

POETIC TRANSLATION: CONCEPTUAL APPROACH IN LINA KOSTENKO'S VERSE *WINGS*

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Summary

In the proposed scientific investigation, the role of conceptual translation in poetic discourse is revealed. The famous verse “Wings” of an outstanding Ukrainian poetess Lina Kostenko has been translated from Ukrainian into English and analyzed emerging into deep senses of the poem. The poetic translations of the verse were presented and compared taking into consideration connotative side of main verse’s elements. The works have been done by the professional translators from Ukrainian into English and the prize-winners of All Ukraine translation competition held on the base of Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University. The main conceptual components were the following: freedom, sky, heights, truth, clarity, love, devotion, truth, heaven, honor, poetry, dream. The above components helped to convey the inner meaning of the cultural phenomena into English from Ukrainian that reflected the differences and similarities in the worldview of these nations. Also the translators tried to preserve individual style of Lina Kostenko while translating the verse for making it as close as possible to the original. The suggested approach can be useful while translating text, poetic in particular, for making translation not only exact, but creative at the same time.

Key words: literary translation, concepts, translation peculiarities, poetic text, worldview.

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1. Introduction

In our scientific investigation we will concentrate on the peculiarities of Lina Kostenko’s famous poem “*Wings*” translation and its conceptual interpretation.

Poetic translation is one of the most challenging and interesting ways to convey senses from one language to another. This is easy and difficult at the same time. It is easy, because this is real diversity of senses comparing to scientific of law translation. But it is complicated, because this is hard to translate sometimes controversial sense with great influence of individual poet’s style; the realities of one language into another taking into consideration cultural, national, psychological issues and difference of worldview.

This is vital to keep balance between correctness and poetic individuality. The most important for the translator of a poetic text is to adjust the meaning and keep the rhyme at the same time. This is desirable if the translator has poetic talent to preserve the rhyme. This is the first important moment that is obvious, but still sometimes violated.

The second moment is of a paramount importance – how to transfer meaning not forgetting about exact sense. In this case conceptual translation can be in help.

Leaning and comparing main characteristics of the concepts in the poem can greatly help to translate the right meaning that will match to the worldview of the language recipients. No

doubt that concepts in different worldviews can have some shades of meaning that are important to convey.

Paul R. Carlile in his work *Transferring, Translating and Transforming* states that for keeping translation smooth this is necessary to keep such method as *integrative framework* consisting of three the above elements for overcoming difficulties in translation: Pragmatic transformation, semantic translation and syntactic transfer (Carlile, 2003: 558).

According to this approach this is clear to know how to translate the text of any type. This really works and helpful, but speaking about poetic translation in particular this is vital to take into consideration worldview of both cultures (Ukrainian and English in our case). This is possible to do applying conceptual creative method in particular. In the focus of our interest is the “the transition of Syntactic to a semantic Boundary that occurs when novelty makes some differences and dependencies unclear or some meaning ambiguous”. Semantic is strongly connected with the theory of concepts (Carlile, 2003: 558).

2. History of the poem “*Wings*” and its meaningfulness in the creative diversity of Lina Kostenko as a romantic poetess

Let us begin with a brief acquaintance with the outstanding personality of Lina Kostenko – alive legend of contemporary Ukraine. Nowadays Lina Kostenko is the most prominent modern Ukrainian female poetess. She was born in the city of Rzhyschiv in 1930. She obtained her education in the Moscow Literary Institute in 1956. Her first verses collection were “*The Rays of Earth*” (1957) and “*The Sails*” (1958). These verses were highly appreciated and accepted by readers and colleagues. Her next collection named “*The Journeys of the Heart*” written in 1961 declared her as the master of Ukrainian poetic tradition. Unfortunately, because of her uncompromised position against Soviet authorities her works were banned and persecuted for many years. Lina Kostenko is the Professor Emeritus of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy; the Honoured Doctor of the Lviv and Chernivtsi National Universities. Lina Kostenko is a laureate of the Shevchenko Award and the awards of the Antonovych Foundation (USA), the Petrarka Award (Italy) and Olena Teliha Award (Kostenko, 2025). Her poems have been translated in European languages,

In our research we will concentrate on the analysis of “*Wings*” poetic translation from Ukrainian into English. We will present its analysis on several stages – from the translation of the known masters of this art and the translation of the students who are just making first steps in the translators’ carrier. This is important to emphasize that this task was given in frames of All-Ukraine literary competition and the best nominees have been chosen. Literary treasure of Lina Kostenko must be known as widely as possible and with the help translation of “*Wings*” into English this will promote this poem tremendously. Before emerging into creative analysis in the poem let’s highlight the pre-history of this masterpiece in brief.

History of the poem “*Wings*” has romantic background. The poetess created it in 1958 in the city of Shchetsyn when she was about to move to Poland with her beloved man Yezhy Pakhliovsky and had hesitations about this serious step. This poem is a masterpiece in her verses collection “*Travels of Heart*” (Kostenko, 2025). The main idea for this poem of spiritual search of a human, prevailing of spirit over material world and values. In the concept of *spiritual wings* of a human the poetess emphasizes that real strength, power and freedom can possess a human who thinks wider than everyday routine and small matters.

This is about flight of higher values like poetic creativity, thoughtfulness, imagination and willingness to see more than the majority of people. Wings as the poetic symbol of real

freedom that was practically impossible in the USSR where she had to live this period of her life. Wings embody spirit, freedom, love, faithfulness, poetry and dreams. *Wings* is a powerful symbol of freedom that all Soviet people were deprived. This poem didn't rise much of struggle, but embodied freedom that is the essential part of every human being. Freedom – this is not about material, this is the power of the spirit and desire to emerge into something transcendent, mystical and spiritual.

This is vital that the poetess chose the wings of a bird (physical level) to show that a human who has urge to be over the routine of everyday life can also have wings of fantasy, freedom and love. This poem has always been in the center of attention of translators because of several layers of senses, some complexity of interpretation and real Ukrainian spirit, because for any Ukrainian freedom is the key of existence. With the original poem “*Wings*” in Ukrainian you can make acquaintance in this source (Kostenko, 2025).

3. Poetic Translation and Conceptual analysis

In general, poetic translation requires special approach and more creativity than the translation of any other genre. The best way will be to use the combination of conceptual analysis and creative approach in this case. If the translator also has poetic talent – this will be the best way to transfer all sense and to immerse the reader into the inner world of the poetess.

Let's consider the main concepts that contain this relatively short verse. It is notable to say that this poem is fulfilled with concepts and hidden senses on semantic level. This is seemingly easy to transfer the meaning into English, but the meanings can be different in worldview of Ukrainians and English-speaking people. Let's specify the conceptual elements of the poem.

The image of *wings* is meaningful itself. For a bird this is obvious to have wings, this is natural for it to fly, this is the basic ability of a bird (truth of a bird). For the human this is possible only to speak figuratively about such ability. So, for the human this is possible to fly only on the wings of *truth, virtue, trust, devotion in love*. Conceptual element *heaven* here means spirituality, a superpower to fly on the wings of fantasy or dreams.

Poetess means the wings of aspiration and inspiration, especially knowing the circumstances of Soviet regime where she had to live and fight. Her weapon is her poetry, her word, her song of the soul. These are real wings of a human. Her verse is profoundly metaphoric and extremely interesting for translation.

4. Conceptual analysis of “Wings” in the interpretation of known translators from Ukrainian into English

Before analysis of the above poem by the translators-students this is worth to highlight the works of professional translators who dedicated their efforts to make “*Wings*” in particular and many other Lina Kostenko's verses known among English-speaking readers.

One of the most outstanding ambassadors of Ukrainian literature into English-speaking world was Vera Rich (Faith Elizabeth Rich) – British translator, journalist and a great friend of Ukraine who was born in London and devoted a substantial part of her life to making poetic translations of Taras Shevchenko, Lesia Ukrainka, Ivan Franko and Lina Kostenko's verses into English. Overall, she translated more than 47 Ukrainian poets into English for English-speaking people to know the pearls of Ukrainian poetry. She can be acclaimed as the person who fully accepted Ukrainian culture, customs, traditions and moreover – poetry. Unfortunately, like many other talented people who supported Ukrainian identity in the period of the USSR, Vera

Rich had been under the ban and oblivion during 30 years.

Later, in independent Ukraine, her literary translation works were highly evaluated by both Ukrainian and British colleagues. In 1996 Vera Rich was awarded by the most honorable Ivan Franko Prize. When she was alive she answered the question why she loved Ukraine so much: "In my case I've been working for Ukraine, cried about Ukraine, was happy and laughed for Ukraine during 50 years ...If this is not love? What else this can be"? (*Brytanska perekladachka*, 2025).

In her translation works she devoted much to Lina Kostenko's poems, feminine and strong at the same time. These verses reflected poetess's devotion to Ukraine, its soul and features that are significant for our nation (*Brytanska perekladachka*, 2025). Among known professional translators of Lina Kostenko's verses is Michael M. Nayden – an American writer, translator, Professor of Slavonic Studies in Pennsylvania University.

Also the bright example of such interpretation is the work of John Weir who was Canadian journalist, publicist and translator. He was of Ukrainian-Polish descent, so, despite the fact that he wasn't born and raised in Ukraine, he was able to transfer the main concepts of "Wings" in his translation and in his professional activities he was strongly connected with Soviet Union and later with Ukraine (Kyiv). He wrote poetry himself and also translated other outstanding Ukrainian poets into English like Taras Shevchenko, Lesia Ukrainka, Ivan Franko and others (*Weir*, 2025).

Let's consider his translation of "Wings":

*But also **true winged** soil is not necessary.*

*Earth is not, it will be **heaven**.*

No field, it will be done.

*No steam, it will **cloud**.*

This is probably true bird ...

But what about the man? And what about the man?

He lives on the ground. I do not fly.

A wing has. A wing has!

They are the wings, not down, now, "I

*And of **truth, virtue and trust** "me.*

*Who – with **fidelity in love**.*

*Who – with **eternal aspirations**.*

*Who – with **sincerity to work**.*

*Who – with **generosity to care**.*

*Who – the **song, or hope**,*

Or with poetry, or dreams.

Man allegedly does not fly ...

*A wing has. A wing has (*Weir*, 2025).*

Here we can observe such main concepts of the poem that were transferred from the original text:

- *Freedom (wings of a bird, a bird can fly);*
- *Heaven (with clouds);*
- *truth (of a bird, of a human);*
- *Wings of Humans (humans can't fly, but they have wings of positive moral qualities)*
- *Honor*
- *Trust*
- *Hope*

- Poetry
- Dreams
- Living with Dreams (far from real life).
- Love in Fidelity

In the J. Wier's poetic interpretation we can observe such concepts that coincide in their meaning with Lina Kostenko's original verse. We can consider such elements as *truth, virtue, trust, generosity, poetry, dreams*. Interesting to note that in the last line J. Weir interpreted not wings in plural, but *a wing has* – meaning that for the human wings – this is a new level of spirituality and this is hardly possible to reach this level for the ordinary human. So, this is like pursuing the dream. This interpretation shows that *wings* as a symbol of liberty and freedom can't be reached completely for the human being, but this is worth trying to pursue this goal anyway. J. Wier's translation is very close to the original verse and it reflects the main conceptual ideas to transmit for the reader.

The majority of the mentioned concepts are common for both nations – Ukrainian and Canadian in their worldview. We shouldn't forget that J. Weir in his identity combined English with Ukrainian, so he was the best presentative who could give the full impression about Ukrainian worldview to the English-speaking reader in the frames of this meaningful verse.

5. Conceptual analysis of “Wings” in the interpretation of XIV All-Ukraine Translation Competition prize-winners

Translation of the 1st prize winner Victoria Valchuk, Kyiv City, Ukraine

Lina Kostenko

Wings

*It's true that the birds do not need steady ground,
with nowhere to go, they can always be found
rushing fast with the wind, spreading wings in the flight,
their friends – foggy clouds, their partner – the sky.*

*The destiny of every bird is to fly,
but are birds the only ones meant to reach heights?*

We're human, and although deprived of the wings,
sometimes we fly higher than every bird dreams.

*The wings that we do have, they are made of feathers
of honesty, trust, family get-togethers,
of empathy, life-lasting urge to break through,
of evergreen love for whatever you do,
of hope, of a song someone sings in the streets,
of a poem that elevates lonely heartbeats.*

*A human can't have the same wings as a bird,
yet our wings take us higher than ever explored (Khudozhnie slovo, 2020: 17)*

The first prize winner had a very interesting interpretation of “Wings”. In her translation she gives preference to the lexeme *sky*, not *heavens*. The student-translator pays attention to the main ability of a bird – to fly and to feel freedom and happiness. She emphasizes that the human is “*deprived of the wings*”, but still can fly higher than any bird with *strength* of his/her *imagination, poetry, dreams*. She gives really romantic interpretation – like “*evergreen love*”, “*empathy*”, “*family get-together*”.

She broadens the meaning of the verse and suggests to the reader that *wings* can consist

of *love*, *affection* and *hope*. She deeply emerges into the mood of Lina Kostenko, the translator felt that when the poetess created her verse, she was in love. The translator could feel through the lines this atmosphere and gave her young, fresh interpretation, “*the poem that elevates heartbeats*”. In this interpretation we can analyze metaphoric *wings* more like “*wings of love*” than “*wings of freedom or spirit*”. This translation is very feminine and deep in our opinion. Also it describes eternal concept of *love* that is common in the worldview of both nations – Ukrainian and English-speaking.

Translation of the **2st prize winner Yulia Bozhenko**, Slovyansk City, Ukraine

Lina Kostenko

Wings

When one has wings, there is no reason of the ground,

*As well as land, when **sky**'s been found.*

One needs no field if one is as still as willed.

*One needs no pair when **clouds** are floating in the air.*

*It is the **truth** of birds indeed*

And what's for human when he's in need?

These earthborn people who never fly

But have their wings to reach the sky!

The wings that made without fluffy feeling

*But made of **truth and trust**, by **lack of double-dealing**.*

*The wings that made of **love's devotion***

*And made of **endless of emotion**,*

*They're made of **labor in its glory***

*And made of **charity** and worry,*

*They're made of **hope** and a sound*

*Or made of **poems and dreams** around.*

It seems like people never fly

*But have their wings to reach the **sky** (Khudozhnie slovo, 2020: 18).*

The second prize winner offered such translation that gives us the concept of wings as the phenomenon made of *trust and clarity* on the one hand and *love and devotion* on the other hand; the student-translator used an interesting element “*lack of double-dealing*” that means the priority of truth for the person who has imaginary wings and full of high spiritual ideas. This aspect seems to us to be very new in the interpretation and shows that high level of spirituality can be combined with dirty games or cheating.

Also the translator underlines value of *labor* (*labor is glorious*) and of kind heart (*wings... made of charity*). This interpretation is new as well, can be described as unusual and gives new connotation in understanding of the verse. All in all, the translator kept the main idea and interpreted it for English-speaking read in a new and dignified way. The translator could transfer the sense of the verse deeply enough also because Ukrainian is her mother tongue and conveying of main poem's concepts is relatively easy for her.

Translation of the **3rd prize winner Solomiya Tsvirla**, Ternopil City, Ukraine.

Lina Kostenko

Wings

*That's really true, **the wingy people** don't need grounds*

*They don't have land and stay in **clouds**.*

*They don't have home but got some **freedom***

*They don't have love but live in **heaven**.*

That's probably about a **bird's truth**
 And what about human? Where is their sooth?
 They can't fly up and leave this Earth
 But they have wings that give them birth.
 They don't have wings from feathers
 They made of **honor, sooth and trust**.
 Some of them of **total dedication**
 Other **of everlasting aspiration**,
 Someone swears to do the best
 Other care about the nearest,
 Somebody has wings of **hope and dreams**
 And other of **songs and rhymes**.
 They can't fly up and live in **clouds** (Khudozhnie slovo, 2020: 19).

In the translation made by a 3rd prize-winner we can observe interesting tendencies and lyrical creative approach in translating of main conceptual elements of the original poem. The student applied two lexemes representing the shades of one phenomenon – *sky* and *heights*, not *heaven*. Also she had used the concept of *clouds* allegedly making allusion with “*head in clouds*”, a dreamer. *The wingy people* in her translation has correlation with J. Weir’s “*winged people*”. So, people who can’t have wings physically can fly on the winds of fantasy and spirit. This notable for translation of the student and of professional translator J. Weir.

Interesting observation – in her “*bird's truth*” she describes the ability of the bird to fly and even not think about this, it is an inborn ability comparing to a human who had only wings of *poetry or freedom or love*. The student also keeps in her translation such basic element of a verse as *honor, trust, dedication, hope dreams*. The impression of a reader may be very spiritual, she could transfer this desire or physically wingless people to fly on the *wings of songs and rhymes*. This is very valuable. Comparing to transition of John Weir, this variant seems more poetic and not so close to the original, but full of high senses and emotions.

6. Conclusions

Let's summarize the main elements of conceptual analysis's interpretation of the verse “*Wings*” by Lina Kostenko. In the original poem main conceptual elements of the verse were the following: *truth, virtue, trust, devotion in love, freedom*. In the interpretation of J. Weir we can underline the following components: *truth, heaven, honor, poetry, dream*.

In the poetic interpretation of the poem by the prize-winners of Translator's Competition the elements were distributed in such a way: first prize-winner had used *sky, evergreen love, empathy, family-get-together wings of love*. She broadened the sense of a poem comparing to the original and translation of J. Weir and gave new fresh interpretation for English-speaking reader.

The second prize-winner suggested such conceptual elements as *sky, heights, truth, clarity, love, devotion, lack of double-dealing; labor is glorious* (interesting fresh interpretation); *wings...made of charity*. This interpretation gives new conceptual depth into poem's inner senses with strong romantic connotation. The third prize-winner in her poetic work concentrated on such concepts as *honor, trust, dedication, hope, dream, wings of songs and rhymes*. This variant has shown more poetic approach and will offer new thoughts and inspirations for English-speaking readers. Lina Kostenko's poetry is always modern and full of ideas that represent Ukrainian worldview and character to the people of other countries, English-speaking

in particular. The investigation has shown huge potential for further analysis and scientific elaboration.

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