



## A Study of Translation Strategies Used in the Translation of Walt Disney Songs into Thai

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### Abstract

This qualitative study investigated the syllable and word counts, as well as translation strategies used in the Thai translations of nine Oscar-winning Walt Disney songs. Content analysis was employed to examine text and musical elements in Thai translations of Walt Disney songs based on Åkerström's (2009) syllable vs. word framework and Lefevere's (1975) seven translation strategies. The results showed that while the English source lines generally matched the target lines in syllable count, there was a notable portion where the target lines contained more words than the source lines. This increase reflects the linguistic adjustments needed to create a natural and singable Thai version while preserving the original meaning through additional wording. Metrical translation and interpretation were the dominant strategies, ensuring rhythmic alignment and emotional resonance with Thai audiences. In contrast, verse-to-prose translation was absent as translators prioritized preserving the poetic features of the songs. These findings offer practical insights for translators, particularly in adapting culturally significant songs for new linguistic audiences.

**Keywords:** song translation, syllables vs. words, translation strategies

### Introduction

At present, it cannot be denied that translation plays an important role in diverse fields, including education, occupation, and business, especially in the entertainment industry. Translation is the

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process of conveying meaning and form from a source language to a target language as closely as possible. During the process, it is necessary for translators to apply different strategies to solve translation problems, depending on the text's genre. Among them, song lyrics are one of the most challenging for translation. A song is a combination of music with words and feeling expression (Dewi, 2020). It consists of many elements, such as lyrics, rhythm, melody, harmony, and expression (Jajuli, 2011). Songs are used for various purposes, including advertising commercials and movie soundtracks. Song translation depends on many factors, such as rhythm, notes, metrics, music, length, and rhymes, making it challenging for translators to find appropriate translation strategies to solve the translation problems. Song translators must carefully deal with the word choices to preserve the rhythm of the melody and the meaning of the lyrics. In other words, in addition to expressing the original meaning, they should ensure that the translated text has a comparable number of syllables to those of the source text as much as possible (Pattiwael, 2019).

Some previous studies are related to this research. Åkerström's (2009) analysis of musicals like *CHESS*, *MAMMA MIA!*, and *Kristina från Duvemåla* found that translations often have differing word counts compared to their originals, though syllable counts remained consistent. Pattiwael (2019) studied how the song *Do You Want to Build a Snowman?* was translated. Fewer words were found in the Indonesian translation compared to the English original, suggesting a focus on preserving meaning over form. This shows that the translator paid close attention to the rhythmic and melodic structure, choosing words carefully to keep the song's flow. Andika (2022) studied the strategies for translating the song *Lead the Way* into the Indonesian version, applying the framework of Åkerström (2009) and Chesterman (2016). Results indicated that the number of syllables remained the same, while the translation consisted of fewer words than the source text. Moreover, various strategies, such as borrowing, rhyme, metaphor, paraphrasing, word addition, and word omission, were employed in the translation.

Although various studies have previously been conducted on song translation, there are significant gaps in the frameworks applied. For example, the studies conducted by Chesterman (2016) and Pattiwael (2019) have examined translation strategies in musicals and specific song translations, using general translation frameworks for the analysis. As a result, essential elements like rhythm, rhyme, and emotional equivalence, which are crucial in song translation, were neglected. Therefore, this study aimed to address these gaps by applying Lefevere's (1975) seven translation strategies, which are particularly suitable for handling the complex interplay of linguistic, rhythmic, and emotional elements in song translation.

Moreover, the focus on Walt Disney songs further fills a gap in translation studies by analyzing works that have been recognized internationally with translations into multiple languages. With the design of content, music, and emotional impact to appeal to audiences of all ages, Disney songs are especially difficult to interpret. These songs make an excellent case study for testing

and assessing song-specific translation techniques because they have been localized into numerous languages, including Thai.

The results of this study will offer valuable insights for translators, equipping them with practical strategies and a greater comprehension of the complexities involved in song translation. This knowledge will enable translators to approach song translation with greater confidence and skill, ensuring their work aligns with linguistic accuracy and musicality.

## **Literature Review**

### *1. Definition of Translation*

Language acts as a bridge for conveying messages across different linguistic groups. When speakers of various languages communicate, translation becomes essential. According to Nida and Taber (1982), translation is the act of transferring the original message into the target language with close adherence to the original style. Larson (1998) emphasizes that translation involves using appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures in the target language. Similarly, Saibua (2010) defines translation as the accurate representation of the source language's meaning in the target language. Translation essentially preserves the source language's inherent style and meaning in the target language. To make an appropriate translation, translators must understand both the meaning and form of the source material before translating it into the target language.

### *2. Definition of Song*

Songs, as short musical pieces performed vocally, combine lyrics and music to create a cohesive expression (Low, 2005; Susam, 2008). They are designed for singing, where lyrics tell the story, and “singability” ensures the words fit well with the music for ease of performance. Low (2005) outlines five key criteria for balancing songs: singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme. Singability involves matching phonetics with melody, while sense sometimes sacrifices semantic accuracy for musicality. Naturalness guarantees the lyrics appear genuine upon initial listening, rhythm synchronizes syllables with the tune, and rhyme corresponds to the song's original structure. A song modifies rhythm and rhyme to express lyrics in a natural and melodic manner.

### *3. Walt Disney Songs*

Global media consumption has increased, with films and songs often translated into other languages to expand their global reach. The Walt Disney Company, which is a leading entity in American animation, has sought to position itself as a leading global entertainment provider since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Disney has generated a wide range of translated famous films whose success has also enhanced the popularity of the associated songs. Numerous Disney films and songs have won Oscars, with fourteen songs awarded the title of “Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures - Original Song.” This study specifically analyzes nine songs with official

translations into the target language. The selected songs are from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) with *Under the Sea*, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) with *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* (1992) with *A Whole New World*, *The Lion King* (1994) with *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*, *Pocahontas* (1995) with *Colors of the Wind*, *Tarzan* (1999) with *You'll Be in My Heart*, *The Muppets* (2011) with *Man or Muppet*, *Frozen* (2013) featuring *Let It Go*, and *Coco* (2017) with *Remember Me*.

#### 4. Challenges in Song Translation

Translating songs is a complex task, requiring translators to create a work conveying the original lyrics' meaning and aligning with the music's rhythm (Stephenson, 2014). Therefore, attention is needed to both the lyrical content and the rhythm to ensure that a natural equivalence with the source language is achieved while meaning and poetic elements in the target language are preserved. Translators have to encounter many challenges as they need to deal with issues like equivalence, untranslatability, and various poetic features, namely rhythm, rhyme, melody, and line length (Soang, 2020). For this reason, translators must carefully select the language to suit both the rhythm and the intended meaning (Pattiwael, 2019), focusing on word choice to match rhyme, meaning, and line structure (Aronson & Box, 2021).

Song translation is the difficult process of substituting the target language for the source language in terms of meaning, length, rhythm, rhymes, and words closely to the source and sound natural in the target language. Songs can be translated for various or particular purposes, including prospective performance. Singable translation focuses on matching the text to the rhythm of music, where the melody, harmonic structure, and mood are the three primary components (Gomez, 2020). Singability requires that the text sound exactly as intended for the music to be a whole song. To maintain the song's natural sound, the translator must also be flexible in their word choice and mindful of rhyme and rhythm, and the words should be simple for singing to specific note values (Low, 2005). Additionally, since the number of words and syllables are necessary for song translation, translators must consider the syllable count to ensure the lyrics precisely fit the music (Åkerström, 2009).

Target audience is also one of the factors affecting song translation, as each person has a distinct preference and comprehension level. It is, thus, necessary for translators to consider the audience's linguistic and cultural background in order to come up with strategies for producing translated lyrics that meet the audience's background. For example, when children are the intended listeners, this presents an additional challenge. The comprehension of children is restricted due to their lack of familiarity with advanced vocabulary or words that are infrequently encountered in their daily lives. That means the target listeners have limited experience and vocabulary knowledge (Rurangwa, 2006). Baihaqi and Subiyanto (2022) studied English-Indonesian translation strategies in children's songs. There are three frequently used strategies: addition, omissions, and paraphrases, in translating eight children's songs. While the paraphrasing technique involves modifying the source texts to be suitable for the target language, it makes

sense that the number of words in children's song lyrics can be increased or removed to fit the beat of the music. Children's limited understanding allows the translator to offer more details or information to clarify complex words and leave out parts of the translated materials to make them easier to understand. Therefore, translators must adapt the lyrics to retain the original message while making them accessible to young readers. In doing so, translators must ensure a balance between maintaining rhythm and meaning and using clear language to make the lyrics understandable and meaningful for young audiences.

### 5. *Practical Translation Strategies for Song Adaptation Syllables vs. Words Strategy by Åkerström (2009)*

In translation studies, various strategies are employed to achieve accurate and meaningful conversions between languages. The study of translation mainly compares an original version of a source language with a translated version in a target language. Åkerström (2009) proposes the strategy of syllables vs. words to analyze song translation. This strategy compares the number of syllables and words in the source and target texts (Pattiwael, 2019). It is well-suited for song translation, as syllable count plays a significant role in aligning the rhythm of the translated text with the original music (Åkerström, 2009). The number of syllables and words in the translations depends on the translator's decision, reflecting their approach to reproducing the song lyrics in the target language. Therefore, the syllables vs. words strategy is deemed suitable for this study.

### 6. *The Seven Translation Strategies of Lefevere (1975)*

Lefevere's (1975) translation strategies are particularly applicable to song translation, as they encompass seven approaches that address both the poetic form and meaning in the target language. Sen and Shaole (2010) further validated Lefevere's theory, finding it well-suited for translating English songs. While most strategies emphasize conveying meaning in the target language, methods such as literal, metrical, and rhymed translation place a greater focus on preserving form (Kolahi & Shiraz, 2012). This supports the use of Lefevere's (1975) framework for song translation. Accordingly, this study adopts Lefevere's seven strategies as its guiding framework, recognizing that, although initially developed for poetry, these strategies are equally applicable to songs due to shared poetic qualities. The seven translation methods in Lefevere's framework are as follows:

1. Phonemic translation: This strategy aims to reproduce both the sound (phonemic qualities) and the meaning of the original text as faithfully as possible. It often results in a translated text that prioritizes sound, which can sometimes compromise the clarity or fidelity of the meaning.

Example:

Source text: ...got its name from *Thom Bird*, who had been co-founder.

Target text: ตั้งชื่อตามนายทอมเบิร์ดหนึ่งในผู้ก่อตั้ง

(/tǎ:ŋ tɛ<sup>h</sup>û: tām nâj t<sup>h</sup>ɔm bɔ̃:t núŋ nâj p<sup>h</sup>û: kô: thâŋ/

(Leenakiti & Pongpairoj, 2019, p.107)

This example transliterated the English name “Thom Bird” into Thai as “ทอมเบิร์ด” (/tʰɔm b̌ɨ:t/) in the translated text.

2. Literal translation: This strategy seeks to stay as close as possible to the original text without altering its structure.

Example:

Source text: ...look at the item that was taken

Target text: มองดูของที่ถูกละไป (/mɔ̌:ŋ dū: kʰɔ̌:ŋ tʰi: tʰù:k ʔāw paj/)

(Leenakiti & Pongpairoj, 2019, p.110)

The translator literally translated the source text into the target text.

3. Metrical translation: This strategy focuses on reproducing the rhythm and maintaining the meter of the source language. This approach is essential when translating texts intended to be performed or sung, as it ensures that the translated lyrics align with the original music’s beat, melody, and overall rhythmic structure.

Example:

Source text: ..that’s so bad guys can’t see me bleed

Target text: ไม่ให้คนร้ายเห็นฉันเลือดไหล (/mâj hâj kʰon rá:j ȟn cȟn ľu:at ľj/)

(Sontisawang et al., 2020, p.93)

The translator maintained the same number of syllables in the target text as in the source text.

4. Verse-to-prose translation: This approach translates poetry into prose, removing structural elements like line breaks and rhythm to focus solely on the content and meaning.

Example:

Source text: พระจันทร์ทรงกลดคลุมเมฆ แล้วมาลอยวิเวกส่องสว่างกลางเวหา

(/pʰráʔ tean soŋ kòt du: mòt mê:k lé:w mā ľɔ̌:j wíʔ wê:k sò:ŋ sà wà:ŋ kla:ŋ we: ȟá:/)

พระจันทร์แจ่มแจ้งกระจ่างตา มาต้องหน้าลาวทองละอองนวล

(/pʰráʔ tean teàm tě:ŋ krà tě:ŋ ta: mā ťɔ̌:ŋ ňá: la:w tʰɔ̌:ŋ lá ʔɔ̌:ŋ ňuan)

Target Text: There were no clouds and the haloed moon appeared alone and apart in the midst of the sky. Its stillness lays upon the face of creamy-skinned Lao Thong.

(Chantakhet, 1985, p.259)

This is an example of verse-to-prose translation, in which the translator preserved only the meaning of the source text without retaining the verse structure.

5. Rhymed translation: This involves maintaining the rhyme of the source text in the target language, which requires the translator to alter word choices and syntax significantly to maintain rhyme, sometimes at the expense of meaning.

Example:

Source text: When you passed through *town*, but that was all before I locked it *down*

Target text: เกี่ยวกับตอนที่เธอผ่านเมืองนี้ไป (/kì:aw kàp tō:n tʰi: tʰɿ: pʰà:n mūaŋ ní: paj/)

แต่นั้นมันเป็นตอนที่ฉันจะปิดล็อกเรื่องนี้เอาไว้

(/tʰè? nâ:n man kʰu: tō:n kò:n tʰi: chán tʰà? pít ló? rūaŋ ní: ?aw wáj/)

(Hayeehasa, 2020, p.64)

In the above example, the word “town” rhymes with “down” in the source text. The translator preserved the rhyme in the target language, where the word “ไป” (/paj/) rhymes with “ไว้” (/wáj/).

6. Blank/free verse translation: This strategy uses a structured, unrhymed meter to translate the poem. Blank verse allows the translator to keep a rhythmic structure without the strict requirements of rhyme, balancing maintaining poetic form and allowing more flexibility with word choice and meaning.

Example:

Source text: Life was a willow, and it bent right to your wind

Head on the pillow, I can feel you sneakin’ in

Target text: ชีวิตก็เหมือนกับต้นวิลโลว์ และมันก็ลู่ไปตามลมของเธอ

(/chī: wít kô: mūaŋ kàp tōn wí? lō: lé man kô: lû: paj ta:m lom kʰǎ:ŋ tʰɿ:/)

หัวถึงหมอน ก็รู้สึกได้ว่ามีเธอข่องเข้ามา

(/hũa tʰũŋ mō:n kô: rú: sùk dáj wâ: mī: tʰɿ: jǒŋ kʰào mǎ/)

(Hayeehasa, 2020, p.60)

The translator conveyed the core meaning of the source text in the target text without preserving the rhymes of the source text.

7. Interpretation: This strategy prioritizes the general meaning of the text over its exact wording or structure, adapting the poem to resonate culturally or emotionally with the target audience. It is often used when a literal translation would lose the cultural or emotional impact intended in the original.

Example:

Source text: Time is money

Target text: เวลาเป็นของมีค่า (/we: lā: pen kʰǎ:ŋ mī: kʰâ:/)

(Hayeehasa, 2020, p.16)

This example demonstrates the use of interpretation. The translator interpreted the word “money” in the source text as “the worth or power of money,” referring to its “value.” In the target language, the translator selected the word “มีค่า” (/mī: kʰâ:/), which conveys the idea that “time is valuable.”

### 7. Previous Research Studies

This study aimed to analyze the number of syllables and words and examine strategies used in translating Walt Disney songs into Thai. Many studies have been conducted on the analysis of syllables vs. words. For instance, Åkerström (2009) studied the translation of twelve song lyrics from the musicals *Kristina från Duvemåla*, *MAMMA MIA!*, and *CHESS*. Notably, Åkerström found that the number of syllables stayed the same even though the number of words changed. This suggests that the structure of the syllables is carefully chosen to match the rhythm of the music. Åkerström's research shows that translators pay attention to the syllabic needs that are set by musical limits, even if they choose to expand or condense words. Pattiwael (2019) conducted a study to identify strategies for translating the song *Do You Want to Build a Snowman?* from English to Indonesian based on the framework of Åkerström (2009). It was found that the lyric lines in the target language used fewer words than in the source language while the target lines have a similar number of syllables to the source lines. The translator likely prioritized the translated lines in the target language by adjusting the source texts and trying to keep the sense and singability of the source language in the target language. In other words, the translator paid close attention to the rhythmic and melodic structure, choosing words carefully to keep the flow of the song. By keeping the same number of syllables but changing the number of words, the translation finds a balance that respects the subtleties of the target language while still getting across the main ideas of the original song.

Research on translation strategies in different contexts highlights various approaches for balancing meaning, musicality, and cultural resonance in song translation. Franzon (2008) introduces a framework focused on “singability,” outlining five approaches from leaving lyrics untranslated to adapting them for musical cohesion. He emphasizes singability as the alignment of prosodic, poetic, and semantic elements, offering a systematic approach to harmonizing musical fidelity with linguistic adaptation. His five approaches—which range from not translating the words at all to changing them to fit the music—show how important it is to keep the music true while letting language change. Similarly, Tekin and İsisag (2017) investigated translation strategies in Turkish versions of Disney's *Hercules* and *Frozen*, using Peter Low's translation, adaptation, and replacement strategies within Skopos Theory. They observed “replacement” as dominant in *Hercules* and “translation” in *Frozen*. This difference shows how cultural, musical, and functional factors affect the chosen method, showing the flexibility needed to connect with a wide range of people. Putri and Nugroho (2023) examined the translation strategy used in the song “Mine” from the English to the Indonesian version based on the framework of Åkerström (2009) and Chesterman (2016). The use of rhymes, interpretation, addition of words, metaphor in texts, and borrowing was found in the study. The finding showed that the translator prioritized the rhyme, rhythm and, singability in the target language, including the cultural context. Fadli et al. (2023) also examined translation strategies in Joji's *Glimpse of Us*, finding generalization and paraphrasing with unrelated and related words to be predominant, based on Baker's (1992) framework. These studies show that translation methods are often very specific to the situation



and are carefully chosen to make sure that the lyrical and musical elements are balanced so that they meet the needs of the audience while still staying true to the song's original meaning. Together, they show a complex way of translating songs, indicating that choices are affected not only by correct language use but also by the desire to keep musical and cultural integrity.

The past studies show that there are both similarities and differences in how people translate songs. One big thing that all languages have in common is that the number of syllables stays the same. This suggests how hard translators work to keep the rhythm and structure of music and lyrics. However, word counts often differ because translators either cut down or add to the original text to account for differences in language and make the writing sound normal in the target language. These differences show a main problem: keeping both musical and grammatical accuracy while taking into account the unique needs of each language.

Translators also use a variety of techniques to make sure that rhythm and cultural resonance work well together. These techniques are based on ideas like “singability” by Franzon (2008) and “skopos theory” by Tekin and İsisag (2017). These strategies were picked with cultural background and audience standards in mind, showing a nuanced approach to keeping the emotional core of the song. Overall, these studies show that translating songs is not just changing the language; it's a complicated process where the choices made by the translator depend on what they want the target audience to get out of the experience.

Although numerous studies have explored translation strategies, applying Lefevere's (1975) framework would deepen this study by addressing translation as both a linguistic and performative act. Lefevere's model, particularly with strategies like phonemic and metrical translation, offers a nuanced perspective on how translations not only adapt linguistically but also retain the musicality and poetic integrity essential for performance.

## Research Objectives

This research aimed to analyze the number of syllables and words in English Walt Disney songs and the Thai-translated versions. It also examined the strategies used in translating Walt Disney songs into Thai. This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How different are the numbers of syllables vs. words in the English Walt Disney songs and Thai translation?
2. What translation strategies are used in the Thai-translated version of Walt Disney songs?

## Methodology

### *1. Sources*

This study's data comprises Disney songs that won the Oscar for Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures – Original Song. Since 1940, they have been 14 Disney songs

receiving this award. However, only nine of these songs were selected due to the availability of official Thai translations. The chosen songs include *The Little Mermaid* (1989) with *Under the Sea*, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) with *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* (1992) with *A Whole New World*, *The Lion King* (1994) with *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*, *Pocahontas* (1995) featuring *Colors of the Wind*, *Tarzan* (1999) with *You'll Be in My Heart*, *The Muppets* (2011) with *Man or Muppet*, *Frozen* (2013) featuring *Let It Go*, and *Coco* (2017) with *Remember Me*.

## 2. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involved gathering the lyrics of the nine selected songs. The YouTube channel “Disney Thai Song,” which compiles Walt Disney songs in both Thai and English, provided the lyrics for the Thai-translated versions. The English lyrics were sourced from the original Walt Disney animated films. All data were transcribed by the researchers and were compiled using Microsoft Word. During this process, repeated lines in the song lyrics were removed to facilitate a comparable syllable and word count for each song. After assembling the data, the researcher compared the original English versions with the Thai translations, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*The English and Thai Versions of the Nine Selected Disney Songs*

Line	Original Version (English)	Translated Version (Thai)
1	A whole new world	โลกใหม่สวยงาม (/lò:k mái sùai ŋám/)
2	Well, now they know.	สุดท้ายก็รู้ (/sút tʰá:j kǎi: rú:/)
3	I reflect on my reflection.	มองภาพสะท้อนของตัวเอง (/mǔŋ pʰá:p sà.tʰɔ:n tua ʔe:ŋ/)
4	I don't know.	ไร้ทางไป (/rǎj tʰá:ŋ paj/)
5	Though I have to say goodbye.	แม้ว่าเราต้องอำลา (/mǎi: wá: raw tʰɔ:ŋ ʔǎj kʰam lá:/)

## 3. Data Analysis

This study adopts a qualitative research design using content analysis as the primary methodological approach. Content analysis is particularly suited for this research, as it facilitates a detailed examination of the text and musical elements in the translations of Walt Disney songs into Thai. By systematically analyzing the textual content, the research identifies patterns, frequencies, and the application of translation strategies while considering the interplay between language and music. This study compared the number of syllables vs. words in the English Walt Disney songs and the Thai-translated versions and analyzed the strategies used for translating Walt Disney songs from English into Thai.

## 4. Comparison of the Number of Syllables vs. Words in the English Walt Disney Songs and Thai Translation

To find the answer, the researchers counted the number of syllables vs. words in both the original English and the Thai-translated versions according to the theoretical framework of Åkerström (2009) to compare and analyze their differences, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2***The Summary of Syllables vs. Words Analysis in Walt Disney Songs*

Line	Source Line		Target Line	
	Syllables	Words	Syllables	Words
1	8	5	8	7
2	6	4	7	7
3	8	6	8	8
4	7	6	7	7
5	8	7	8	8

*Translation Strategies Used in the Translation of Walt Disney Songs from English to Thai*

To find the answer, the researchers coded the original and translated versions of the nine Disney songs based on the seven translation strategies of Lefevere's framework, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3***The Translation Strategies Used in Walt Disney Songs*

Line	Original Version (English)	Translated Version (Thai)	Translation Strategies
11	Take it from me	จงเชื้อค้ำข้าหลวง (/tɕʰhɔ̌ŋ tɕʰhɔ̌ŋ kʰam jaː weːŋ/)	Interpretation
15	Under the sea	ใต้ท้องทะเล (/tɕʰhɔ̌ŋ tʰaː.leː/)	Literal translation
27	In fricassee	จับกินไม่แก่ (/ŋɔ̌p kɪn mǎj kɛː/)	Verse-to-prose translation
45	The ray he can play	เจ้ากระเบนก็เป็น (/tɕʰhɔ̌w kràː.ben kɔ̌ː pen/)	Rhymed translation
66	Unexpectedly	หันมองกันด้วยใจ (hǎn maawng gan duay jai)	Verse-to-prose translation

After coding the data, the researchers calculated the frequency of each translation strategy across the nine songs and presented the results as percentages.

### 5. Data Verification

The researchers initially coded and analyzed the data, ensuring it was systematically categorized and interpreted. Following this process, two translation experts reviewed the coded data to verify its accuracy and reliability, making adjustments as necessary to enhance precision.

## Results

This section presented the findings from analyzing syllables and words using Åkerström's (2009) syllables vs. words method. Additionally, it explored the translation strategies employed in the Thai translations of Walt Disney songs, based on Lefevere's (1975) translation strategies framework.

### 1. Syllables vs. Words

The analysis of syllables vs. words proposed by Åkerström (2009) was shown in this section. This method involved a comparison of syllables and words by counting the number in both the original and translated versions of each song lyric. The data consisted of nine selected Walt Disney songs. A summary of the syllables vs. words analysis is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*A Summary of Syllables vs. Words Analysis in Walt Disney Songs*

Songs	Source Lines		Target Lines	
	Syllables	Words	Syllables	Words
1.Under the Sea	437	371	435	373
2.Beauty and the Beast	115	86	115	101
3.A Whole New World	202	171	206	198
4.Can You Feel the Love Tonight?	184	150	176	170
5.Colors of the Wind	338	322	352	317
6.You'll Be in My Heart	97	90	90	81
7.Let It Go	303	257	299	269
8.Man or Muppet	228	188	219	188
9.Remember Me	100	79	100	81

Table 4 highlights the differences in syllable and word counts between the original English (source) and Thai (target) lyrics for each Disney song. It was found that *Under the Sea* had 437 syllables and 371 words in English, while the Thai version had 435 syllables and 373 words; *Beauty and the Beast* had 115 syllables and 86 words in English, compared to 115 syllables and 101 words in Thai; *A Whole New World* had 202 syllables and 171 words in English, while the Thai translation had 206 syllables and 198 words; *Can You Feel the Love Tonight?* had 184 syllables and 150 words in English, and 176 syllables and 170 words in Thai; *Colors of the Wind* had 338 syllables and 322 words in English, while the Thai version had 352 syllables and 317 words; *You'll Be in My Heart* had 97 syllables and 90 words in English, compared to 90 syllables and 81 words in Thai; *Let It Go* had 303 syllables and 257 words in English, while the Thai version had 299 syllables and 269 words; *Man or Muppet* had 228 syllables and 188 words in English, and 219 syllables and 188 words in Thai; *Remember Me* had 100 syllables and 79 words in English, while the Thai translation had 100 syllables and 81 words.

It can be concluded that the English versions tended to have more syllables than the Thai versions, except for *A Whole New World* and *Colors of the Wind*, which had more Thai syllables than English. For word counts, the Thai versions often contained more words than the English versions. Exceptions included *Colors of the Wind* and *You'll Be in My Heart*, where the English lyrics had slightly more words.

**Table 5**  
*Examples of the Number of Syllables and Words*

Source Text	Translated Text
Fewer number of syllables in the translated text	
For you and me (line 125) (4 syllables)	ฉันและเธอ (/tɕhǎn lé tʰɔː/) (3 syllables)
I don't care what they're going to say (line 227) (9 syllables)	ฉันไม่กลัวปล่อยให้เขาพูดไป (/tɕhǎn mâj klɯːa plòj hâj kʰǎo pʰùːt paj/) (8 syllables)
Greater number of words in the translated text	
Over, sideways and under (line 93) (4 words)	บินให้สูงหรือต่ำใกล้ดิน (/bin hâj sùːŋ rǔː tàm klâj din/) (7 words)
Through an endless diamond sky (line 107) (5 words)	ดาวน้อยใหญ่จับปลายขอบฟ้า (/daːw nɔːj jàj tɕəp plaːj kʰòːp fáː/) (7 words)

Table 5 provides examples of how the number of syllables and words differs between the source English text and its Thai translation. It highlights instances where translators either reduce or expand the content in the target language to maintain clarity, meaning, and rhythm. For example, in lines 125 and 227, fewer syllables are used in the Thai translation compared to the English source, suggesting that the translators condensed the lines to fit the target language's structure and musical timing. Conversely, in lines 93 and 107, the Thai translations contain more words than the English originals, indicating that additional words were included to enhance meaning or provide cultural context. This table illustrates the translators' adjustments to syllable and word count as part of the translation process to balance linguistic and musical requirements.

## 2. Translation Strategies

This section analyzed the translation strategies proposed by Lefevere (1975) used in Walt Disney songs. Seven strategies were applied to analyze the nine selected songs from the source into the target. The frequency and percentages of translation strategies are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
*The Frequency and Percentages of Translation Strategies in the Nine Walt Disney Songs*

Translation Strategy	1. Phonemic translation	2. Literal translation	3. Metrical translation	4. Verse-to-prose translation	5. Rhymed translation	6. Blank/free verse translation	7. Interpretation
Frequency							
Percentage							
1. <i>Under the Sea</i>							
Frequency	12	19	53	0	20	2	46
Percentage	7.89	12.50	34.87	0	13.16	1.32	30.26
2. <i>Beauty and the Beast</i>							
Frequency	0	2	24	0	1	0	22
Percentage	0	4.08	48.98	0	2.04	0	44.90

**Table 6 (Continued)**

Translation Strategy	1. Phonemic translation	2. Literal translation	3. Metrical translation	4. Verse-to-prose translation	5. Rhymed translation	6. Blank/free verse translation	7. Interpretation
Frequency							
Percentage							
<i>3. A Whole New World</i>							
Frequency	0	2	37	0	2	4	37
Percentage	0	2.44	45.12	0	2.44	4.88	45.12
<i>4. Can You Feel the Love Tonight?</i>							
Frequency	0	2	28	0	0	2	29
Percentage	0	3.28	45.90	0	0	3.28	45.54
<i>5. Colors of the Wind</i>							
Frequency	0	1	32	0	1	1	34
Percentage	0	1.45	46.38	0	1.45	1.45	49.28
<i>6. You'll Be in My Heart</i>							
Frequency	0	1	19	0	0	0	19
Percentage	0	2.56	48.72	0	0	0	48.72
<i>7. Let It Go</i>							
Frequency	0	8	40	0	1	4	41
Percentage	0	8.51	42.55	0	1.06	4.26	43.62
<i>8. Man or Muppet</i>							
Frequency	9	7	19	0	0	1	17
Percentage	16.98	13.21	35.85	0	0	1.89	32.08
<i>9. Remember Me</i>							
Frequency	0	1	16	0	0	0	15
Percentage	0	3.13	50	0	0	0	46.88

The following section presents an analysis of the translation strategies applied across nine Walt Disney songs, with a breakdown of the percentage use of each strategy.

Phonemic translation aims to replicate both the sound (phonemic qualities) and the meaning of the original text, often prioritizing sound, which can sometimes lead to a slight loss in clarity or fidelity. This strategy was applied in 7.89% of lines in *Under the Sea* and 16.98% in *Man or Muppet*.

Literal translation closely follows the original text's wording and structure. This strategy appeared in all the nine songs, including: *Under the Sea* (12.50%); *Beauty and the Beast* (4.08%); *A Whole New World* (2.44%); *Can You Feel the Love Tonight* (3.28%); *Colors of the Wind* (1.45%); *You'll Be in My Heart* (2.56%); *Let It Go* (8.51%); *Man or Muppet* (13.21%), and *Remember Me* (3.13%).

Metrical translation focuses on preserving the rhythm and meter of the original text without requiring rhyme. It was the most frequently applied strategy, helping to maintain a singable rhythm in the target language. Its usage across songs included: *Under the Sea* (34.87%); *Beauty*

*and the Beast* (48.98%); *A Whole New World* (45.12%); *Can You Feel the Love Tonight* (45.90%); *Colors of the Wind* (46.38%); *You'll Be in My Heart* (48.72%); *Let It Go* (42.55%); *Man or Muppet* (35.85%); and *Remember Me* (50%)

Rhymed translation retains the original text's rhyme scheme, often requiring changes to word choice and syntax. It was found in: *Under the Sea* (13.16%); *Beauty and the Beast* (2.04%); *A Whole New World* (2.44%); *Colors of the Wind* (1.45%); and *Let It Go* (1.06%).

Blank/free verse translation keeps a structured, unrhymed meter, offering flexibility in word choice while maintaining rhythm. It was used in: *Under the Sea* (1.32%); *A Whole New World* (4.88%); *Can You Feel the Love Tonight* (3.28%); *Colors of the Wind* (1.45%); *Let It Go* (4.26%); and *Man or Muppet* (1.89%).

Interpretation focuses on conveying the spirit or overall meaning rather than the exact words or structure, adapting the content for cultural resonance. This was another frequently used strategy, found in: *Under the Sea* (30.26%); *Beauty and the Beast* (44.90%); *A Whole New World* (45.12%); *Can You Feel the Love Tonight* (47.54%); *Colors of the Wind* (49.28%); *You'll Be in My Heart* (48.72%); *Let It Go* (43.62%); *Man or Muppet* (32.08%); and *Remember Me* (46.88%).

**Table 7**  
*Examples of Each Translation Strategy*

Source Text	Translated Text
<b>Phonemic translation</b>	
When the sardine (line 51)	ฝูงปลาซาร์ดีน (/fū:ŋ plā: sā: di:n/)
Am I a man or am I a muppet (line 258)	เราเป็นผู้ชายหรือเป็นได้เพียงมัมพ็พ (/ <i>raw pen p<sup>h</sup>ū: te<sup>h</sup>a:j rū: pen dāj p<sup>h</sup>iaŋ map p<sup>h</sup>ét/</i> )
Lines 51 and 258 transliterate “sardine” and “muppet” as “ซาร์ดีน” (/sā: di:n/) and “มัมพ็พ” (/map p <sup>h</sup> ét/) in Thai.	
<b>Literal translation</b>	
Don't let them know (line 221)	อย่าให้เขารู้ (/jâ: hâj k <sup>h</sup> âw rû:/)
I'm a muppet (line 275)	เราคือมัมพ็พ (/raw k <sup>h</sup> ū: m̄ap p <sup>h</sup> ét/)
In lines 221 and 275, the translators employed a word-for-word strategy to preserve the source text's meaning and form. This approach also facilitated maintaining the same number of syllables in the target language, ensuring the lyrics aligned well with the original music.	
<b>Metrical Translation</b>	
Fry us and eat us (line 24)	ทอดเราอามีดลับ (/thô:t raw ʔaw mî:t sàp/)
The chub play the tub (line 41)	ปลาบ๊องเล่นที่คลอง (/plā: p̄ŋ l̄n thî: klô:ŋ/)
The translator generally retained the meter of the source by maintaining the number of words and syllables in the target text while adapting the original rhythms to sound natural in the translated version.	

**Table 7 (Continued)**

Source Text	Translated Text
	Rhymed translation
Darling, it's better down where it's wetter (line 8)	แสนจะเย็นชื่นต่ำ เจ้าจนเย็นต่ำ (/sɛːn tɛːhâː jɛn tɛːhûːn.tɛːhâːm tɛâw tɛːhɔn jɛn kʰam/)
In the source text, the words “better” and “wetter” created a rhyme. The translator fully translated these rhyming words into “ชื่นต่ำ” (/tɛːhûːn.tɛːhâːm/) and “เย็นต่ำ” (/jɛn kʰam/) in the target text, preserving the rhyme scheme in the translation.	
	Blank/free verse translation
You last let your heart decide (line 90)	อย่างใจปรารถนาสักอย่าง (/jàːŋ teaj pràːt thà náː sàk jàːŋ/)
In this example, the translator tries to retain the core meaning and to preserve the rhythm in the target text. The word “last” rhymed with the word “heart” in the source line, but the translator removed the rhymed words in the target lines.	
	Interpretation
Down in the muck here under the sea (line 62)	น้ำเค็มและดินทรายใต้ท้องทะเล (/nám kʰêm lé pʰuːn sǎːj tâj thǔw.ŋ thǎ.lɛː/)
In this example, the translator interpreted the word “muck” in the source text as referring to “sea water and sand,” symbolizing elements of the sea. It is translated as “น้ำเค็มและดินทราย” (/nám kʰêm lé pʰuːn sǎːj/) in the target text.	
Has a life, has a spirit, has a name (line 165)	มีทั้งนามและมีชีวิตแทบทุกสิ่ง (/mii thǎŋ nám lé mii tɛːhī.wít thǎːp thúk siŋ/)
In line 167, the translator interpreted the phrases “has a life” and “has a spirit” in the source text as conveying the same concept, translating them both as “มีชีวิต” (/miː tɛːhīː.wít/) in the target text.	

Table 7 illustrated various translation strategies applied in adapting Disney song lyrics from English to Thai. It demonstrates how different techniques—such as phonemic, literal, metrical, rhymed, blank/free verse, and interpretive translation—are used to balance meaning, rhythm, rhyme, and cultural nuances in the target language.

## Discussion

This study examined syllable-word dynamics and translation strategies in nine Walt Disney songs translated from English to Thai. The analysis revealed that English source lines generally contained the same number of syllables but fewer words than the Thai target lines, likely due to structural differences between the languages. Unlike Pattiwael’s (2019) study, which found that Indonesian translations used fewer words to prioritize meaning, this study suggests that translation decisions in song adaptation can vary significantly depending on the target language and the specific goals of the translation.

The distinctive characteristics of Walt Disney songs, especially their appeal to children, play a key role in shaping both syllable/word counts and translation strategies. Since Disney songs are crafted to be engaging and easy for young audiences to sing along with, the Thai translations often employ simpler phrasing. This approach helps maintain a smooth, singable rhythm that aligns with the music, resulting in a higher word count with a similar number of syllables in



many Disney songs under this study. This balance between word count and syllable structure is intentional, aiming to keep the translated songs as engaging and accessible for young audiences as the originals. Similarly, Baihaqi and Subiyanto (2022) studied English-Indonesian translation strategies in eight children's songs. Addition, omissions, and paraphrases are three frequently used translation strategies, affirming the importance of adjustments to maintain musicality and accessibility for young audiences.

Furthermore, Lefevere's (1975) seven translation strategies were applied, with metrical translation emerging as the predominant strategy. This choice reflects the need to maintain rhythm, ensuring that the lyrics align with the original score. The frequent use of metrical translation, as well as rhymed and phonemic translations, aligns with studies by Tekin and Isisag (2017), who observed similar patterns in Turkish translations of Disney songs, demonstrating that translators prioritize rhythm and musical cohesion. The use of interpretation as a strategy, especially in songs like "Can You Feel the Love Tonight?" and "A Whole New World," reflects the adaptation necessary to bridge cultural and emotional gaps, resonating with Putri and Nugroho (2023) emphasis on rhyme, rhythm, singability, and cultural adaptation within Low's Pentathlon Principle.

However, this study also diverges from some prior research. While phonemic translation was common here, Soang's (2020) findings suggested a lack of phonemic translation, likely due to a focus on meaning over sound in other contexts. Additionally, while metrical translation and interpretation were the most used strategies in this study, Fadli (2023) identified generalization as the primary strategy in song translation, and Kolahi and Shiraz (2012) noted a preference for literal translation in Persian poetry. These differences highlight how genre and translator preference significantly shape the translation process. For Disney songs, the strict syllable and rhythm requirements led to the frequent use of metrical translation. In some cases, translators added rhymes in the Thai versions to enhance naturalness and musicality, even where the original lacked them. Adjusting word and syllable counts to align with the melody and emotional tone, translators made the songs singable and appealing in the target language.

In conclusion, this study expands on existing research by applying Lefevere's (1975) framework to Disney songs, highlighting the adaptability required in song translation. Translators must balance meaning with musical rhythm, demonstrating that successful song translation depends on both linguistic fidelity and the anticipated performance context, as noted by Low (2005). By focusing on high-profile, globally recognized songs, this research underscores the unique challenges of translating music for a new cultural audience.

## Conclusion

The study found that, based on Åkerström's (2009) strategy, the Thai translations of Walt Disney songs generally had the same number of syllables as the source lines, while the source lines had

fewer words than the target lines. Using Lefevere's (1975) framework, six translation strategies were identified, with metrical translation being the most frequently used. This strategy likely helped preserve the original meaning while maintaining the rhythm essential to the music. Notably, verse-to-prose translation was absent, possibly because translators sought to retain the poetic elements of the original text to ensure the translations remained natural, singable, and equivalent in the target language. The findings mostly align with previous research, emphasizing the importance of tailoring translations for young audiences. Simpler phrasing and increased word count in Thai ensure readability and enjoyment, reflecting Disney songs' child-friendly appeal. By applying Lefevere's framework, this study sheds light on balancing linguistic accuracy with performative needs in song translation, offering practical insights for adapting culturally significant music across languages.

## Recommendations

This study emphasizes the need for translation strategies that balance linguistic fidelity and musicality in adapting Disney songs. Future research could broaden the analysis to other languages, explore how linguistic differences impact strategies, and examine adaptations aimed at young audiences to enhance accessibility. To guarantee emotionally impactful and singable translations, translators are urged to consider both rhythmic and cultural aspects. Additional research on audience reaction may improve translation techniques and provide culturally aware and captivating versions.

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