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I am not throwing away my shot! (at discussing multimodality): How a multimodal analysis can support song translation – the case of *Hamilton*

ABSTRACT

I am not throwing away my shot! (at discussing multimodality): How a multimodal analysis can support song translation – the case of *Hamilton*

Stage musicals stand out for their multimodal nature, and thus convey meaning through verbal, audio and visual semiotic resources. So far, studies on the translation of musicals have focused mainly on lyrics, without taking into consideration their multimodal nature; when the topic of the multimodality of songs has been researched, it was mostly in popular music and opera. When it comes to stage musicals and their translation, it is evident that there is a lack of substantial research on how meaning is expressed through interaction between modes. However, due to their nature, stage musicals require a multimodal translation approach. To tackle this, the paper presents a model of analysis that considers the semiotic complexity of these songs and demonstrates how they use verbal, audio and visual resources to further the plot. This model was applied to the musical *Hamilton* (2015) to understand the role of multimodality in a modern stage musical and to address the question on how to tackle its translation.

Keywords: translation, multimodality, stage musicals, song translation, themes

1. “Who lives, who dies, who tells your story”: stage musicals and multimodality

Song translation plays a critical role in musical theatre around the world; many stage musicals are in English and thus a translation into another language is required when the performance is aimed at a target audience whose language is

not English. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, there was a rise in the number of operas performed in translation; however, today it is more common to experience an opera in its original language. By contrast, stage musicals tend to be experienced entirely in translation (Mateo 2012: 119), as indicated by the many translated Anglo-American musicals that have reached Europe and Asia.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in song translation; among others, studies on opera, pop music, films, folk music or cover songs have been published (Minors 2013; Low 2017; Franzon et al. 2021). However, little research has been attempted in the field of stage musicals¹.

Several attempts have been made to devise models of translation to be applied to the lyrics of songs; however, studies on the translation of musicals (Low 2017) have focused mainly on lyrics, while studies that take into consideration the multimodality of songs (Kaindl 2005) mostly discussed popular music and opera.

The main challenge faced by these various efforts to create models of song translation is related to the specificity of the genre and of particular source texts involved. Songs are “verbal-musical hybrid[s]” (Low 2003: 229), and when it comes to stage musicals, they are used to convey a message via the interaction of verbal, audio and visual semiotic resources. The analysis of these songs for translation purposes should therefore address this multimodal interaction to provide a full understanding of the text. To date, there does not yet seem to be any study that has actually investigated how to disentangle the complexities of song translation by examining how different semiotic modes interact to create meaning.

A recent study (Carpi 2020) on the multimodality of songs in stage musicals acknowledged the lack of substantial research on how meaning is expressed through interaction between modes. The result was the development of a model of analysis that considers the semiotic complexity of these songs and explains how they use verbal, audio and visual resources to further the plot.

This model, which will be described further in the paper, has been so far only applied to four traditional stage musicals (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, *My Fair Lady*, *Cats* and *Grease*). Providing a newer approach to the topic of song translation as it has, it has not been tested on more recent productions.

The aim of this paper is therefore to explore the relationship between semiotic modes at play in the musical *Hamilton* (2015), with the use of a systematic model for their analysis, and subsequently for their singable translation. There are several reasons why *Hamilton* was chosen as the subject of this study: first, it is a newer and more disruptive production, which is based on a different

1| The term stage musical follows the definition provided by Woolford (2012: 5), according to whom a stage musical is “a theatrical presentation where the content of the story is communicated through *speech, music and movement* in an integrated fashion to create a unified whole” (my emphasis).

genre of songs (rap) than the ones that were previously used. This offered the opportunity to investigate what multimodality looks like in a more modern stage musical. Finally, this analysis also aimed to identify which elements of the model, if any, would need updating when dealing with this particular type of show.

Section 2 of this paper provides a description of the multimodal model of analysis and its categories, detailing its theoretical framework and background. Section 3 introduces the research material (*Hamilton*) and it describes how the model of analysis was applied to this musical. Finally, Section 4 reviews the data obtained and offers some considerations on the advantages and shortcomings of the model as well as its further applications in the field of translation studies.

2. “What’d I miss”: a multimodal model of analysis

When discussing the translation of popular songs, Kaindl (2005: 242) states that:

Any translation works through dialogue at various levels: dialogues with previous texts, genres, styles of the source culture and the target culture, dialogues between (musical, verbal and visual) discourses, dialogues between producers and addressees (real or imagined), dialogues between various interpretations of an individual song. These various echoes, traces, contrasts lead to a multiple-voice signifying stream and to a concept of translation that is intertextual, in process and never complete.

This also perfectly relates to musical theatre songs and the concept of dialogue between different semiotic modes that is at the basis of the model used here.

The model looks at the “semantic interaction among semiotic systems” (Pastra 2008: 300) and aims to provide more information on the multiple modes at play in songs of stage musicals, which could eventually inform their translation. It was developed with a particular focus on the identification of relevant themes in lyrics, which are then replicated (or not) in audio and visual modes. These themes represent the information that each song wants to transmit to the audience, expressed via verbal, audio and visual semiotic resources². For the purpose of this research, the verbal mode expressed by lyrics is considered the primary mode of interest, due to the fact that, in the event of a translation, lyrics would be the translator’s initial working material. The other two modes (audio and visual) are then analysed in their interaction with the verbal mode. The analysis is based on a principle of sequentiality, meaning that the audio mode is analysed after the verbal mode, and only then the visual mode is analysed. The

2| For a more in-depth description of the model of analysis presented here see Carpi 2020.

audio mode is given the second place due to the strict relation that music has with its lyrics, and consequently the visual mode is the last one to be considered.

The analysis of the verbal mode should be based on the printed libretto of the show; however, it is recommended to compare it with the recording of the show, in case any changes have been made when performing it live. The analysis of the audio mode can be based on an audio recording of the songs as sung, because it does not require the musical analysis of a printed score. The analysis of the visual mode should be based on a video recording of a suitable production of the source text musical; this should be a live performance on stage and not a film.

A schematic summary of how the model is structured can be found in Table 1, while a step-by-step guide on how to apply the model will be the subject of Section 3.

Table 1: Multimodal model of analysis for songs of stage musicals

Verbal mode	Audio mode	Visual mode
Repetitions	Music	Dancing
Evocative meaning	Interludes	Embodied behaviour
Key clusters	Pauses	Stage props
Expressive meaning	Sound effects	
Cultural background	Paralinguistic features	
Intratextuality		

2.1. Verbal mode

In this multimodal model of analysis, the verbal mode focuses on lyrics, i.e. written words performed on stage during a song. The categories developed to analyse this mode (see Table 1) are based on modified versions of the Pentathlon Approach by Low (2003; 2005) and the functional system proposed by Franzon (2005). Additionally, when a song is translated, assuming that the final aim is a performance in a target language, the most important aspect is its singability, which in Franzon's words (2015: 333) is "the prosodic, poetic-rhetoric and semantic fit that a target text lyric may show to a certain piece of music – the music the source text is linked to".

With these elements in mind, the categories of the model are organised following three streams of analysis (linguistic, semantic and social/cultural), which group together categories covering different aspects of songs. First are those related to the linguistic aspect of the text (repetitions), then the categories analysing the semantic properties of the song (evocative meaning, key clusters, and expressive meaning) and finally the categories that look at the social/cultural aspects of the text (cultural background and intratextuality).

2.2. Audio mode

The audio mode analyses the components that relate to sound: music, interludes, and pauses are linked to the musical background that supports lyrics, while sound effects and paralinguistic features (such as laughter) look at specific sounds that can be heard on stage.

Given the general lack of unanimous guidelines, the subcategories that compose this mode (see Table 1) were developed borrowing from the fields of theatre and music studies, and mostly based on the classification of theatre signs by Kowzan (1968). This study on sign systems looks at different modes of communication that can be found in a theatrical performance. The sign systems at play in the theatre are divided into auditory and visual signs as well as those signs that are directly related to the actor and those that are “outside the actor”.

2.3. Visual mode

A song is not influenced and determined by its verbal and audio components only, but also by a series of visual elements seen on stage while the song is performed. The visual mode of this new model analyses visible components that have an impact on the meaning of lyrics. As with the analysis of the audio mode, the aim of the visual analysis is to investigate how verbal resources interact with visual resources, and how the two modes complement each other.

The theoretical basis for the development of the subcategories of the visual mode (see Table 1) was mostly drawn from Kowzan’s (1968) previously mentioned classification of theatre signs.

3. “Wait for it”: introducing Hamilton

There is no doubt that since its debut off-Broadway in 2015, *Hamilton* was an immediate sensation. The musical has smashed record after record, and it now sits among the greatest in the musical theatre universe. What could have been a potentially uninteresting, or even difficult topic to treat (the history of Alexander Hamilton, one of America’s Founding Fathers and the first US Secretary of the Treasury) managed to thrill audiences the world over. Lin Manuel Miranda, the mind behind this success, created a show that is both anchored to the musical theatre tradition and, at the same time, recognized as hugely innovative³. One reason for its popularity surely lies in the complexity of its songs. The music and the lyrics present many different layers that can attract audiences of different age, sex, race and social rank. What is in fact extremely interesting

3| See for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/dec/01/hamilton-mashed-up-musical-theatre-and-hiphop-lin-manuel-miranda> (accessed: 28.9.2023); <https://common-reader.wustl.edu/c/hamilton-innovative-not-quite-revolutionary/> (accessed: 28.9.2023).

about this musical is how a localized and, to some, even unknown story can reach so many individuals and convey the universal message of inclusiveness.

As perfectly stated by Churchwell (2016), *Hamilton*

[...] is the story of a “young, scrappy and hungry” immigrant from the West Indies who became the quintessential American success story through a combination of brains, hard work and audacity. Miranda creates a myth for Hamilton by celebrating him as a symbol of immigrant inclusiveness, egalitarianism and meritocracy: historically it’s a stretch, but theatrically it’s genius.

On top of that, Churchwell (2016) points out, “[e]verything about the show is ‘meta,’ as layered references compound meaning like interest: Hamilton is metatheatrical, metahistorical, metamusical, metamorphic”.

However, despite these elements of novelty, we should not make the mistake of thinking that *Hamilton* is not in line with its predecessors: as stated by Lawson (2017),

Hamilton, though, is no aberration. It continues the American musical’s impressive tradition of creative radicalism. While Stephen Sondheim is often singled out for his unlikely subjects – presidential shootings (*Assassins*), US-Japanese trade wars (*Pacific Overtures*), pointillist art (*Sunday in the Park with George*) – audacious combinations of content and expression have always been integral to the genre.

Two of the most-revived musicals, *Cabaret* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, are stories of anti-Jewish genocide. *West Side Story* turned Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* into a multiracial teenage dance musical. And the last Broadway import to create anything close to the heat around *Hamilton* made another improbable subject – Latter Day Saints evangelism – into *The Book of Mormon*.

It is also important to note that *Hamilton* is considered a through-sung musical, given that there is barely any spoken dialogue and the narration proceeds entirely via songs (there are, however, a few moments in the show where spoken dialogue is used instead of singing). This makes the songs (and the lyrics) the focal point of the show. As previous studies have shown, the verbal mode is not the only important element of a musical, as audio and visual modes contribute to the telling of the story too.

This brief presentation of *Hamilton* showed how this musical is the most suitable material for a multimodal analysis with translation in mind. Sections 3.1. to 3.5. provide a detailed description of how the model previously developed in Carpi (2018) was applied to this musical, specifically to the song “My shot”.

3.1. “My shot”: an overview

“My shot” is song number 3 of Act 1 of *Hamilton*, and it is one of the best-known songs of the entire show. “My shot” falls under the labels of anthem and group song, as detailed in Carpi (2018: 102):

Anthem: The most (or one of the most) popular song of the musical, which immediately reminds the audience of that particular show. This type of song can highlight a relevant theme of the show and could include the title of the musical itself.

Group song: A randomly selected song where there is singing interaction between more than two characters. This type of song could also be quite spectacular from the visual point of view, and it is sometimes referred to as the “production number”.

In “My shot” there are several characters on stage at the same time: Hamilton, Lafayette, Mulligan, Laurens and Burr, together with the ensemble.⁴

The recorded clip analysed here was taken from the filmed version of the show that was made available on Disney+ in 2020. Due to the fact that only one small difference was found between the original Broadway cast recording (2015) and the 2020 Disney+ recording, the lyrics were taken from the libretto published with the CD, with just one small amendment compared to the recording.⁵

The following sections show how to practically apply the model of analysis to a song taken from a stage musical in order to understand how the process works and how the data is extracted from the model.

3.2. “My shot”: analysis of the verbal mode

This section analyses the lyrics of “My shot” in detail in order to show how the multimodal model of analysis can be applied to verbal semiotic resources. As a preliminary step, lyrics taken from the libretto should be compared with those sung in the video version analysed, checking for any differences; as in the case study presented here none could be found⁶, the categories of the verbal mode (see Table 1, p. 114) could then be applied to the libretto. The categories should be applied one after the other and the results annotated in tables; at this stage, it is worth remembering that the application of the model is partly characterised by subjectivity.

3.2.1. Repetitions

For the purposes of the model, repetitions are “words or clusters of words that are repeated more than once” (Carpi 2020: 425). Table 2 (p. 118) lists a few of

4| <https://hamiltonmusical.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Characters> (accessed: 23.09.2023).

5| Towards the end of the song, Hamilton sings the lyrics: “I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory. When’s it gonna get me? In my sleep? Seven feet ahead of me? *If I see it comin’*, do I run or do I let it be?”. However in the booklet published with the original Broadway cast recording (*Hamilton* 2015), the segment ends: “Seven feet ahead of me? *comin’*, do I run or do I let it be?” (my added italics). Given that the difference is minor (and it could very well be a typo), the words were added to the lyrics used for this paper and analysed as if part of the original booklet.

6| Please refer to the previous footnote.

the repetitions that can be found in “My shot”. Those words and expressions that were repeated only two or three times were left out of this table. From this list, some thematic patterns can already be spotted. They will be useful when applying the next categories.

Table 2: Repetitions

Word(s)	Iterations
shot	41
shoot	1
my	39
throwing	23
throwin’	3
rise up	18
I am not throwing away my shot	10
time	10
country	6
hungry	6
hungriest	1
I’m young, scrappy and hungry	5
colonies	5
colony	1
free	4
freedom	1

3.2.2. Evocative meaning

The analysis of what is defined as evocative meaning should look at words or groups of words that concern language variations (Carpi 2020: 426).

Noticing these writing choices is useful to understand the tone of the text and the type of relationship between characters on stage. Table 3 provides a few examples from “My shot”.

Table 3: Evocative meaning

Examples	Comments
Hey yo	Informal register
I got y’all <i>knuckleheads</i> in loco parentis	Colloquialism
where all the <i>hungriest brothers</i> with something to prove went?	Informal register

3.2.3. Key clusters

The category of key clusters provides a clearer identification of more significant themes of the song. With two categories applied, it is likely that at this stage some information could already be evident; however, it is only with the creation of key clusters that a more definite thematic structure can be attached to the song.

The analysis includes multiple scannings of the text, in order to group together words or clusters of words that refer to a similar topic (see Table 4). The process of grouping the expressions is based on personal knowledge and experience, whilst always acknowledging the subjectivity of this process. This is then followed by a labelling phase as objective as possible, using labels that can be recognised and understood universally. The aim is to link these words to general themes that could easily be replicated in a target language and culture.

Table 4: Groups of key clusters

Group 1 (Intellect)	Group 2 (Fight)	Group 3 (Freedom)
I amaze and astonish	I am not throwing away my shot!	I dream of life without a monarchy
I got a lot of brains but no polish	'm joining the rebellion	But we'll never be truly free until those in bondage have the same rights as you and me
With every word, I drop knowledge!	A bunch of revolutionary manumission abolitionists	For the first time, I'm thinkin' past tomorrow
Don't be shocked when your hist'ry book mentions me.	Rise up!	
Between all the bleedin' 'n fightin' I've been readin' 'n writin'		

As Table 4 shows, this step of the analysis only concerns the grouping phase; the labelling phase should happen at the end of phase 1 (verbal analysis), when useful information can be gathered through all the categories (identification of themes). Nevertheless, it is usually possible to identify some thematic areas in the song at this stage of the process of analysis, which is why some labels were already added to show this.

3.2.4. Expressive meaning

The category of expressive meaning bears many similarities to that of key clusters, in that it looks at the meaning of words; specifically, this category aims

to locate words or expressions that refer to emotions and/or attitudes (Carpi 2020: 428). Examples 1–5 show some expressions in “My shot” that could be interpreted from an emotional point of view.

- (1) I am *not throwing away* my shot
- (2) The plan is to *fan this spark into a flame*
- (3) I said *shout* it to the rooftops!
- (4) where all the *hungriest brothers* with something to prove went?
- (5) I’m past patiently waitin’.
- (6) I’m *passionately smashin’* every expectation, every action’s an act of creation!

3.2.5. Cultural background

This category helps locate the expressions that are specifically related to the source culture, and/or to culture in general (see Table 5). This way, it should be possible to define whether further explanation is needed in the event of a translation, either in the text or via other semiotic modes.

Table 5: Cultural background

Examples	Field
Scholarship to King’s College	Education
A colony that runs independently. Meanwhile, Britain keeps shittin’ on us endlessly. Essentially, they tax us relentlessly, then King George turns around, runs a spending spree. He ain’t ever gonna set his descendants free, so there will be a revolution in this century.	History
I dream of life without a monarchy. The unrest in France will lead to ‘onarchy?	History
we roll like Moses, claimin’ our promised land	Religion
We need to handle our financial situation. Are we a nation of states? What’s the state of our nation?	History

3.2.6. Intratextuality

This category refers to the knowledge that the audience has acquired throughout the show and points out which information should not require any extra explanation, had this already come up in the previous stage of the performance. However, it is to be considered how much of this information the audience is able to retain, and how frequently it should be made explicit again, possibly via different semiotic resources.

The examples in Table 6 show how some information is left implicit in “My shot”, because it is expressed in previous songs and/or interactions between characters on stage.

Table 6: Intratextuality

Expressions	Explanation
ev’ry burden, ev’ry disadvantage I have learned to manage	Hamilton’s upbringings and difficulties growing up
I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory	Foreshadowing of Hamilton’s future, previously referenced in other songs
See, I never thought I’d live past twenty. Where I come from some get half as many	Hamilton’s past

3.2.7. Summary of verbal mode analysis

Once all the categories of the verbal mode have been applied to lyrics, results can be analysed, with the main themes extracted from the information gathered. Tables 7 and 8 (p. 122) provide a summary of all the categories and a few labels that indicate the main thematic areas identified in “My shot”. As previously mentioned, the themes were named in the most generic and understandable way possible. The aim is to identify those topics that would need to be restated in a target text, as the most important elements conveying meaning. Borrowing Franzon’s words (2015: 339), the aim of this category is “to create focus [...] observing the workings of this structuring effect may matter more than counting rhymes and copying rhyme schemes”.

Table 7: Summary of verbal mode

Verbal modes	Present or not
Repetitions	✓
Evocative meaning	✓
Key clusters	✓
Expressive meaning	✓
Cultural background	✓
Intratextuality	✓

Table 8: Overall themes in the verbal mode

Theme	Origin
intellect	from key clusters
fighting	from repetitions, key clusters and expressive meaning
freedom	from repetitions and expressive meaning
future	from key clusters and expressive meaning
history	from cultural background and intratextuality
family	from evocative meaning and intratextuality

3.3. “My shot”: analysis of the audio mode

This section analyses the audio recording of “My shot” in detail, in order to show how the model should be applied to the audio semiotic mode. Specifically, the second step of the analysis consists in the application of the categories of the audio mode (see Table 1, p. 114).

This analysis was performed on a recording of the examined staged performance. As a general note, the performance analysed should preferably be a video one, as songs recorded for CDs tend to be polished afterwards, and the video is necessary for the visual analysis as well.

3.3.1. Music

This section of the analysis does not require specific musical knowledge and it does not aim to provide a detailed reading of the score. This level of information will be necessary in a later phase of the song translating process (as explained in Carpi 2018). The purpose of this current stage of the analysis is simply to know more about the way audio semiotic resources contribute to the meaning of the song, and what impact they have on lyrics. As described in more detail in Carpi (2020: 431), in order to classify differences across musical motifs, a taxonomy provided by Kaindl (1995) was used as a basis. Specifically, a distinction was made between:

- 1) signs relating to characters, 2) signs relating to situational references, and 3) signs relating to concepts and ideas. The first type expresses psychological and/or physiological and/ or sociological states, the second type is used to indicate spatial relations and objects, while the third type links music to specific concepts.

See Table 9 for an example of note taking on the music in “My shot”.

Table 9: Music

Examples	Comments
Chorus: increasing rhythm, the beat provides a sense of urgency	Referring to concept or ideas (upcoming revolution)
Stanzas: music drops to punctuate the words and serve as support to the narration	Referring to concept or ideas
Specific words are marked by the same instruments (e.g., cymbals under the word “shot”)	Referring to concept or ideas
Fingers snapping as the only accompaniment to Hamilton’s own thinking	Referring to characters (symbol of hesitation before joining in)
Music becomes more powerful towards the end	Referring to characters, and concept or ideas (marking the increasing understanding of Hamilton and the others of what is about to happen)

3.3.2. Interludes

This category should look at any moment in the song where music is played with no lyrics, for a noticeable duration. Interludes can happen at the beginning or at the end of the song, but tend to occur most often in the middle, and are frequently accompanied by a dance routine. In the analysed song, no instances were identified for this category.

3.3.3. Pauses

As stated in Carpi (2020: 432),

[...] the category of pauses is different from that of *interludes* as it keeps track of interruptions in which no music or other sounds can be heard. This definition does not refer to the transitional moments between songs, but to those silent moments that are purposely inserted in the song itself. Pauses may give information on specific moments or themes that are to be highlighted in the song.

In this specific song no real pauses can be identified; however, there is a moment in the middle of the song when Hamilton hesitates and the only sound heard is that of fingers snapping (performed by other characters on stage). This is to signify doubts popping into Hamilton’s head, before he fully commits to the idea of revolution. While not a real pause *per se*, given that a sound can still be heard, this should still be noted, as it represents an important and meaningful moment in the song.

3.3.4 Sound effects

As stated in Carpi (2020: 432), “the category of sound effects analyses the sounds that are ‘artificially reproduced for the aims of the spectacle’ (Kowzan 1968: 72) and that are used to recreate on stage a sound that is normally heard in real life (rain, bells, etc.)”. In the case of “My shot”, no instances were identified for this category.

3.3.5. Paralinguistic features

It was previously established that paralinguistic features include all those non-lexical elements that can be heard during the song (for instance, laughter, crying), which are uttered by the actors.

“My shot”, however, poses an interesting question when discussing its paralinguistic elements: in fact, due to the rapping nature of the song, many of the sounds uttered by the actors are closer to regular conversation than actual singing. How should we then approach the analysis of these elements? Should we still look for instances of “paralanguage” (Poyatos 1997: 42), or are rap songs different from the more traditional musical theatre songs? In other words, does the fact that there is a lot more spoken dialogue in these songs than there would be in other musicals, make the category of paralinguistic features redundant?

When performing the analysis of “My shot”, the second approach was followed, but this shows how this model could still be subject to change the more we study this topic. For these reasons, for the purposes of this study, no paralinguistic features were identified in the song.

3.3.6. Summary of audio mode analysis

After applying all the categories of the audio mode to “My shot”, the next step is to extract themes from the information obtained. The notes taken during this phase of the analysis will now be compared with the themes already gathered from the verbal analysis. The first step should be to check whether the themes identified in the verbal analysis are replicated by the audio analysis or not, and then proceed in identifying any new ones. Tables 10 and 11 summarise the results obtained in “My shot”; the labelling system was the same as used for the verbal analysis.

Table 10: Summary of audio mode

Audio modes	Present or not
Music	✓
Interludes	×
Pauses	✓
Sound effects	×
Paralinguistic features	×

Table 11: Overall themes in the audio mode

Theme	Origin
awareness	from music
fighting	from music
hesitation	from pauses

3.4. “My shot”: analysis of the visual mode

The final step of the analysis consists in the application of the categories of visual mode (see Table 1, p. 114) to the same recording used for the audio mode analysis. As with the first two semiotic modes, the aim is to gather information on the song and on how the identified themes can be expressed via different semiotic resources. The visual resources identified in “My shot” were specific to the staging in question (filmed version available on Disney+, 2020⁷); however, this section of the analysis is also useful to generally understand how the meaning of lyrics could be expanded via visual semiotic resources.

3.4.1. Dancing

This category specifically looks at the choreographed routines that could be seen on stage and leaves the analysis of spontaneous movements to the category of embodied behaviour. See Table 12 for an example of note taking on the dancing in “My shot”.

Table 12: Dancing

Example	Comments
Choreographed routine whenever the refrain of “My shot” is sung. First there is only a few dancing, and Hamilton does not immediately join in. Then more and more characters join as the song continues, until everyone is dancing.	It is a crescendo of interactions, to signal the plan that is taking form and the more and more people that start to believe in it (Hamilton included). It is a call to action, and it foretells the fighting that will come later.

3.4.2. Embodied behaviour

This category aims to identify spontaneous visual cues that add more information to the lyrics of the song. As previously stated in Carpi (2020: 434),

7 | See official trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSCKfXpAGHc> (accessed: 27.09.2023).

[...] the focus was placed on iconic gestures, that is, marked cues that deviate from “regular” behaviour. However, instances of gaze following speech and body movements that logically follow words will also be analysed when they appear to add more to the communication.

In addition to this,

[...] the acts inserted in this category are classified under the labels “logical” (acts linked to speech) and “objective” (acts independent from speech), both borrowed from Efron (1941). Not every gesture is to be listed, but only those that carry a meaning”.

Based on this, Table 13 offers an overview of a few selected examples from “My shot”.

Table 13: Embodied behaviour

Examples	Type	Symbolic Function
Hamilton pointing at his glass before putting it back on the table: something is about to start	Objective	Anticipation
Hamilton pointing at his temples when talking about his “brain”	Logical	Intellect
Lafayette, Mulligans and Laurens standing up and surrounding Hamilton to listen to him: they are getting interested in what he is saying.	Objective	Anticipation

3.4.3. Stage props

The final category of the visual mode looks at props that are used on stage to support or add to the meaning of the song. See Table 14 for an example of the props found in “My shot”.

Table 14: Stage props

Examples	Comments
Drinking glasses	Characters on stage often drink whenever the word “shot” is sung. This could be a foretelling for the fighting that is to come.
Lights	The stage gets darker to mark Hamilton’s moment of hesitation, then the lights are back on once he regains confidence in himself. Lights are also used to mark moments when Hamilton thinks about the future and what is to come.

3.4.4. Summary of visual mode analysis

As with the verbal and audio modes, the themes identified in the visual analysis have been summarised and compared with the already identified ones, in order to see whether they were new or not.

Table 15: Summary of visual mode

Visual modes	Present or not
Dancing	✓
Embodied behaviour	✓
Stage props	✓

Table 16: Overall themes in the visual mode

Theme	Origin
fighting	From dancing and stage props
anticipation	From embodied behaviour
intellect	From embodied behaviour
hesitation	From stage props
future	From stage props

3.5. Relationship between verbal, audio and visual mode: an overview of “My shot”

Table 17 (p. 128) provides a complete overview of the analysis of “My shot”, showing the relationships between the three modes; it is possible to notice which new themes emerged from which mode, and whether these themes were enhanced, modified or omitted.

According to Table 17, nine themes were identified in “My shot”: six in the verbal mode analysis, two in the audio mode analysis and one in the visual mode analysis; some of these themes were repeated across the different modes. *Fighting* is a multimodal theme, because it is expressed via all the three semiotic modes. The themes of *intellect*, *future* and *hesitation* could be defined as “bimodal”, because they recur in two out of the three modes available: *intellect* and *future* are expressed via the verbal and visual modes, while *hesitation* is expressed via the audio and visual modes. Finally, *freedom*, *history*, *family* and *anticipation* could be defined as “monomodal” themes, as they are expressed via one mode only: the verbal one for *freedom*, *history* and *family*, and the visual one for *anticipation*.

Table 17: Summary of themes in “My shot”

Themes	Verbal	Audio	Visual	Modality
intellect	+		✓	bimodal
fighting	+	✓	✓	multimodal
freedom	+			monomodal
future	+		✓	bimodal
history	+			monomodal
family	+			monomodal
awareness		+		monomodal
hesitation		+	✓	bimodal
anticipation			+	monomodal
Total	6	3	5	

To summarise, Section 3 outlined a step-by-step guide on how to apply the model of analysis to songs of stage musicals. Each category was used to analyse “My shot”, in order to provide a more holistic view of the song and of its themes.

4. “What comes next?”: a few considerations on the model

As stated at the beginning of this paper, the model of analysis for songs of stage musicals has been created to provide a useful tool that could serve as a basis for, among other things, the potential translation of these shows. An important aspect of this research has always been to keep the model up to date, and this is why it was tested on a more recent musical (*Hamilton*, in this case).

The first consideration regarding the application of the model is that the verbal analysis step is still the strongest and the most articulated one. Thanks to the categories in this section, it was easy to extract the main themes of the song, and it was possible to see the links between “My shot” and the other songs of the show. Additionally, the verbal analysis highlighted an interesting aspect of this song and of *Hamilton* in general, which is the use of an extremely contemporary and colloquial language. This almost street-like language is one of the defining features of this show and something that makes it stand out. This element should be kept in mind when approaching the translation of this musical, given how the language used is extremely linked to the source culture.

As stated by Cammarata (2016), *Hamilton* “communicates visually and textually in the language of our time to give the intended message to the audience

of our time. Resonance depends on receptiveness and relevance”. This not only means that the show wants to communicate with its audience using a language they would understand, but that it can also tell a story that, although technically set in the past, becomes extremely current.

For example, if we look at the themes that are identified at the end of the verbal analysis, we notice how universal they are: *freedom, future, family* are themes that can resonate with every person in the audience, whether or not they had known the story of Alexander Hamilton before sitting down in the theatre.

Regarding the potential improvement of the verbal mode analysis, some next steps to be taken could be to systematise the scanning of the text even more, especially with the following categories: evocative meaning, key clusters or expressive meaning. When it comes to the audio and visual analysis, as previously noted (Carpi 2018), the model requires a stronger effort from its users: they need to be able to look at the performance in its entirety, whilst simultaneously taking into consideration what emerged from the verbal analysis. The previous research on the model indicated not to focus on one element only in a too detailed manner, but to look at audio and visual in a holistic way: one of the reasons this model was created was to provide a tool to translators, who might not necessarily have musical or dance training. However, it is evident that when approaching the translation of a stage musical, there needs to be a team that works on it together, as the various levels of meaning need not be analysed and translated separately. This is why the analysis that a translator could provide would offer a good starting point to identify which areas of the show might need more attention, while taking into consideration the input that the director and the choreographer will give to the target adaptation.

In terms of audio analysis, what made this musical an interesting candidate for the testing of the model was the choice of hip-hop as the basis for the story. While not a new sound *per se*, it is definitely more contemporary than the “usual” stage musical sound. Therefore it is yet another way that the show finds to relate to its audience. While providing a solid base for the audio analysis of the song, applying the categories of this mode showed how a few of them might need some adapting when used on such a specific genre of music. In the case of paralinguistic features, for example, the definition could be expanded to include the different ways that rap and hip-hop have to express “non-musical” sounds. Or again the category of pauses, which was here used to cover a moment of finger-snapping and to allow the model to capture its meaning, could be rethought.

Similarly, the visual analysis worked well to provide information on how this semiotic mode was used to express meaning in “My shot”. For example, an interesting aspect that was identified via the visual analysis is how the characters are always moving, conveying a sense of urgency that comes across from the words as well as the actions. The need for freedom and the consequent desire

to fight that emerges from the song is also evident in the characters' movements, in an increasing rhythm that culminates with the final repetition of the song's motto, "not throwing away my shot".

At the same time, however, this part of the analysis also offered food for thought regarding the complexity of this semiotic mode and the categories used to analyse it. For example, the interesting use of the lights highlighted how a specific category could be created to look at this powerful instrument. Additionally, the category of dancing could be expanded to include comments on how the characters/actors present themselves on stage (or potentially even create a new category for this aspect). In relation to this, one extra point that the visual analysis brings to our attention and that the model as it is now does not have the instruments to discuss, is the diverseness of the cast that is performing the show, singing about freedom and future. This is clearly a choice that was made to communicate something to the audience, and one aspect that would need to be communicated in a target adaptation as well.

At this stage, it is worth noting that the data collected is not vast enough to confidently state whether this methodology is the best for these types of productions. It is also important to stress once more the subjectivity of certain categories of this model and how it would need to be used by several more researchers and translators to test its strength. For this reason, further research could be developed on which techniques are currently used by translators in the field and to enquire whether they would find the model a useful addition to their work. Input from experts in music and dance would also be relevant to see how the model could be expanded and made clearer even for the audio and visual stages. The model could potentially be tested by professional translators to make sure that it can be used with the least amount of subjectivity.

To conclude, this paper aimed to show how the multimodal model of analysis is still a very practical, varied and detailed tool that offers a good starting point when approaching a complex form of art such as a stage musical, with the aim of a translation in mind. The concept of themes and modes, in particular, keeps offering interesting points of view on each song/show analysed. Additionally, as previously mentioned (Carpi 2020), this model could also be a starting point for other types of analysis, such as those of poetry and theatrical pieces, increasing its potential even more.

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