the sky
'Cause you light up the path	bo rozświetlasz mi mrok	'Cause you light up my darkness
I don't care, go on and tear me apart	Nie dbam o to, czy serce złamiesz mi	I don't care if you break my heart
I don't care if you do, ooh-ooh, ooh	Masz ochotę, to łam	If you feel like it, break it
'Cause in a sky, 'cause in a sky full of stars	Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie	Because you're a star, you're a star in the sky
I think I saw you	Moje serce ci dam	I'll give you my heart
'Cause you're a sky, 'cause you're a sky full of stars	Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie	'Cause you are a star, you are a star in the sky
I wanna die in your arms, oh, oh-oh	Inną od reszty gwiazd	Different from the rest of the stars
'Cause you get lighter the more it gets dark	Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie	'Cause you're a star, you're a star in the sky
I'm gonna give you my heart, oh	Bo rozświetlasz mi mrok	Because you light up my darkness

Source: Coldplay (2014), Szoltysek (2019)

In the first stanza, the Sense is retained, with the only serious deviation lying within the second verse (giving heart versus looking), with another instance at such level occurring in stanza 3 verse 2 (“dying in arms” versus “different star”). The meaning of some verses can also be found elsewhere in the passage.

The text loses on naturalness in several places, utilizing forced inversions and at times ignoring the typical Polish accentuation of words, such as “CIEbie” (you) or “NIEbie” (sky). Other than that factor, the passage maintains a steady language level.

In terms of Rhythm, the TL includes some abnormalities and in most cases, the author managed to retain the correct number of syllables per verse, but without analysing the internal structure of syllable allocation, i.e. treating a verse as a set of 6 syllables instead of a sum of parts such as 1+2+2+1.

The utilized Rhyme structure of the translation is consistent with the original to a moderate degree. While there is little attempt to mimic the SL sounds, the ABAB structure is preserved without change in some verses, while on occasion the rhymes are omitted, resulting in AxAx configuration at best.

In terms of Style, the translation strategy is inconsistent and the panache levels may be understood as lacking, and while some well-conceived elements have

been introduced, the unnecessary level of repetition and the displacement of verse messages lowers the general reception.

**Table 8.** Assessment of the Polish translation of the “A Sky Full of Stars”

Target Language (TL)	Sense	Naturalness	Rhythm	Rhymes	Style	Mark
Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie,	4	4	2	4	3	70%
Chcę tylko patrzeć na ciebie,	2	4	3	3	4	61%
Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie,	4	4	2	4	4	72%
Bo rozświecisz mi mrok	4	4	4	3	3	75%
Nie dbam o to, czy serce złamiesz mi,	4	3	3	3	3	66%
Masz ochotę, to łam,	4	4	4	4	4	80%
Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie,	3	4	2	4	3	64%
Moje serce ci dam	1	3	3	4	3	51%
Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie	4	4	2	4	3	70%
Inną od reszty gwiazd	2	4	3	2	3	56%
Bo jesteś gwiazdą, jesteś gwiazdą na niebie	4	4	2	4	3	70%
Bo rozświecisz mi mrok	1	4	4	3	3	57%
TOTAL	3,08	3,83	2,83	3,50	3,25	66,0%

Source: Coldplay (2014), Szołtysek (2019), own work

Similarly to the first translation, the second text was evaluated using the TFA mechanism, bearing in mind that it is a system of evaluating the precision of translation, not the artistic quality of the writing itself. The liberal approach to preserving the original Sense caused a drop of this dimension to a 3,08/5, with substantial changes to Rhythm and applying forced inversions and accent changes to Naturalness resulting in a considerably lower total. Because of this, the translation fidelity score of the text was 66.0%.

### 4.3. Group Assessment

The above marks were however conducted by a single individual. In order to maximise the objectivity and therefore the reliability of the TFA assessment, I used the findings of several researchers (Rotem & Halperin, 1995; House, 1997; Cohen, Manion & Morrisson, 2000; Stejskal, 2003; Hurtado Albir, 2008), with the conclusion being that evaluation gains a sufficient level of non-subjective approach once reviewed by between 7 and 10 specialists, with 5 people being the bare minimum.

To meet this requirement, several language specialists have been invited to participate in the test. Each of the two texts was rated by several individual test-

ers, who were picked based on several criteria: their proficiency in both Original Language and the Target Language (in this case, English and Polish), prior experiences with either translation or literary grading, and finally firm background in a field connected to words (ie. arts, linguistics, etc).

Their assessment was then combined in the following table for Translation 1:

**Table 9.** Group assessment of Translation 1

Evaluator number	Sense	Naturalness	Rhythm	Rhymes	Style	Total
1	4,83	4,08	4,83	5,00	4,5	92,7%
2	4,42	4,75	4,83	4,08	4,83	91,8%
3	4,67	3,92	5,00	3,92	4,25	86,2%
4	4,17	5,00	5,00	5,00	4,67	96,3%
5	4,42	4,33	4,67	4,42	4,83	91,6%
6	5,00	4,83	5,00	4,75	4,58	95,8%
7	5,00	5,00	5,00	4,83	4,92	98,7%
Final Score	4,64	4,56	4,90	4,57	4,66	93,29%
Standard deviation	0,30	0,41	0,12	0,41	0,22	–
Deviation %	5,9%	8,3%	2,4%	8,1%	4,3%	3,8%

Source: Own work

The same process was then repeated for Translation 2:

**Table 10.** Group assessment of Translation 2

Evaluator number	Style	Naturalness	Rhythm	Rhymes	Style	Total
1	3,3	3,5	2,8	3,8	3,1	66%
2	3,08	3,00	2,67	3,67	2,92	61,7%
3	1,92	2,42	2,58	2,00	1,42	39,9%
4	1,92	2	1,58	3,75	1,92	46,4%
5	2,67	2,67	2,67	2,67	2,75	53,8%
6	2,67	2,83	2,42	3,08	2,75	55%
7	2,58	3,00	3,17	2,67	3,00	58%
Final Score	2,58	2,77	2,56	3,09	2,55	54,30%
Standard deviation	0,48	0,44	0,45	0,64	0,58	–
Deviation %	9,5%	8,9%	9,1%	12,8%	11,7%	8,2%

Source: Own work

Looking at the above data, several conclusions can be drawn. First of all, there is a greater agreement between evaluators when it comes to the assessment of texts with higher translation quality. The standard deviation for Text 1 (3.8%) is

relatively low, indicating that the jury was more likely to agree on the quality of lyrics in the target language. Furthermore, this suggests that a good translation is more predictable and that it is easier to agree on its rating.

To contrast this, a greater variance has been observed in matters of lower translation quality. For Text 2, where the overall translation was lower (rating 55%), the standard deviation was 8.2%, indicating higher variance in ratings, particularly in the dimensions of Rhymes and Style (12.8% and 11.7% deviation respectively). In other words, lower fidelity of melic translation may lead to more subjective ratings, as language specialists may interpret errors and compromises in the text differently.

In other words, it can be seen that the translation quality affects the consistency of ratings. The data suggest that the higher the fidelity value of the text, the more consistent the grades are, whereas for poorer translations, the opinions of specialists may be more diverse. Another conclusion that can be drawn is that in the TFA model, the better the translation is, the more precise its high score will become, whereas sub-tier texts below a certain level may not differ to a large extent. To illustrate this, a difference between a stanza with a 95% overall score and an 85% one may be expected to be greater and more noticeable than that of 65% and 45%, although this requires additional research.

## 5. Summary

As it can be observed, the dimensions created by Peter Low make for a promising basis of a melic translation fidelity quantification standard. While his original Pentathlon included Singability, a trait that can be understood as a derivative of Naturalness and Rhythm, the newly introduced Style enabled a more comprehensive evaluation. Another added value provided within the Enhanced Model was the potential of its application in assessing not only melic translations but also poetic ones.

The Translation Fidelity Assessment (TFA) created on this scheme, was then tested in cooperation with seven language specialists, who assessed two iterations of the “A Sky Full of Stars” song lyrics translations using the system. The higher number of evaluators was introduced to ensure a possibly low level of subjectivity, which was confirmed by the outcome: in a quality translation, the standard deviation only reached 3.8%, illustrating a major consistency of individual assessments.

To contrast this, the second translation with an overall fidelity score of 54.3% had a higher deviation of 8.2%, showing a visible discrepancy of views between specialists in charge of the test. The takeaway therefore is that the TFA mechanism

based on Low's Pentathlon theory can indeed be utilized to measure the fidelity level of a translation of lyrics, particularly to differentiate between the high- and top-tier texts, thus creating a cornerstone for a prospective industry standard.

After all, Low himself wrote (2008, p. 12) that no translation is perfect and that one can only strive for excellence by tending to the five dimensions he named – a practice that may hopefully set commonly acknowledged norms within the melic translation sector.

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## **Ocena wierności przekładu — analiza potencjału zasady pięcioboju Lowa jako podstawy standardów tłumaczenia melicznego**

**Streszczenie.** W artykule podjęto próbę zastosowania koncepcji pięcioboju Petera Lowa jako kamienia węgielnego standaryzacji wierności tłumaczenia melicznego. Stwierdzono, że cztery z jego czynników (sens, naturalność, rytm i rymy) są stosunkowo wymierne i pozwalają na relatywnie obiektywną ocenę tekstu. Jednak ze względu na to, że ostatnią z jego zasad (tj. śpiewalność) można uznać za pochodną pozostałych wskaźników, to na potrzeby testów i w ramach proponowanego modelu rozszerzonego w tym artykule zastąpiono ją nowym elementem w postaci stylu. Na tej podstawie dla każdego sprawdzanego wersu wprowadzono pięciostopniowy system oceny, sumowany średnią ważoną. Nowa, rozszerzona kombinacja była następnie testowana na dwóch polskich przekładach piosenki Coldplay „A Sky Full of Stars”. Aby zmaksymalizować obiektywność kwantyfikacji, każdy tekst został oceniony przez kilku indywidualnych testerów. Potwierdzono, że w swojej ulepszonej, wielopoziomowej wersji model pięcioboju Lowa może stanowić podstawę funkcjonalnego mechanizmu oceny jakości, zwłaszcza przy tekstach na wysokim poziomie wykonania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pięciobój Lowa, przekład, przekład meliczny, ocena wierności przekładu

