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Editorial

Translation manifests itself in diverse forms, especially in plurilingual and multicultural countries like India. In such contexts, translation emerges and prevails as a way of life, so much so that one can claim to be living in translation. Therefore, the phenomenon of translation is found in academic spheres as well as various other aspects of life. Translation creates a present from the past, adopts new forms, offers fresh contexts and contests the accepted meanings. Translation has a double life; one is born-produced, and the other acquires an ideal form for itself. The Indian translation tradition has been interrogating the Western notions of translation. Epistemologically, it has confronted the rigidity advocated by Western scholars for translation. At such a crossroad, the Translation Today journal witnesses the currents and cross-currents of translation in India and beyond. In this issue of the journal, the editorial team is pleased to present six research papers, two interviews and one annotated bibliography. Here follows a glance at this issue:

The first article, titled *Recovering the First Shakespeare Adaptation in India: A Critical Re-examination of the Text and Previous Scholarship* by Sunil Sagar, tries to rectify the misrepresentation of the first adaptation in translation history in India. It engages with the larger claims made by previous scholarship by providing a more evidence-based 'explanation' rather than mere criticism. The second article, titled Students' Language and Knowledge Background: A Drawback *on Translation Teaching*, is by Rafael Ferrer-Méndez. He discusses the translation teaching drawbacks when it is taught to translation students who are also learning a second language. The third article is *Ideological Recreations: A Corpus-Based Study of Female Characters and Translation Strategies in Mo Yan's Big Breasts and Wide Hips and Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* by Yuanting Wang & Maialen Marin Lacarta. The authors analyse the ideological portrayal of female characters in Mo Yan's novels, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (1996) and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (2006), and their representation in Howard Goldblatt's English translations. The fourth article, titled *Translating Multilingualism,*

Composing Multilingual Translations: Reflections on Practice and Theory by Sheela Mahadevan, examines manifestations of literary multilingualism in a range of contemporary literatures, along with strategies employed in translating literary multilingualism in Indian and Francophone literary texts, and it casts light on their theoretical implications. The fifth article, titled, *Reanimating the Revenant: Intersemiotic and Ideological Transformations in Adapting Frankenstein for the Digital Age* is by Subha Chakraburtty. She applies Peircean semiotics to trace shifts in meaning across media with specific reference to Guillermo del Toro's Netflix film *Frankenstein*. The sixth article is *Translating Folktales for Children into Multimodal Forms: A Study of "Silonir Jiyek" by Lakshminath Bezbaruah* by Prarthana Mahanta and Pallavi Jha. This paper studies the intersemiotic translation of the Assamese folktale "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter) from Lakshminath Bezbaruah's *Burhi Aair Xadhu* (1911) into the comics adaptation illustrated by Robin Baruah in Sobit Burhi Aair Xadhu.

This issue also features two academic interviews. The first one is an interview of the author Sethu as a self-translator by Ammu Maria Ashok. In the second, Nidhi J. Makwana interviews Jonathan Evans. The final item in this issue offers an annotated bibliography on Select Translation Studies books published in 2024 by Sanjana Rajan.

Above all, as said in the beginning, translation brings changes in the form and medium of textual representation. Every representation is a scholarly site for study. The study of translation is no longer limited to definite concrete forms like books, as theoretically it is crossing the border and changing its object of study. This issue witnesses the dynamic being and becoming of translation as a phenomenon. In this scholarly journey, it could not have been successful without the support of our esteemed reviewers, advisory and editorial board members. We highly appreciate them for giving their timely feedback and expertise to make this issue possible.

Enjoy reading!

Tariq Khan

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Recovering the First Shakespeare Adaptation in India: A Critical Re-examination of the Text and Previous Scholarship

SUNIL SAGAR

Abstract

Previous scholarship on the adaptation of The Taming of the Shrew, the first Shakespearean play to be adapted in a modern Indian language, relied heavily on the title of the adaptation in Gujarati to provide their commentary and interpretation, although the text was believed to be lost. This study uses Santoyo's (2006) approach of mapping and filling the blank spaces, gaps and mistakes, and Pym's (1998) idea of advancing translation research by providing a more evidence-based 'explanation' rather than mere criticism, to rectify the misrepresentation of the first adaptation in translation history in India and the larger claims made by previous scholarship. It also dwells on the methodological issues regarding translation history in India, considering the contemporary theoretical and methodological advancements in the field of translation history. In light of the inaccuracies which crept into the previous research, the study proposes to underscore the need for a rigorous and comprehensive translation history in India.

Keywords: Shakespeare Translation in India, Translation History, Adaptation History, Parsi Theatre.

Introduction

Translation is not "an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer", and it does not "happen in a vacuum but in a continuum" (Bassnett & Trivedi 1999, p. 2). Moreover, translation also occurs in a "specific historical context" (St-Pierre, 1993, p. 62). Therefore, decoding a translation is fraught with risks. The obvious risk is to misread the continuum or misrepresent the historical context. At times, in the absence of the rigour and emphasis on

examination of evidence and archival data, translation criticism and research end up being what Pym terms "mostly impressionistic" (1992, p. 221), leading to gross inaccuracies and misrepresentations. In fact, translation history emerged as a systematic endeavour to map the continuum and shed light on the historical context. In the process of doing this, one of the important tasks has been to address "Gaps, holes, blank spaces…and *mistakes,* too, which must absolutely be amended" (Santoyo, 2006, p. 30). Thus, one of the key responsibilities "of today's historians is to denounce, correct, and eradicate the serious mistakes that have slipped into a good number of present-day texts" (p. 30).

This study is a case in point how "serious deficiencies in the sacrosanct rigour of historians" commenting on the first adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Gujarati, a modern Indian language, without, "exploration of primary historical sources" and relying exclusively on "indirect references" resulted into the serious misrepresentation of a key text in the translation history of Shakespeare translation in India (Bastin, 2006, p. 122). The first adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* was a theatre performance in Gujarati at Surat, Gujarat, in 1852. It has the distinction of being the first ever adaptation of a Shakespearean play in a modern Indian language. While it was well-documented in terms of its year and other details, the text, which was a script for a theatre performance, was considered to be lost, like many other adaptations (Mehta, 1964, p. 41). In the absence of the text of the adaptation, a number of Shakespeare scholars in India have commented on what the adaptation might have contained and might have aimed at accomplishing, without reading/accessing the text. The present study consists of the recovery and analysis of the text in the light of the interpretations that previous scholars had posited. While no previous Shakespeare scholar could have fathomed what such an adaptation might have contained, previous scholarship made unjustifiable assertions in the absence of primary sources, leading to a misrepresentation that this study seeks to rectify.

Previous Scholarship

The first adaptation attracted the attention of almost every known Shakespeare scholar and translation theorist in India. Every scholar who commented on Shakespeare translations in India referred to the first adaptation. However, it was C. C. Mehta's "Shakespeare and the Gujarati Stage", published in Sahitya Akademi's journal *Indian Literature* in 1964, that documented the first adaptation for the first time. At the beginning of the article, he rues the fact that most of the unprinted scripts of these adaptations were no longer available (p. 41). However, Mehta's article remains to date an authoritative account of Shakespeare's plays adapted and translated into Gujarati. It is also a profoundly insightful article on translation history when it comes to performances of Shakespeare's plays in Gujarati on stage. Starting from the first ever adaptation in 1852, Mehta provides a succinct documentation of all the translations and adaptations till the year of publication of his article. As regards the first adaptation, Mehta documented that a play called *'Nathari Firangiz Thekane Avi*' was performed in the Andrews Library in Surat in November 1852, "telling of 'How a bad Firangiz woman was brought to her senses'. It was evidently a Parsee version of *The Taming of the Shrew*" (1964, p. 41). 'How a bad Firangiz woman was brought to her senses' was a reverse translation of the Gujarati title of the play. It was subsequently used by every subsequent scholar in their commentary on the play to further their own interpretations.

The word 'Firangiz' in Gujarati stands for a European/foreigner. While the text of the adaptation was not available, Mehta went on to assert that the shrew in the adaptation was a European woman based on the word 'Firangiz' used in the title of the adaptation. Sisir Kumar Das (2005) was the next scholar to comment on this adaptation, but he went a step forward and elaborated on the idea as to why the shrew was not an Indian woman and tried to explain why the translator presented a European woman rather than an Indian woman in the adaptation.

While Das mentioned that the text was no longer extant, he still provided his interpretation of the play. He also reiterated that the play was titled *Nathari Firangiz Thekane Avi* (A bad European woman was brought to sense) (2005, p. 47). In his view, the

translator could not translate the word shrew properly and hence used the word '*nathari*'. He asserted that the translator could not either contextualise it in an Indian situation, particularly to place an Indian Kate on the stage and situate her "convincingly within the Indian social milieu". To him, Kate is diametrically opposite to the image of a woman in the Indian context. Das also remarks that since marriage is the "*dharma*" of the woman in Indian society, and Kate is revolutionary as she refuses to marry, Indian Kate would be unfit for the play. However, audiences were not averse to the idea of seeing a particular type of woman being tamed. This is where, according to Das, the European Kate comes in. In his view, the use of such a title was "a clever device" to leverage a story that satisfies "Indian male chauvinism without demeaning Indian womanhood, while underlining Indian criticism for European female". Das's interpretation was that it was necessary for the translator to remind his reader that "Kate was not an Indian but a Firangi."

Commenting on the "adaptative, indigenized staging of Shakespeare in India", Poonam Trivedi argued that the adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1852 was the "very first *desi* Shakespeare" performed in an Indian language, entitled *Nathari Firangiz Thekani Avi* [A Bad Firangi Woman Brought to Sense]. She characterised it as "a critical adaptation, alert to the politics of relocation, for it distanced and labelled the shrew as non-Indian, a *firangi*/foreigner" (2005, p. 153).

Sangeeta Mohanty's *The Indian Response to Hamlet: Shakespeare's Reception in India and a Study of Hamlet in Sanskrit Poetics* (2010), which was a PhD dissertation at the University of Basel, cites Das's claims verbatim and makes use of the same arguments, perpetuating the idea of a European Kate in a Parsi adaptation (p. 50).

In *How Shakespeare Became Colonial: Editorial Tradition and the British Empire*, Leah H. Marcus (2017) makes rather far-reaching claims. Marcus reiterates not only that its title was *Nathari Firangiz Thekani Avi*, "A Bad Foreign [i.e., European] Woman Brought to Sense" but the text of the translation has "apparently not survived". However, Marcus asserts that "Katherine was cast as a prototypical British memsahib and that by staging her taming, the

Gujaratis were symbolically repudiating British culture — especially British efforts to reform what they haughtily identified as South Asian disrespect for womanhood" (p. 72).

In continuation, Vikram Singh Thakur, in his *Shakespeare and Indian Theatre: The Politics of Performance* (2020), reiterates Trivedi's comments on the first adaptation (p. 77).

The idea that the adaptation was about how a bad European woman was brought to her senses was reiterated in every commentary on the adaptation. These varied studies spread across a span of nearly 70 years constitute the scholarship regarding the first adaptation of a Shakespearean play in a modern Indian language. Each scholar had a theory of their own regarding how Kate was conceptualised in this adaptation. However, it should be remembered that each study relied on an interpretation of the title while the text was believed to be lost.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws its insights from a number of key ideas in the writings of various translation history theorists and scholars, such as Anthony Pym and Julio-César Santoyo. This study is based on Pym's distinction of three strands when it comes to translation history- translation archaeology, historical criticism and explanation. As far as translation archaeology is concerned, it relates to 'who translated what, how, where, when, for whom and with what effect?' (Pym, 1998, p. 5). Historical criticism, on the other hand, is not adequate as it tries to "assess the way translations help or hinder progress" (p. 5). "Explanation", the term posited by Pym, is vital because it "tries to say *why* archaeological artefacts occurred when and where they did, and how they were related to change" (p. 6). Explanation matters for translation history because it focuses on discovering "causation of such data" (p. 6). In other words, the explanation approach as suggested by Pym calls for asking the question "why?" rather than restricting the inquiry to "what?" and "who?". This is not to suggest that translation archaeology or historical criticism are not required. However, restricting or limiting translation history to archaeology or criticism does not allow us to reconstruct a fuller account of history.

This is perhaps why Pym's "Shortcomings in the Historiography of Translation" is particularly relevant in the context of this study. In it, he argues that translation historiography is not criticism or archaeology because "neither archaeology nor criticism are adequately designed to formulate the basic historical question "why?"" (1992, p. 223). The problem arises when scholars and critics obsess with archaeology or criticism and ignore the question "why?" or the explanation part of translation history, which is exactly what happened in the case of the first adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew.* As far as the first adaptation is concerned, the previous scholarship resorted to a methodology that is best suited for archaeology or criticism and failed to ask the fundamental question "why" required for uncovering the explanation of why the adaptation occurred in the first place, and why it occurred in a particular form. None of the scholars bothered to ask why a translator would, first of all, select *The Taming of the Shrew* of all the plays for adaptation. It is neither a great tragedy nor a famed comedy. Secondly, none of them truly concerned themselves with the question of why a translator would portray a European woman in an adaptation which is usually expected to indigenize the story in the Indian context. Moreover, Pym also argues in "Humanizing Translation History" that we need to be able to make "narrative sense" of the relations between cultures, and we need more than "just raw data about texts, dates, places, and names" to accomplish the same (2009, p. 23). In his view, instead of focusing only on the data, we should be able to find a way to "string the isolated data into meaningful progressions" (p. 24). Only then, he argues, will we be able to explain the interaction between cultures. In this case, the previous scholarship developed a hypothesis based on merely the title of the adaptation and held on to it unquestioningly, which resulted in a grossly inaccurate account of how an Indian translator interacted with a Shakespearean play through adaptation. This led to a flawed representation of the adaptation in the larger history of translation in India. Therefore, the present study seeks to rectify it and make "narrative sense" of the adaptation in the Indian context.

Writing history is an arduous and tricky task. It involves interpretation and making claims based on the data one has at one's

disposal at the given point in time. At times, one does not have adequate data, and it can result in erroneous claims. Therefore, Santoyo (2006) argues that errors might have crept into the previous historical accounts and need to be rectified. (p. 30) Rectifying such errors is a significant part of translation history because it can remove all inaccuracies and help us make a better sense of history. Drawing from this idea, the present study attempts to undertake the re-examination of previous scholarship and rectify the errors in the representation of the first adaptation of a Shakespearean play in a modern Indian language.

Methodology

1. Archival Research

The study follows archival research methodology and investigates the claims made by the translation/Shakespeare scholars who commented on the first adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Gujarati. The study has used archival research because the primary source has been considered missing according to the published work on the first-ever adaptation of a Shakespearean play in a modern Indian language. Therefore, the study has relied on archival research to recover the text of the adaptation and set the record straight about the claim that the text is no longer extant. Moreover, recovery of the primary text was vital for verifying the claims of previous scholarship. It was also imperative to discover the crucial details regarding the characters and treatment of the key themes and ideas. Therefore, archival research has been significant for this study.

2. Textual Analysis

Having recovered the text using archival research, the study carries out a textual analysis of the adaptation in the light of comments and claims made by previous scholarship. The research also seeks to assess the elements that previous scholarship claimed to be present in the adaptation. For example, the previous scholarship asserted that the adaptation revolved around a European woman, although the adaptation was meant to adapt and align the plot to suit the Indian context. The textual analysis was also employed to answer the basic questions, which Pym considers more

important in historical research. The basic historical question when it comes to this adaptation is not "what" or "how" but "why". The study endeavours to find out the possible reasons for the selection of the text and discover why it was adapted in a particular way.

Recovery of the Text and Analysis of Textual Evidence

The study commenced with a nationwide search for the text at various libraries and archives. When the archival research led to the recovery of the text of the adaptation, the text defied all the assertions made by previous scholarship. To start with, it challenges Das's (2005, 47) claim that the text is "no longer extant". While it was a widely held belief that the text of the adaptation was lost, the fact is that it was neither damaged nor lost. In fact, it was preserved quite well. Contrary to the idea that it was lost, the fact is that the text was serialised in a Parsi women's magazine called *Stri Bodh* in 1861, after the performance in 1852. In fact, a large number of the issues of the magazine called *Stri Bodh* have been preserved at the B. J. Institute of Learning and Research, Ahmedabad. It is also available in the archives of the Forbes Gujarati Sabha situated in Mumbai. Since Mumbai was the hub of Parsi theatre and Gujarati literature and culture in the 19th and 20th centuries, a curious researcher would have easily found a copy of the adaptation in Mumbai. In any case, the text is available since it was neither damaged nor destroyed. In one way or another, the text remained available, not in some remote and interior part of the world but in the two thriving centres of literature and culture- Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The fact that it was serialised in 1861 proves that a copy of the adaptation existed in some part of the country.

Ever since C. C. Mehta mentioned that *Nathari Firangiz Thekane Avi* is about how a bad *firangi* (European) woman was brought to sense, every scholar who came after him seems to have blindly accepted it as the ultimate truth. As to the claims made by previous scholarship that there was a European woman portrayed as Kate in this adaptation, the textual analysis revealed otherwise. A careful examination of the title of the adaptation in the actual text shows that it is spelt slightly differently from the one mentioned by Mehta and the rest.

The title mentioned by Mehta and others:

- *Nathari Firangiz Thekane Avi*

The correct title, as mentioned in the text:

- *Nathari Farangij Thekane Avi*

The previous scholars have mentioned "*Firangiz*", whereas the title contained in the text mentions "*Farangij*". The real issue here is not that of a variation in the spelling of the title. The issue is that Firangiz or Farangij does not refer to a European/foreign woman in the text. The actual discrepancy is that instead of being a European woman, "Farangij" is the name of an Indian/Parsi girl in this adaptation, which is about a Parsi family. All the characters are Parsi, and so is Firangiz/Farangij. She is an Indian/Parsi girl and not a European woman, as the previous scholars have made us believe so far.

The text starts with a list of principal characters that definitively establishes the Indian/Parsi identity of all characters:

- Godrej - An eminent businessman
- Farangij- Godrej's elder daughter
- Meherbanu- Godrej's younger daughter

This evidence fundamentally contradicts previous scholars' assumptions about the adaptation's treatment of character and plot. There was no European Kate in the adaptation. It was the story of "Farangij", a Parsi girl adapted to suit the Indian context and particularly the Parsi context. The title was also misrepresented in all the scholarly writings regarding the adaptation. While every scholar interpreted the word "Firangiz" in the title as "Foreigner" or "European", "Farangij" is the name of the Parsi girl who resembles Kate in her refusal to marry. It was an adaptation that centred upon a Parsi family. The idea that there was a European woman in the play was merely a conception derived from the misspelt title. However, the evidence refutes all the claims of male chauvinism, the translator's inability to present an Indian Kate on the stage, and the adaptation being a critical adaptation, distanced from the context, etc. It also turns the claim on its head that Katherine was "a

prototypical British memsahib" and that the Gujaratis were trying to convey a message by taming her (Marcus, 2017, p. 72). These claims were the extrapolation of the scholars, based on their assumptions regarding what the play might have contained. To add to this, the fact remains that the title of the adaptation cited by the scholars was also incorrect.

As to the basic historical question of why the translator selected *The Taming of the Shrew* for adaptation and adapted the way he/she did, the previous scholars did not offer any answers. The text recovered through archival research explains. Plays performed by Parsi theatre were commercial productions and meant largely for entertainment. While this play must have been no less entertaining as a theatre performance, the text reveals that the translator sought to convey a social message. For this, the comments contained towards the end of the play should suffice. The play ends with a long speech by Farangij, who apparently comes to her 'senses' at the end of the play. In the last part of the play, she addresses her friend and comments on the roles and responsibilities of a woman towards her husband. She remarks that when a woman refutes her husband and disobeys his orders, she crosses a line and violates the code of a woman's behaviour. She argues that the husband works day and night to provide for her and protect her, and all he expects is that she should follow his instructions unquestioningly. Hence, when a woman disobeys and thus misbehaves in this way, it deeply hurts the man. She further argues that women are weak physically and mentally, and they tend to get carried away at times. In fact, she goes on to say that there is nothing worse in a woman's behaviour than trying to disobey the man and dominate him. She ends the speech by saying that she will pray to God that He grants the wisdom to all the women to realise their true duties towards their husbands and follow them sincerely. The play ends on the note that listening to Farangij talking about all this created a particular fervour among other women present there to follow their duties, and they dispersed after some discussion (1861, p. 165).

As the last part of the play indicates, the play was intended to carry and convey a social message over and above the entertainment that a typical Parsi play would generally provide. This explains why

The Taming of the Shrew was selected instead of other Shakespearean plays because it had aspects that perhaps resonated with the social situation in the Parsi community. The Parsi theatre group used the play as a trope to reinforce the social and gender roles of women in the community and society. If it were not the case, the play could have ended where Farangij agrees to marry. It ends with this elaborate sermon by Farangij to other women, which indicates why the play was selected, because it had the potential to convey a particular message to the Parsi community and society at large. To further support this argument, one should dwell a bit on where and why it was serialised after the performance. It was serialised in *Stri Bodh,* which was a women's magazine edited by Parsis. It carried instructional and educational material for women in general and Parsi women in particular. The title itself is suggestive. "*Stri Bodh*" stands for "instruction/wisdom for women". The magazine carried the dictum by Napoleon Bonaparte on the front page, right under the title. It roughly translates to this- "The best way to reform a nation is to make women more knowledgeable." If serialisation of the text in this kind of a magazine by itself does not prove the instructional message, it would be apt to cite what the editor of the magazine had to offer as a commentary at the end of the play. When the play ends in a particular issue of the magazine as a part of the series, the editor of *Stri Bodh*, the Parsi magazine, wrote a note as follows:

"Dear Women Readers. The story of how a quarrelsome Farangij was brought to sense comes to an end here. Those readers who must have read it from the beginning to end must have observed how Farangij was obnoxious and quarrelsome and how she turned out to be a good woman at the end. You must have noted one more point that how quarrelsome people suffer and how one has to try several tricks to bring them to sense. In that sense, apart from the humour, we can learn several things from the story. At the end, we too pray to God much like Farangij does at the end of the play that may God grant the good sense to the women who do not realise their duties towards their husband to carry out their duties sincerely." (p. 165, my translation)

It is pertinent to note that Farangij's speech was not merely addressed to her friend but also to the other women present. Going beyond the context of the play, it seems to extend a message even to the audience. Recognising the relevance of the social message, the editor of the magazine also serialised it with the same intention. The note written by the editor is evidence of the social connotations derived from the speech. This should suffice to explain why *The Taming of the Shrew* was best suited for adaptation in a community and society that intended to reinforce gender roles for women, 'reform' them, and put them in their place. The adaptation probably served as an instrument to drive the message home that women would do well to stick to their duties as wives and follow their husbands' instructions unquestioningly, else there would be unpleasant social consequences.

Approaches to Translation History Research and Previous Scholarship

Over time, approaches to translation history research have evolved and made translation history research more robust as an exercise. While the previous scholarship tried to address an important text in the history of translation, their methodology could have benefited from more rigorous approaches required in translation research in general and translation history research in particular. To start with, as Pym (1998, 20) asserts, translation history must seek to answer an important question, or as Outi (2013, 215) argues, "history is also written to study a determined period from the point of view of a specific research question, such as censorship or literary influences, for example". It is hard to fathom what kind of research questions the previous scholarship attempted to address regarding the first adaptation. It is quite evident that the vexing questions regarding a number of crucial aspects, such as the selection of the text, the particular treatment of the characters, and the supposedly European woman in the play, were left unexplored. The previous scholarship merely extended the thesis of a firangi/European woman with their own arguments based exclusively on the title. One could argue that they offered this kind of commentary as they did not have access to the text. However, it is not advisable to comment on a text that is

believed to be lost or one that is not accessible. It is perhaps possible to explain away some things or provide an explanation for the way the previous scholarship chose to go about the first adaptation. However, the fact remains that translation history accounts, such as the one regarding the first adaptation, indicate an approach that is less based on evidence and did not involve the exploration of archival data. Such a methodology has its limitations because it undermines archival research in an age where archival research is increasingly gaining ground worldwide.

The previous scholarship could not or did not access the primary sources, at least to infer anything, whereas methodological approaches to translation history research involve a far more rigorous exploration, even beyond the primary sources. Researching translation requires pre-textual material (i.e. drafts) or extra-textual material (e.g. interviews or paratextual commentary). In the absence of such pre-textual material and extra-textual material, as Munday (2014, p. 65) argues, any study that "limits itself to the primary text product remains rooted in an analysis of that product and dependent on the analyst's more or less subjective deduction of the process which underpinned it". In other words, focusing only on translation may not provide a coherent explanation about the historical context of its production and circulation. It calls for a lot more data to make the analysis more objective. As Gomez (2017, p. 57) asserts, "this new model of historical inquiry" has to go beyond the study of the traditional primary sources (source and target texts), examining "extra-textual sources such as statements from translators, editors and publishers, archives, manuscripts, letters, translator papers, post-hoc accounts and interviews". Translation research in general and translation history research in particular have become far more rigorous, and the previous scholarship did not seem to make use of any of these approaches, including accessing the primary source in their analysis of the first adaptation. The idea of consulting archival sources, which an increasing number of scholars have recommended, could have altered the history of continued commentary and unsupported arguments in the case of the first adaptation. With a growing emphasis on archival research and methodological sophistication, translation history research has

evolved into a much more complex pursuit that cannot be undertaken based solely on one's subjective interpretation of a text or its title.

With its link to history, a translation is no longer considered an isolated phenomenon occurring in a vacuum. Commenting on a translation is tantamount to commenting on a period of history and its historical, cultural and social context. An adverse comment unsupported by evidence can show a particular community or faith in a poor light and distort history. In the case of the first adaptation, the commentary by the previous scholarship has the potential to present Parsi theatre or community in a particular light. Therefore, as Malena (2011, 87) expects, it is imperative that "translation scholars "doing history" to be familiar with methods used by historians and the debates about them". Translation researchers, therefore, need to carry out their work keeping their role in mind as translation historians, which is no less sacred than the work of historians proper. Therefore, translation history researchers may need to integrate these approaches that lead to evidence-based, archival research.

Previous Scholarships' Assertions and their Performance Viability

While the previous scholarship did not access the primary sources to make the assertions of a European/foreign woman playing the role of Kate in the first Shakespeare adaptation in a modern Indian language, they also did not consider what these assertions will mean for the performance of the play. It should be borne in mind that primarily the adaptation was meant for the stage. It was performed in the Andrews Library at Surat, Gujarat. Parsi theatre was known for theatre performances of Shakespeare's plays adapted to the Indian context. In this context, before making those assertions about a European woman playing Kate in a Gujarati adaptation of a Shakespearean play, the previous scholarship should have considered the performance viability of such assertions. In fact, even if they did not have access to the text of the adaptation, considering the performance implications of their assertions would have prevented them from making those assertions. To start with, the question is, if the play was adapted in Gujarati, which is a modern

Indian language and if the character playing Kate was a European/foreigner, how would she communicate with other characters in the play? It would be good to keep in mind that the adaptation was set in a typical Parsi family and Indian context, and the language of the text was Gujarati. Performed in Surat, the audience was also going to be Gujarati, and they could not have followed anything if a character were to articulate dialogues in a language other than Gujarati. If the character playing Kate articulated her lines in English, no communication would be possible between her and the other characters in the play. Moreover, even if the characters in the play understood what an English-speaking European Kate said, the audience would most certainly not have followed what she had to say. If the European Kate spoke in Gujarati, how would that appear on stage? A play containing European characters talking in Gujarati mixed with elements of the Parsi language, it would seem absurd and laughable for all the wrong reasons. This thought alone should have prevented the previous scholarship from making those assertions regarding Kate being a European or a foreigner.

Even if one were to assume for a moment that the character playing Kate was a European/foreigner, how would she fit into the plot of the play? What was a European woman doing in a Parsi/Indian household? Secondly, *The Taming of the Shrew* is about two sisters, and the headstrong Kate is compared with her sister. It is a study in contrast. The Indian adaptation can be no different, and it should also have two sisters- one of them being quarrelsome and unpleasant. If the character of Kate were played by a European/foreigner, how would the plot have two sisters, and how would it work on stage? How can we have one girl who is European/foreigner and her sister is an Indian? How can the comparison be made between a European and a Parsi girl? The contrast could only be created between two sisters from a similar social context. This is a theatrical impossibility that the previous scholarship did not stop to ponder before making assertions of a European Kate in an Indian adaptation. As the text reveals, the Indian adaptation also had two sisters- Farangij and Meherbanu. Both were a part of a typical Parsi family that the audience could

relate to. A European Kate in this Parsi adaptation had no theatrical basis.

As Sujata Iyengar argues, theatre groups adapted Shakespeare, making use of "hyper-local ways" rendering him, "foreign but neighbourly" (2022, p. 135). Parsi theatre was no different; it was primarily a commercial enterprise that entertained the audiences, remaking Shakespeare in a way that indigenised his tales. In other words, they knew the pulse of the audience and adapted plays in a way that the adaptations would resonate with the audience. They crafted plays which would deal with issues that Indian audiences would be able to relate to. As regards the first adaptation, it is obvious how the Indian/Parsi audience would find it nearly impossible to relate to a European Kate. In fact, the play is about invoking the idea that women should play their typical gender role and follow the patriarchal system obediently. Moreover, the audience would be able to relate only if an Indian woman is being tamed and if the play reinforces the Indian social order, where women are meek and surrender to the social code of conduct. They would find it hard to relate to a European woman being tamed. Invoking the basic historical question "why" has profound implications for translation history in general, and translation history in India, in particular.

Methodological Insights for Translation History

As the revelations of the text of the first adaptation vis-à-vis the assertions of previous scholarship indicate, there is a need to rework the theoretical framework and methodology of translation history in India. It is a case study of how the methodology regarding translation history in India needs to be revamped when it comes to situating a translation in its historical context. It cannot be based on one's instinctive interpretations without textual or archival evidence to support the claims. Secondly, it is also high time that one started critically looking at previous scholarship and examined it objectively, rather than blindly accepting everything and building on the claims of previous scholarship. It is disappointing that not a single subsequent scholar bothered to critically analyse the claims of previous scholarship and simply accepted them as the ultimate truth.

In fact, every successive scholar ratified the previous claims and added their own similar claims that extended the original thesis provided by previous scholarship.

Instead, as the study suggests, the approach to translation history should be evidence-based. It should be carried out like a proper historical endeavour. In historical research, one cannot make unfounded assumptions. With an open mind, one must go where facts take them. Secondly, there is a long list of theorists who have given key ideas on how translation history should be approached. Any endeavour on translation history in India should be based on the ideas of key theorists who have charted the methodology for translation history. Starting from Paul St-Pierre to Andrew Lefevere, from Lieven D'hulst to Anthony Pym and Georges L. Bastin and Paul F. Bandia to Christopher Rundle, each one provided significant insights on how translation history should be explored. In India, there is a dire need to rework the methodology and align it to the insights provided by previous and contemporary scholarship. Moreover, there should be a greater emphasis on archival research that leads to the recovery of texts and secondary data that throws new light on translation in India. Merely citing previous scholars to make new claims, as happened in the case of the first adaptation, does not suffice to carry out rigorous translation history research. Translation history must have a component of archival research that lays the ground for newer interpretations and fresh insights on existing perspectives on translation and its history in India. The present study illustrates how archival research can transform the existing narratives and provide a new way of looking at translation in India.

Conclusion

Translation history is inherently an intercultural area of research. The previous scholarship disregarded what Pym asserts, "Translators are not *within* a culture; they always act *on the boundaries* of cultures; their work is thus always *intercultural*" (1992, p. 232). If this is true, translations are tricky as intercultural artefacts because there is a danger of completely misunderstanding them and the underlying objective that made the translation possible. To add to

this, as Pym (2009, p. 23) argues, the true objective of Translation Studies is to improve relations between cultures and make narrative sense of the relations between those cultures. In fact, if we were to continue the methodology of the previous scholarship, we would have a narrative that ends up making a flawed case for relations between these two cultures. Instead, we should look for a methodology that brings to the fore the true nature of transactions between cultures.

As Santoyo (2006, p. 13) states, many parts of the translation history are "well-charted", but there are "vast unknown territories" that are yet to be explored. It is particularly true in the case of India. In India, large quantities of archival data lie in wait for translation historians. An archival and evidence-based approach may illuminate the vast unknown territories. This will help us uncover insights that may be valuable, not only for translation history but also for history proper.

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Students' Language and Knowledge Background: A Drawback of Translation Teaching

RAFAEL FERRER-MÉNDEZ

Abstract

Translation, in an interconnected world, becomes a need; consequently, translation teaching arises. Thus, we find translation programs in most countries, and México is not the exception. Therefore, we present a study done about the translation teaching drawbacks when taught to translation students who are both learning translation and a second language at the same time. This study has collected the results of 24 translation students and 4 professors. To collect the information, we used an interview, a questionnaire, and descriptive statistics to present such results. Among the most important findings are students' inability to apply linguistic aspects, different language levels among students, and no clear classification placement system for the students, problems in reading comprehension and writing output, and a lack of specialised and general knowledge. Finally, these identified deficiencies or drawbacks affect translation teaching, being a multidisciplinary activity.

Keywords: Translation Teaching, Students' Background, Language, Translation.

Introduction

Translation, in our globalised world, is a means allowing people of different cultures to interact. Consequently, translation has become a part of human life in business, social encounters, and state affairs. Thence, in most countries, translation has become a subject in some universities, and even a degree or speciality to achieve this area of specialisation. In the case of Mexico, due to the proximity of

the USA and the different state agreements, the need for specialised or professionalised translators has become a must. Here, we highlight how students' language and knowledge backgrounds are drawbacks of translation teaching, with students learning the source language as a foreign language and translation fundamentals at the same time.

As is known, the teaching of translation has evolved in the last few decades, especially with the publication of key material focused on the teaching of translation. In most of these publications, translation procedures, translation methodologies, and translation theory are stated to make translation teaching effective. Besides, reference books about translation teaching and translation theory are also available on the internet. Most of this information is freely accessible, updated, and reliable for the teaching of translation. At the same time, publications are of different formats, among these, we can read research report papers, theory articles, newsletters, glossaries, general and specialised dictionaries, and even discussion forums. However, teaching curricula are not available at all, at least publicly, and "there is very little research done on class dynamics in a translation classroom" (Gonzalez-Davis, as cited in Safinaz-Zainudin & Mat-Awal, 2012). As quoted here, translation studies have neglected teaching translation processes, focusing rather on methods, procedures and linguistic matters. Accordingly, a class of translation differ from another, depending on the professor and the material available.

Fundamentals of translation are mainly linguistic or based on a strong linguistic basis. Then, translators must gain a strong linguistic competence to deal with language constraints and stylistic restrictions in message transference. Nonetheless, relying only on linguistic criteria has proved to be inadequate for the translation of texts; therefore, other aspects have been included, such as context, culture, and pragmatics, among others (Nord, 1994).

Considering translation training as a multidisciplinary field, the translator-trainee needs a wide range of general knowledge. On the other hand, both translator trainers and trainees must remember the principle of being trained in translation, which must start when they have a good command of the target language. This way, a translator

must have a command of such a language as that of a native speaker, besides a strong command and knowledge of their mother tongue. Consequently, theoretically, translation hardly occurs when a translator trainee is still learning a second language, but in most translation programs, this is not the case (Wensheng, 2020).

No matter what the literature of translation states, in most translator training schools or universities, translation students join when they are still learning the second language. Thus, they lack a good command of this second language. At the same time, most of these trainees have a low level of their mother tongue. At least, this happens in most countries where translator-trainees have the target language as a foreign language.

In Cd. del Carmen, Campeche, most students join a university program immediately after high school. In the case of the Licenciatura de Lengua Inglesa (Bachelor's degree of English Language), two out of ten students joining our program are under the above situation. Consequently, they get into the program with the English learned in Secondary and Preparatory school, if they were lucky to have had a professor of English, which is not always the case. From the remaining ones, very few students have taken English as an extracurricular class or as a hobby during such time.

A phenomenon observed in the faculty is that some students have joined as a second or third option for a bachelor's degree. Some joined the degree as a possibility to have a place at the University and as a way to transfer to another degree at a later stage. Or they join the degree to learn English, not knowing that the purpose of the degree is to train them to reach translation or teaching competencies, resulting in discomfort or disillusionment for most students.

Students joining the Degree of English Language also have low knowledge and command of their own mother tongue, a requirement for properly recoding a message in the translation process. Besides, they also lack reading comprehension skills and writing abilities, as well as general knowledge. We evidenced this by their low performance in their Spanish courses during their first term in the faculty, the placement exams they took, and their translation output.

Being aware of the difficulties students faced in applying translation fundamentals, professors of the translation classes decided to determine students' language and knowledge background deficiencies. Once these deficiencies or drawbacks were identified, they evaluated how such drawbacks affected the teaching and learning of translation, focusing on students' preparedness and translation output. This way, the study was around the following questions:

What are the main deficiencies that students in the translation program have? How do these deficiencies affect or impact the teaching of translation?

Literature Review

By defining translation, we can state that it is "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" (Mehdi & Mehdi 2018, p. 47). This definition clearly highlights that the process of translation occurs at the written level, that is, written documents. However, it does not detail aspects or levels to reach, and it is not clear if it only refers to the product or to the process, too. For Casillas-Avalos (2023), translation implies a process of appropriation of a writer's ideas by means of the translator's comprehension and the use of the language, which also implies the comprehension of the translator, hence, the reader of the source text (Casillas-Avalos, 2023). In this way, the final reader or the reader of the translation output comprehends the ideas of the translator who renders his product in the linguistic elements of the translation language.

As seen, since the translator is the prime reader of the source text, this person must have good reading competencies, first to understand, and second, to transfer the read message. In this way, the understanding of a text, then, reading comprehension is linked to translation. As proved by Faridah and Anam (2022), "The students' low, moderate, and high level of reading scores give positive effect into translation scores" (p. 62). This remark highlights the need for a high reading competence in a translator, as well as in a translator-student. On the other hand, Sriwantaneeyakul (2018) proved that students with a high critical reading skill produced a higher quality

translation since they not only understand the literal meaning, but also the implied meaning of the source text. Seen this way, reading comprehension is a key aspect to properly deal with meaning and the decoding of a message in a translation activity. But reading comprehension is not enough to deal with translation, because the way we conceive translation also impacts our learning and performance.

Alwazna (2012, p. 50) recounts a brief synthesis of some translation definitions in which translation is perceived as a process and as a product which replaces a textual meaning with an equivalent one in another language. It is also the rendering of meaning or message from one language into another. Some authors also consider translation as a means to communicate ideas or provide information in different languages. As a sum, the word highlighted in most definitions means as an equivalent for message, the fact of being a process or a product, and an attempt to reach the closest meaning or equivalent from the source language. Starting from these aspects, translation implies reading comprehension as well as high writing commands for the decodification and recodification of a message, always having the communicative value of such a process.

Depending on the definition we have made, or how we conceive translation, is how we approach or face our translation practice. In this way, a translator may consider linguistic, semantic, pragmatic, social, cultural or even psychological aspects in the rendering of a message, based on his/her command of such aspects. Cao (2018) states that the translation process implies a series of factors such as "types of source text, purposes of translation, target text readers, positions of source language culture and target language culture, emotional factors and contexts." (Para. 4) All the above aspects and factors imply translators mastering of, not only the languages involved, but also core and generic competencies to deal with the whole translation process to produce a rendering with the highest quality possible.

Nonetheless, in the recodification of the message, the translator must fit the rendered message into linguistic restrictions and constraints of the target language (commonly the translator's mother tongue), and this is an aspect that also depends on the translator's

command of such language and the cultural aspects involved. Accordingly, a translator must master the source text language as well as the target language of the translation process. This means the translator must be competent linguistically in both languages, have a master knowledge of the cultures involved, stylistic aspects and specialised knowledge of the area in which the translation takes place.

In the case of the translator's mother tongue, if we approach translation from a communicative scope, this will have to produce a written translated output. Thus, any linguistic gap or deficiency in this language is reflected in the recodification of the message, resulting in a gap or a lack of communicative effectiveness. Mother tongue deficiency results in inaccuracies and a lack of quality in the translated texts (Makkos, 2019). For translation students, this is even more evident since they do not have a good command of their mother tongue, as well as the foreign language, in which case, reading comprehension errors and writing errors are expanded by the lack of translation expertise and language command.

The linguistic competence of the translator in both languages is an essential requirement for translation learning and practice. Since translation teaching is commonly faced from a linguistic point of view, neglecting linguistic elements may guarantee a failure in the comprehension of essential elements, as well as in the rendering of a message. The translator, obviously, must have a competence on linguistic components such as linguistic, grammatical, pragmatic and textual aspects of the language, but knowing this is not enough, the translator must also be aware of languages differences since facing different linguistic levels surely provide lack of comprehension, gaps on meaning, and poor or inability to transfer a message (Khany, 2014).

Linguistic aspects of both languages play an essential role, both in translation teaching and translation practice. Meaning components have to be decoded and then recoded from one language into another. In this action, the translator may face difficulties in lexical items at the comprehension stage, and then, some others at the rephrasing of the message, leading to meaningful translation errors. These errors may fall in incorrect forms, written or spoken, the lack

of transferring the source meaning, semantic or syntactic errors, creation of new words, and strange grammar, among others (Aprilianti-Putri, 2019).

For practical and teaching purposes, we perceive translation as an art, a science and a craft. As a science, we confer the qualities of precision and predictability to the translation process and product (Alwazna, 2012; Ordudari, 2008). This also means that, as a science, we have methods, procedures, techniques, and strategies to be applied to achieve translation quality. As an art, translation requires certain skills such as creativity and even the translator's personality traits (Alwazna, 2012). As a craft, translation requires practice and supervision. Hence, we consider translation to be developed through repetition and practice.

Whether you consider translation an art, science, or craft, learning and translation teaching have happened throughout human history. Perhaps, the teaching and learning of translation as the core meaning of teaching and learning is not very possible, but developing translating competence by practice and reflection based on the study of translation fundamentals is a way to reach high standards in translation.

A competence, in general, is what an individual can perform. It is the ability to do something or the actual performance of something. It is also the ability to use and apply knowledge in a real-world situation. This implies responsibility and autonomy in the performance of something in an autonomous problem-solution situation (Holmes, Polman-Tuin & Turner, 2021, p. 42). On this definition, the performance by using knowledge to solve specific problems or situations is clear. On the other hand, the performer acts as an independent individual showing the gained ability to accomplish a task. For the PACTE group, translation is "the underlying system of declarative and fundamentally procedural knowledge required to translate; a combination, thus, of knowledge, skills and attitudes." (Hurtado-Albir, Kuzkik & Rodríguez-Inés, 2022, p. 29) In this way, we perceive translation as a metacognitive activity, one that gathers diverse knowledge and skills, but also the attitude to perform the task, guiding the translator toward an integrative competence.

Developing translation competence in translator students or novice translators means making them aware of translation theory and fundamentals. However, they must already cover certain minimum requirements to start their training and learning of translation. To begin with, they require a command of both languages involved in the translation process, as well as other linguistic and communicative competencies. At the same time, they must have generic and specialised competences, reading comprehension, and a good knowledge of writing. Besides these, a strong background knowledge is essential to select the right equivalent as well as to understand the source text message (Al-Mufti & Al-Rubai, 2024).

The teaching of translation theory and fundamentals is not an easy task, especially if the students are learning the language and translation theory and fundamentals at the same time; besides "their different educational background" (Sdobnikov, Shamilov, Shlepnev, 2020, p.1228), a condition that affects comprehension and communication. In this stage, students' linguistic and language command, and other deficiencies arise, making the process a difficult task or an impossible one for some students. Most students present difficulties in identifying linguistic components, transferring the source text (ST) meaning properly, re-codifying the message, or simply failing to transfer translation units; this mainly depends on students' subjectivity and individual skills (Al-Mufti & Al-Rubai, 2024). For the professor of translation, the teaching of translation fundamentals and the practices to develop translation competence by applying the acquired knowledge becomes a complicated task since students are not able to comprehend, and consequently, lack translation competence development.

A translation professor also needs to consider "professional translation competences, common didactic competences, specialised pedagogic competences, [language and communicative competences to deal with students in developing translation competences]" (Sdobnikov, Shamilov, Shlepnev, 2020, p.1233). Most of these aspects are under the professor's control, but the students' performance is not. That is, the students' success does not entirely depend on good teaching strategies, techniques or methodologies,

but also on students' practice and responsibility to follow the professors' directions. Besides, students' language background also impacts translation rendering in the way of errors such as "inversion of meaning, addition of meaning, omission of meaning, deviation of meaning, and modification of meaning" (Aprilianti-Putri, 2019).

Students' background knowledge, poor linguistic command, and translation fundamentals teaching may affect the learning and application of this knowledge in the transference of a translation unit. Being aware of this, we try to evaluate how students' deficiencies of language and general knowledge affect or impact the teaching of translation, since, based on gained experience, most students get a good command of learning translation theory and fundamental concepts, but in their application to actual translation activities, most of them fail. We realise this when they can speak about translation theory and fundamentals, but their translations are poor, or their practice exams fail. At least, in the Faculty of Educational Sciences (FES) at the Unacar, students succeed in dealing with translation theory, but fail in dealing with translation practice.

Materials and Methods

This study sample consisted of 4 professors and 24 students of the Program of English Language from the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen in México. We invited both the professors and the students to participate in the research by means of an email invitation. In the case of the professors, three of them had translation classes at the time of this research, and one had classes in previous terms. In the case of the students, we invited all students from the three classes of translation taking place at the time of this research, being 54 students. All of them agreed to participate and answer an online questionnaire, but in the end, only 24 participated in answering it. The selection of the participants depended on their free willingness to participate in the research, so we can say that it was a random sample, not complying with specific lineaments or requirements for the research purposes. In the case of the professors, we selected the ones who have taught or were teaching translation classes this term. However, not all of

them cooperated on the study, with only four who responded, which also made a random sample, since no specific characteristics were set.

To collect the information from the participants, we carried out a structured interview with the professors. This interview consisted of a guide. We asked the same questions to the four professors in the same way. Nonetheless, they were free to express their answers. Thus, this was a structured interview (Lazaro Gutiérrez, 2021, p. 67). In this research, the interviewees were the four professors with translation teaching experience. For the translation students, we did a survey by means of an online-administered questionnaire. This questionnaire was structured, having as a basis the interview guide used with the professors, and was mainly to complete a series of items. Most of the questionnaire had closed questions, and only the last one was open (Navarro-Soler, 2021).

Both the interview and the questionnaire were organised into five indicators. The first 'knowledge of linguistic aspects', with three items, the first focused on the ability to identify linguistic aspects, the second on identifying parts of the sentence, and the third focused on having had linguistic classes. The second indicator, 'command of English', had three items, the first had the purpose to identify the level of English based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the second was to identify the level of English based on the faculty classification, and the third one, to identify the command of the students' English level. The third indicator, 'command of Spanish', had three items: the first was to identify the level of Spanish based on the CEFR, the second focused on identifying the use of vocabulary the students had, and the third was the students' capability to express meaning. The fourth indicator, 'Reading comprehension,' had five items. The first to identify students' reading comprehension in Spanish. The second item was to measure or rate students' reading comprehension, the third item focused on identifying the capability to express meaning, the fourth item was to identify the students' comprehension of different types of texts, and the last item was to determine the type of information the students could understand. The fifth indicator, 'writing command,' had six items. The first was to identify if the

students could write different types of sentences. The second had the purpose to identify the quality of the sentences, the third was to determine the quality of the students' paragraphs, the fourth had the purpose to identify the components of students' paragraphs, the fifth was to determine the capability of the students to write paragraphs or documents, and the sixth focused on rating students' writing production. The last item, not classified in any of the previous indicators, was to identify drawbacks or deficiencies of translation output.

For the questionnaire, we tested its reliability by means of a pilot study in which we obtained the same results in six different subjects' responses under the same conditions. For the face validity of this questionnaire, we considered the operationalisation of the constructs by means of five indicators in it. Also, the researchers considered these indicators and their corresponding items as relevant to the research as they were organised in a good format and style, clear, and consistent with the literature of the research topic. Regarding the content validity, all items were analysed in terms of how essential they were for the research. Passing this by the analysis and detailed examination of colleague scholars in the faculty (Taherdoost, 2016).

We used descriptive statistics to report and examine the information stated by the professors in the interview. The purpose was to identify the perception the professors had about their translation students and delve into the drawbacks these could have in their learning of translation. For reporting the information, we proceeded as stated by Lázaro-Gutiérrez (2021, p. 79) by transcribing the information, coding the participants, organising and selecting the data and interpreting the results.

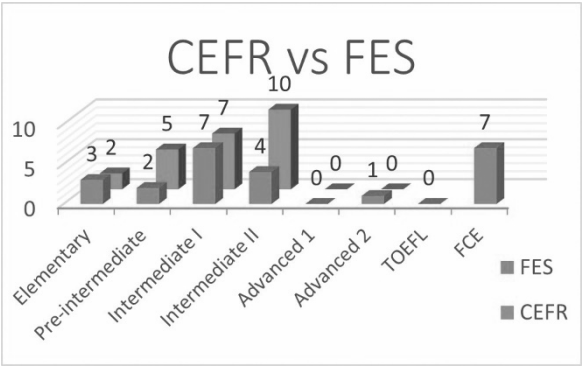
By the collecting techniques and instruments and by the way of dealing with the presentation and analysis of the data, we used a mixed methods research design. Mixed-methods research focuses on quantitative data, but also considers qualitative data to support and provide a deeper comprehension of the arguments and conclusions stated in a study. In this study, we followed the collection of qualitative and quantitative data by using a guide for the interview and a detailed focus on the questionnaire. The use of this mixed-methods research guarantees superior results and a wider

comprehension of the arguments and results presented in this paper in reference to students' language and communicative command deficiencies as drawbacks of translation teaching (McLeod, 2024).

Presentation

At the time of this research, there were three groups of translation with 54 students. We invited all students to answer a questionnaire sent by email. After three weeks, we ended up with twenty-four questionnaires answered; thus, the results and percentages presented here are from these 24 participants. As seen in *Fig. 1*, 58% of the students stated that they are able to identify linguistic aspects. However, 21% answered that they were able to deal with such aspects, and 17% considered themselves able to apply such linguistic aspects.

The above data is surprising since 83% of these students have already taken general linguistics. This is because students from different academic terms integrate the courses. Besides, 8% have taken both general linguistics and applied linguistics, and the other 9% have not taken linguistics classes yet.



As mentioned before, students differed in terms of academic backgrounds when they joined the translation. We asked them to grade themselves on their command of English, considering the

CEFR criteria. Consequently, 42% (10) of them considered they were in B2, 29% (7) in B1, 21% (5) in A2, and 8% (2) in A1. However, in accordance with their degree classification, 29% (7) of these were in First Certificate Exam (FCE) preparation, while the other 17% (4) were in Intermediate II. 29% (7) in intermediate I, and 13% (3) in Elementary (See *Fig. 2*). Therefore, their perception of their level of English differs depending on whether we asked them to take the CEFR or their actual faculty parameters. An important point on having this as a reference for the students' performance in the translation class is that CEFR considers six general levels, while the faculty also considers six levels equivalent to those of the CEFR and adds two more, which are special courses to get students prepared for the TOEFL and FES exams. However, a concern in these two systems of equivalences is how much the faculty parameters really match the CEFR, especially because their command of English determines their ability to decode messages.

The competence to decode a written message in English is a key point in translation. Based on this, we asked participants to grade their reading comprehension on a scale from 01 (low) to 10 (high), both in Spanish and English. In their Spanish reading comprehension, 8% (5) of the participants ranked it at a 10, which means they perceived their reading comprehension at a high level. 8% (5) evaluated their reading comprehension with a 9, which means they considered themselves to have a good command of decoding messages, but not at the highest level. Nonetheless, 8% (5) ranked their reading comprehension with an 'eight'. 12% (3) graded their reading comprehension with a 'seven', and there were two participants who ranked their reading comprehension below the media, grading themselves with a 'four' (one) and with a 'five' (one). Considering that this ranking was in their mother tongue, their expected reading comprehension was high, but the participant themselves seems to consider themselves to have a low level.

In the case of the participants' grading their reading comprehension in English, the figures went down. Only one participant ranked his reading comprehension with a 'ten'. 8% (2) graded themselves with a 'nine'. 17% (4) ranked their reading comprehension with an 'eight'. 29% (7) graded themselves with a

'seven'. 8% (2) graded with a 'six'. Twelve (3) graded their Reading comprehension with a 'five', and 21% (5) marked a 'four', which means they considered themselves below the median.

When the participants were questioned about how easily they understood or comprehended a written message, 54% of them stated that 'they got the general idea of a common text in English with difficulties', while the remaining 46% stated that they easily got the general idea of a common text in English. Specifically, 33% assured to be able to identify the general idea of a text. 21% said to focus on specific information, while 46% can identify the purpose of the text.

In writing, 71% of the respondents stated that they can write compound and complex sentences, which implies a high level of ability to transmit their thoughts. However, 29% considered only writing simple sentences. At the same time, 17% of the participants assured that to write cohesive, coherent, clear paragraphs, while the remaining 83% recognised that they miss at least one of the elements of an effective paragraph. Situation reinforced by the participants' responses, who assured to write paragraphs with more than two main ideas.

Sixty per cent of the participants joined the degree immediately after high school. While 38% joined the program after some time without studying, this means that they had been working for a while. 80% of the participants stated that they joined the bachelor's degree to learn English. 29% joined the program to learn how to teach English. 17% joined this program to learn how to translate, and 46% of the students in this program joined without having any idea about its purpose.

Among the many comments students expressed when asked about problems in their translations was "my paragraphs are not complete". "I often try to make everything fit, but I rarely get it right." "I can understand a text, but it is difficult for me to translate its paragraphs." "Sometimes I have some mistakes in the idea of my translation, since I don't usually perceive the main message." "I need more vocabulary. I need to practice more." "In my translations, I have found difficult to write very clearly, concisely, and well-structured texts."

The first part of the interview collected information related to students' knowledge of linguistic aspects. At this point, 50% of the professors stated that their students could only identify linguistic aspects. A 25% mentioned they can identify and discuss linguistic aspects, and another 25% assured they could identify and deal with linguistic aspects.

As part of the linguistic aspects, the professors could indicate that 50% of their students can identify the parts of the sentence. 25% deal with the parts of the sentence, and the other 25% match the part of the sentence. Another aspect in which all professors agreed, in their students' knowledge of linguistic aspects, is that they all have already taken general linguistics as part of their curricular courses.

The second aspect in which the professors had to provide an answer in relation to their students is their command of English. In this topic, 75% of the professors agreed that the students had a level of B1 in their command of English. The other 25% stated that their students had an A2 level.

We also questioned all professors about the level of English the students had based on the faculty classification level. 50% of the professors stated that their students were in Intermediate II. The other 25% of the professors identified their students to be in Intermediate I and Basic I. At the same time, all professors stated that their students were able to communicate orally in English. However, all of them agreed that students had serious difficulties in their written communication.

Another aspect of interest for this research was the command of Spanish that the students have. For this aspect, the respondents had to identify the level of Spanish and the command of the language the students had. The first aspect we asked the professors was the level of Spanish the students had. Even when the students and the professors are native speakers of the same mother tongue, they widely disagree on identifying their students' level. At this point, fifty per cent of the professors stated that the students had a C1 level. Twenty-five per cent assured they had a C2 level, and the other 25% of the professors considered their students to be in B2.

From the professors' point of view, 50% of them assured their students have a right command of Spanish tenses (structures) that of a university-educated native speaker. However, 25% of them considered their students to have a high command (variety) of vocabulary in Spanish that of a university-educated native speaker, as they are. However, another 25% of the professors considered their students to lack a high and correct command of both vocabulary and structures of their mother tongue.

In the case of the students' way of expression, 50% of the students stated that they accurately expressed meaning by using the right vocabulary, but the other 50% of the professors highlighted that the students poorly expressed meaning by using vague, ambiguous, or incorrect vocabulary.

The following aspects were questioned by the professors, which were related to their students' Reading comprehension. In this aspect, we questioned them about the students' Reading comprehension, both in English and Spanish. They also had to identify if the students could get the general idea of a text.

Fifty per cent of the professors considered that their students had a rank of 8 points on a scale of 10 about their students' reading comprehension in Spanish. However, the other 50% also stated that their students had a scale of 9 in relation to a scale of 10 about their students' reading comprehension in Spanish.

We also asked the professors to identify their students' reading comprehension in English. In this aspect, 25% of the professors considered that their students were on a 4 out of 10 scale. The other 25% of the professors also considered their students to be on a 5 out of 10 scale. Another 25% stated that their students were in an 8 out of 10 scale, and the other 25% considered their students to be in a 9 out of 10 scale.

In the case of identifying the students' ease in identifying the general idea of a text, 50% of the professors stated that their students easily get the general idea of a common text in English, while the other 50% stated that they have difficulties identifying the general idea of a common text in English. According to the professors, their students can understand common texts in English, but half of the

professors also stated that they could understand both common texts and specialised ones.

Fifty per cent of the professors stated that their students could understand the purpose of a text in English. Twenty of them assured their students could only identify specific information in English, and another 50% of the professors considered their students could identify the general idea of a text in English.

The last aspect the professors had to give information about their students was that of the writing aspect. In this case, 50% of the professors stated that their students could write well-structured, simple sentences. However, another 25% stated that they were able to write complex sentences, and the other 25% stated that they had identified that their students could write compound sentences.

In relation to the qualities of the sentences the students wrote, all professors stated that their students had different levels of sentence writing. Twenty-five per cent stated that the students write clear sentences. Twenty-five per cent stated that they write complete sentences. Twenty-five per cent stated that the students could write sentences containing all qualities, which means clear, complete, concise, and coherent sentences.

In relation to students' paragraphs, fifty per cent of the professors stated that their students could write coherent paragraphs. Twenty-five per cent considered that the students could write cohesive, coherent, and clear paragraphs, while another 25% of the professors assured their students could write paragraphs without the qualities of an effective and well-written paragraph.

With reference to the students' paragraphs' content, the professors stated that their students had one main idea, an introduction, and a development. However, 25% of the professors stated that their students have not learnt the elements of a well-written paragraph.

Fifty per cent of the professors stated that their students could write simple paragraphs. Twenty-five per cent can only write brief documents, and the other fifty per cent of the professors stated that their students could write simple paragraphs, brief documents, and complex documents.

In the case of the students' level of writing production, all professors absolutely disagree about their students' production. In this way, each professor ranked their students from 2 to 5 points on a scale of 10.

Discussion

We can realise from the professors' interview results that all students joining the Degree of Foreign Language of the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen do not have a heterogeneous linguistic command. Though in this article we focus on identifying necessary aspects to do a translation by means of eliciting from the students most translation errors, their deficiencies in language and background knowledge, so we can indirectly determine their weaknesses, therefore, drawbacks of translation teaching, since translation occurs at the written level as stated by Mehdi and Mehdi (2018).

As seen, professors agree that most students (75%) can identify linguistic aspects, and just a few of them (25%) handle such aspects. In the students' questionnaire, this fact was verified since only a few students (17%) considered being able to apply linguistic aspects. This is an expected phenomenon, even when most of them have already taken linguistics, they all come from different academic as well as social backgrounds. This fact causes students to lack comprehension and learning opportunities while studying English and other subjects taught in English at the same time; an aspect stated by Sdobnikov, Shamilov, and Shlepnev (2020), students' background, which affects their learning, as well as producing errors in their translation outputs (Aprilianti-Putri, 2019). Besides, participants study linguistics as a class or as another subject from their curriculum, and they lack core elements of both languages, English and Spanish; consequently, they are not able to get the necessary command of such linguistic aspects as to master them and be able to apply them, as proved by Khany (2014).

The professors' results showed that students also have a different background of language level, which was also verified by the students' answers and by having no clear institutional placement or language classification criteria. The students' language level not

only affects them at the personal level, but also affects the whole class, having less translation practice or less effective translation analysis. Even when professors identified some students at the B1 level, this is not a required level to be able to translate properly (Wensheng, 2020); besides, in the translation classes, we also have students at a lower level, as well as other general knowledge mishaps. These knowledge deficiencies in students are the consequences of the faculty's language classification, as well as students' placement in each class.

Most students not only lack knowledge in their English learning, but also in their mother tongue. As seen in the professors' results, even professors lack effectiveness in identifying their students' Spanish level. Therefore, this affects students' translation output as stated by Makkos (2019), indicating that the result of such deficiencies may lead to translation errors. The percentage of students having a low level of Spanish is higher than that of the students with a suitable level for a translation class.

The professors' results demonstrated that most students have problems in reading comprehension, both in English and in Spanish. We also verified these problems by the students' results, which seem to demonstrate that their reading comprehension and their ability to decode a written message are not sufficient. Just a few students, based on professors' perception and students' results, can accomplish higher reading abilities; this means they have the autonomy to perform such a task, as Holmes, Polman-Tuin & Turner (2021) state. Consequently, students cannot properly decode written messages. Lacking reading comprehension is a fact that affects translation since a translator requires comprehension skills to decode a read message properly (Casilla-Avalos, 2023), and he/she is the prime reader of the source text, the one who transfers such a message, and the one whom the final reader relies on.

Participants also have problems in recoding a written message. Especially, most students lack competencies in written communication. Professors stated that, even when these students can write simple, compound and complex sentences, they are not able to write paragraphs properly since most of them lack elements of an effective paragraph. We also verified this by the participants'

responses, since a considerable percentage (83%) agreed to lack paragraph components, having mistaken or lacking vocabulary, which allows them to choose the right equivalent in the ST, as also Al-Mufti & Al-Rubai (2024) found in their research. In the case of translation, this may affect the re-structuring of a message with the consequences of producing nonsense or a misunderstood paragraph, as Alwazna (2012) states that translation is a textual meaning; therefore, a translated written paragraph would be a problem for the message rendering. We can realise that this lacks the desired translation principle, in which someone must study translation when such a person has reached an almost native speaker language level. Besides, students' lack of knowledge and other skills directly affect translation aspects highlighted by the PACTE group as requirements to translate (Hurtado-Albir, Kuzkik & Rodríguez-Inéz, 2022).

The way the faculty accepts and places students may also be a factor affecting students' translating competence. As seen, the number of students selecting the program for its translating training is very low (17%), as well as the number of those who selected this program because they really considered it as their prime goal. This, plus the fact of having students directly from high school, results in a lack of general knowledge, social competencies, and real knowledge to comprehend different types of text, be able to transfer it into another language and restructure it in the target language. As seen, these differences in students' educational background directly affect students' translation learning and practices, as Sdobnikov, Shamilov, and Shlepnev (2020) found as a factor affecting students' developing translation competences.

As seen, the main findings of this research seem to highlight that no matter the teaching approach the translation professor applies, the learning of translation ends up at the empirical level. This is proved by the students failing in the application of linguistic and translation aspects to their output, as well as the different deficiencies identified in the students' performance. In this way, we can assume that teaching translation occurs as a craft (Alwazna, 2012; Ordudari, 2008) in which the translation student, even when being taught fundamentals of translation, linguistics, and other subjects, translates by trial and error. Most students do not have the desired level of

English or general knowledge to translate, and they have not matched theory and practice, at least in the first courses of translation.

Conclusion

Teaching, being a human activity, is influenced, affected, and determined by humans' actions and attitudes. Thus, the teaching of translation may not be otherwise. This means that translation results directly depend on students' background, knowledge, skills, competencies, and soft human skills, as seen in this report.

Throughout this paper, we have seen how students of translation present some lacks and deficiencies in their general knowledge and competencies. Besides this, not having admission criteria to the program and to the translation classes makes it even more difficult for the students to succeed in developing translation competencies. This also contributes to the heterogeneous groups with big differences among individuals, both at the learning and application stages. Thus, this fact affects not only the teaching and learning processes, but also the learning and development of the translation fundamentals.

Not having clear students' language level criteria has also affected the translation class management and development. In this way, we can see, based on the students' and professors' results, that the institution and the CEFR language criteria classifications have not matched. Therefore, students are in a translation class having a low level of English, but also of Spanish, and having difficulties in dealing with the translation material, as well as following the professors' directions. As we have read in the literature, for joining a translation class, the students must have an equivalent language level of an educated native speaker; this means their English and Spanish for these students must be at the same level, but this is not the case.

The consequence of accepting any student-prospect for the program and for the translation class is that these individuals are unable to comprehend and handle the linguistic aspects necessary for the translation process. Besides, the differences in students' background knowledge of English and Spanish clearly result in a

difference in the comprehension of a conveyed message in a text, resulting in a lack of the rendering of a message.

Among the differences in the students of translation, reading and writing deficiencies have highly affected the process of translation, as well as the communicative level of the people involved in the translation class. Especially when students have to decode and recode a written message, this is more evident if the students also lack knowledge of the translated topic. This last aspect is a constant in most translation students since they have joined the Educational Program, lacking reading and cultural concerns and highlighting the fact that they are not all specialised in any area of knowledge.

In sum, among the main students' background deficiencies identified in this research are no clear student selection criteria, deficiencies in both languages involved in the translation process, low reading and writing skills or competencies, a lack of general background knowledge and other skills. These deficiencies cause drawbacks affecting the decodification and recodification of a message; therefore, difficulties for translation teaching to students learning a second language at the same time they join a translation program, especially if we are aware that translation is a complex multidisciplinary activity, requiring the mastery of many different competencies.

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations of this study may include the number of subjects involved in it. However, this was a variable far under the researcher's control; even when we invited all students having translation classes to participate by answering the questionnaire, the responses of these students were short. There were three other professors who neglected to cooperate with this study because they stated that at this moment, they weren't teaching translation. Even when the response was not the expected one, the results allowed us to identify deficiencies and drawbacks students have in learning translation, and then, in translating.

The conclusions of this study may be generalised if we consider subjects who present the same or similar conditions at the time of

joining a translation class. Also, the information and rationale presented in the conclusions may shed light on teaching translation in different parts of the world and make a good contrast between what is expected and what really happens in a translation class.

Recommendations for Further Research

We strongly recommend considering a wider population or sample for a similar study on this topic. At the same time, we suggest focusing on a specific aspect of what we consider as drawbacks or deficiencies, for example, isolating students' language command, or any other, but not many. Since a questionnaire is used, sending this to other educational institutions would provide more data for analysis and reach stronger arguments and conclusions.

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Ideological Recreations: A Corpus-Based Study of Female Characters and Translation Strategies in Mo Yan's Big Breasts and Wide Hips and Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out

YUANTING WANG
MAIALEN MARIN LACARTA

Abstract

This study analyses the ideological portrayal of female characters in Mo Yan's novels, Big Breasts and Wide Hips (1996) and Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out (2006), and their representation in Howard Goldblatt's English translations. It explores how translation strategies shape English readers' ideological interpretations, addressing: How does Mo Yan construct female-related ideologies? What techniques does Goldblatt use to convey these ideologies? What differences and similarities exist between source- and target-language readers' interpretations? Using a corpus-based translation studies approach, a parallel corpus was built, supported by the Corpus of Contemporary American English and the Chinese BCC Corpus. Jieba facilitated Chinese word segmentation, TextRank calculated word weights, and AntConc performed collocation analysis with log-likelihood statistics to identify ideological markers, complemented by qualitative structural analysis and reference corpus verification. Findings reveal that Mo Yan crafts female-centred narratives, highlighting the historical violence, social structures, and gender dynamics that shape women's lives. Goldblatt's translations blend domestication and foreignization, improving readability but diluting cultural specificity and political critique. The study confirms corpus analysis as effective for uncovering ideological shifts in translation, underscoring the need to balance cultural adaptation with fidelity to preserve diverse interpretations of contemporary Chinese literature for global audiences.

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Keywords: Ideology, Ideological Marker, Domestication, Corpus Linguistics, Descriptive Translation Study.

Introduction

Mo Yan, a Nobel laureate in literature, is recognised worldwide for his storytelling and exploration of Chinese history, social struggles, and human endurance. His novels have been mainly translated into English by Howard Goldblatt, who brings Chinese literature to global audiences. Goldblatt's translations have influenced versions into other languages through indirect translation. Marin-Lacarta (2014, 2018) argues that Anglophone reception continues to shape how the world sees Mo Yan's works, making English translations essential for study. Mo Yan's novels frequently explore ideological themes, including political authority, rural life, ethical values, aesthetic tastes, and female perspectives (He, 2014). However, few studies focus on ideologies; previous research by Klein (2016) and Du & Zhang (2015) highlights Goldblatt's tendency to simplify or omit politically sensitive content. This study examines how Mo Yan's ideological paradigm is recreated in Howard Goldblatt's English translations, as his decisions shape ideological reception among English-speaking readers. It also examines how translation strategies influence ideological transmission and shape readers' interpretations.

Due to the word limit, this study focuses only on the main female characters in Mo Yan's two novels, *Fengru Feitun* (丰乳肥臀, Big Breasts and Wide Hips)[1] (Mo, 1996) and *Shengsi Pilao* (生死疲劳, Life and Death are Wearing Me Out) (Mo, 2006), and studies the ideology embodied by these female characters. We intend to answer three research questions:

1 How does Mo Yan construe the ideologies related to female characters?

[1] We include the pinyin followed by the Chinese characters and the English translation of the title the first time a Chinese book is mentioned. After that, only the pinyin will be provided.

2 What are the strategies employed by the translator Howard Goldblatt concerning the transmission of these ideologies?

3 What are the deviations and commonalities between source and target language readers in understanding these ideologies?

To answer the above questions, this study employs a corpus-based translation study method, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, to systematically explore the ideological construction of female characters in Mo Yan's novels and their translations. First, a parallel corpus consisting of the original texts of the two books by Mo Yan and Howard Goldblatt's English translations is built, supplemented by the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the Chinese BCC Corpus as reference corpora.

Jieba is used for Chinese word segmentation to extract high-frequency words and weights via TextRank. Co-occurrence analysis in AntConc, using log-likelihood statistics, screens ideological markers such as trauma symbols, class representations, and gender norms, analysing both micro-linguistic and macro-narrative structures to address RQ1. Translation strategies, such as domestication and foreignization, are compared, examining Goldblatt's rewriting, omission, and reconstruction in context for RQ2. Semantic differences in translated words are verified via reference corpora to explore cross-cultural interpretations for RQ3.

In summary, we integrate corpus linguistics, descriptive translation studies, and critical discourse analysis, considering both data-driven methods and close readings of texts, to systematically examine the dynamic transformation of ideology in translation.

1. Ideology and Translating Ideology

1.1. Ideology and Ideological Markers

The Cambridge Dictionary defines ideology as "a set of beliefs or principles, especially one on which a political system, party, or organisation is based" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). McLellan (1986) explains that Marx viewed ideology as reflecting how ideas and consciousness are influenced by material conditions, particularly societal economics and structures. Hall (1982) asserts that language

forms the foundation of ideology, while Chilton (2004) emphasises its role in shaping and representing the world based on perspectives.

Contemporary research employs empirical methods to connect ideology with textual representations, as language serves as both a carrier and a constructor (Chilton, 2004; Hall, 1982). This requires operationalising ideology into recognisable language patterns, termed "ideological markers" here: words or phrases reflecting beliefs, values, or viewpoints tied to specific ideologies. These markers reveal the writer's or character's ideology and can be identified using corpus tools that analyse frequency, collocation, and context.

1.2. Translating Ideological Markers in Mo Yan's Works

Klein (2016) argues that translation provides a theoretically and politically productive means to represent China, avoiding simplistic ideological binaries in Mo Yan's works and their English versions. He views translation as a cultural and ideological negotiation that shapes global perceptions of Chinese literature, where meaning emerges from discourse, as per Critical Discourse Analysis theories, influenced by readers and context.

Du and Zhang (2015) contend that Goldblatt, in translating Mo Yan's *Tiantang Suantaizhige* (天堂蒜薹之歌, The Garlic Ballads), modifies, omits, or reshapes politically sensitive content to suit English readers' expectations, often omitting ideological markers through "rewriting". They use close reading for comparative analysis, examining additions, omissions, substitutions, and rewording to show transformations in political and aesthetic elements. We will investigate whether the translation strategies outlined by Du and Zhang (2015) are also employed in the other two novels and if ideological markers are omitted during the translation process.

2. Corpus-based Translation Studies

Corpus-based translation studies draw from corpus linguistics and descriptive translation studies (DTS) (Laviosa, 2021). A corpus is a systematic collection of real language samples that reflect actual

usage, large enough to capture language patterns statistically, and stored digitally for computer analysis (Sinclair, 1991). Corpus linguistics involves the computer-aided study of extensive transcribed texts or utterances (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p.3). DTS focuses on describing real-world translations without prescriptive judgments (Toury, 2012).

Corpus linguistics analyses large-scale data with statistical tools to identify patterns, while DTS examines target texts and cultural factors. Their integration enables systematic analysis of translated texts to uncover translation norms. This study applies this approach to Goldblatt's translations of Mo Yan's two novels, using data from a parallel corpus and reference corpora representing contemporary Chinese (BCC) and English (COCA) discourse communities.

Swales (1990) defines a discourse community as a group sharing values, assumptions, and communication practices. Here, COCA and BCC represent U.S. and Chinese languages, cultures, and values, respectively, allowing examination of ideological markers and their translations to analyse strategies.

3. Translation Strategies

Proposed by Venuti (1995), the primary translation strategies are domestication and foreignization. Domestication involves an ethnocentric trade-off in cultural values, while foreignization highlights linguistic and cultural differences to guide readers toward the source context. Marin-Lacarta (2012) suggests these concepts form a continuum rather than strict poles, proposing that the degree of domestication be qualified.

In Chinese literary translation, studies by Qi & Roberts (2020), Sun (2002), Jiang (2015), Ding (2016), and Kumar (2021) reveal patterns where translators often domesticate titles for target audiences while retaining some foreignization in the text bodies. Jiang (2015) notes Goldblatt's domestication in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (Mo, 2004) enhances accessibility, while Ding (2016) and Kumar (2021) highlight his use of both strategies, with creative alterations for English readers. Shao (2016) discovers that when dealing with specific Chinese terms, Goldblatt sometimes omits

them due to cultural gaps. However, these omissions are specifically listed and explained in the afterword to compensate for the loss caused by zero translation. This translation strategy transcends the concepts of domestication and foreignization but reflects the translator's attempt to maximise the preservation of the original cultural characteristics (Shao, 2016).

Another direct way to evaluate a translator's translation strategy is to "talk" to the translator himself. In the speech titled "Author and Translator: An Uneasy, Mutually Rewarding, Sometimes Fragile Relationship" delivered by Goldblatt at Shanghai International Studies University, Goldblatt considered the Western readers' awareness and reading interests, giving Chinese literary works a chance to "squeeze" into this small publishing market. The "translating and revising" approach is a smart one (Goldblatt, 2013). The translator readily admitted that in translating nearly ten of Mo Yan's novels, including *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (Mo, 2011) and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (Mo, 2004), he made omissions and alterations to suit American readers.

4. Methodology: Corpus Building and Data Processing

4.1. Corpora in the Research and Corpus Tools

In this study, two types of corpora will be assembled and utilised. The initial corpus is a parallel collection containing two original texts by Mo Yan and their English translations by Howard Goldblatt (Mo, 2004, 2011), serving as the primary resource for extracting ideological terms and expressions related to female characters. It identifies ideological markers and reveals Goldblatt's translation strategies for Chinese terms. The second category comprises two reference corpora, COCA and BCC, used to analyse cultural discourses and uncover nuanced ideological meanings across cultures.

A corpus analysis software tool, AntConc4.2, will be employed, utilising Concord, Wordlist, Keywords, and Lemma List features to analyse the parallel corpus data. Collocation Analysis from the reference corpora will identify dominant discourse patterns and explore the usage of ideological markers in both source and target

languages. Jieba will process the Chinese corpus data, segmenting it to calculate word weights.

4.2. Word Weight

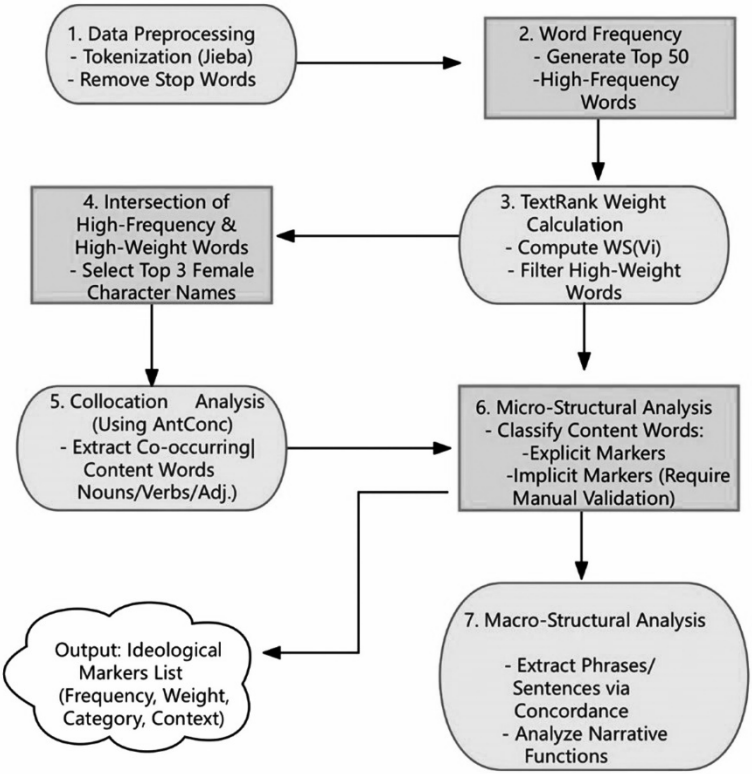
The principle of word weight relates to TextRank, a graph model algorithm where the weight of a word node WS(Vi) reflects its importance or centrality in the text. The higher the weight, the stronger the semantic relevance, information-carrying capacity, or structural significance of the word (Mihalcea & Tarau, 2004).

The specific attributes reflected by word weights are reflected in the application of corpus linguistics: words with high weights are typically located in the semantic core of the text, may serve as keywords or core elements, have denser connections with other words in the co-occurrence graph, and can distinguish topic differences between texts (Adil Jaafar, 2022; Goyak et al., 2022; Mehler, 2008).

4.3. Screening Ideological Markers

First, a word frequency list and the top 50 high-frequency words are generated by Jieba. Then, Jieba's TextRank algorithm calculates the node weight of each word's WS(Vi) to filter out high-weight words. Next, the top three female names with high word frequency and weight are selected. Then, collocation analysis is conducted with AntConc, extracting content words, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, that co-occur with these names. Based on collocation words, microstructural analysis selects content words and tags them as explicit or implicit ideological markers, with implicit markers verified through close reading. Finally, macro-structural analysis extracts phrases and sentences marked by collocation words via the concordance function to analyse their narrative functions in transmitting ideologies.

Graph 1 ***Ideological Marker Screening Flow Chart***



4.4. Top Three Female Characters in Two Texts

In *Shengsi Pilao* (Mo, 2006), the top three female characters by frequency and word weight are 春苗 (Chunmiao, WS(Vi)=0.02789, 172), 互助 (Huzhu, WS(Vi)=0.02756, 240), and 凤凰 (Fenghuang, WS(Vi)=0.01945, 196). Chunmiao, despite a lower frequency, has the highest weight, indicating her role as a semantic hub in ideological themes. In *Fengru Feitun* (Mo, 1996), the top characters are 母亲 (Mother, WS(Vi)=0.08674, 1455), 大姐 (Eldest sister, WS(Vi)=0.01794, 217), and 二姐 (Second elder sister,

WS(Vi)=0.01252, 122). Mother's high frequency and weight underscore her central ideological role.

Table 1 ***Top Three Female Characters***

Shengsi Pilao			***Fengru Feitun***		
Name	WS(Vi)	Frequency	Name	WS(Vi)	Frequency
春苗 (Chunmiao)	0.02789	172	母亲（Mother）	0.08674	1455
互助 (Huzhu)	0.02756	240	大姐 (Eldest sister)	0.01794	217
凤凰 (Fenhuang)	0.01945	196	二姐（Second elder sister）	0.01252	122

4.5. Ideological Markers

Using female character names as search words, collocates are generated by AntConc, ranked by log-likelihood (LL≥3.84, $p<0.05$, minimum 5 frequencies) to identify significant associations. The following is how the value of likelihood is interpreted: the less likely the co-occurrence of collocations and node words is to be random, the higher the significance (Anthony, 2005).

Table 2 ***Reading of Log-Likelihood***

LL ≥ 3.84	Corresponding p value < 0.05 (significant)
LL ≥ 6.63	The corresponding p value < 0.01 (highly significant)
LL ≥ 10.83	The corresponding p value is < 0.001 (extremely significant)

Collocates, such as place names or actions, are excluded because they lack ideological connotations. Implicit markers, such as "巴结" (butter up) with "中年妇女" (middle-aged women), are extracted via manual review of concordance lines. Thematic roles (Dowty, 1989) include intimate relationship representatives (e.g., mother, wife), class representatives (e.g., rural women), and victims of morality (e.g., oppressed by norms). Ideological functions (Dahm, 1980) encompass symbolising trauma, new social ideologies, gender norms, systemic hierarchy, vulgar culture, and economic class attributes, derived from collocates. The following tables contain the ideological markers extracted by AntConc based on likelihood value and the implicit markers selected with the assistance of the "file view" function and the author's close reading.

Table 3 ***Thematic Role Markers with Value of Likelihood***

Thematic Role	***Shengsi Pilao***	***Fengru Feitun***
Intimate Relationship Representative	春苗 (chunmiao): **大姐** (eldest sister, 44.45); **妻子** (wife, 18.42); **妹妹** (younger sister, 16.89） **互助** (Huzhu): **嫂子** (sister-in-law, 59.82); **朋友** (friend, 27.45); **姐姐** (elder sister, 24.72); 闺女 (young lady, 23.62); **大娘** (auntie, 22.60）；**女儿** (daughter, 16.03) 凤凰 (Fenghuang): **小姨** (aunt, 75.65); 妈妈 (mother, 60.82); **爸爸** (father, 42.24); **女儿**	**母**亲 (mother): **大姐** (eldest sister, 12.49); **二姐**(second sister, 68.84); 闺女 (daughter, 50.83); **大嫂**(elder sister-in-law, 40.09); **女儿** (daughter, 33.10); **姑姑** (aunt, 23.66); **姥姥** (grandmother, 16,71) **大姐** (eldest sister, first sister):**母**亲 (mother, 12.49); **二姐** (second sister, 23.56) **二姐** (second sister): **母**亲 (mother, 68.84); **大姐**(eldest sister,

	(daughter, 11.14)	23.57)
Class Representative	**春苗** (Chunmiao): **中年**妇女 (middle-aged women, 34.78); 导演 (director, 31.7) **互助** (Huzhu):县、社官员 (County government and commune VIPs） 凤凰 (Fenghuang): **警察** (police, 36.47)	**母**亲 (mother): **排**长 (Platoon Leader, 21.95); **士兵** (soldiers, 18.88) **大姐** (eldest sister): **政委** (political commissar, 44.78); **区**长 (district head, 17.43)
Victims of Morality	**春苗** (Chunmiao): **情人** (mistress, 18.74)； 艰难(victim) 凤凰 (Fenghuang): **好孩子** (good girl, 83.84), 处女(virgin, 20.70)	
Religious Symbol or Character	凤凰 (Fenghuang): **猴子** (monkey, 189.67)	**母**亲 (mother): 马洛亚 (Pastor Marlory, 56.06); **教堂**（ church); **牧**师 (pastor)

Note:

1. The markers without a likelihood value are implicit ideological markers selected from the relevant text surrounding the node words or their collocates.
2. The English translations are from Goldblatt.

Table 4 ***Ideological Function Markers with Value of Likelihood***

Ideological Function	***Shengsi Pilao***	***Fengru Feitun***
Symbolising Trauma	**春苗** (Chunmiao): 别哭 (don't cry, 59.85); **孝服** (morning garments); 坟墓 (grave, 18.68); **眼泪** (tears, 13.18); **互助** (Huzhu): 伤口 (wound, 13.62); 缝合 (stitch up, 25.73) 凤凰 (Fenghuang): 惩罚 (punish, 16.86);	**母**亲 (mother): **跪下** (kneel, 38.72); **断奶** (Wean, 17.27); **感慨** (sigh, 21.59); 叹息 (sigh, 18.87); **日本** (Japan/Japanese, 16.03); **大**枪(gun, 15.82); **大姐** (eldest sister): 汉奸 (traitor, 16.73)；枪毙 (execute, 13.04); **二姐** (second sister): 丢脸 (loose face, 55.86); **哭声** (crying, 12.47)
Symbolising Newly Established Social Ideology	**春苗** (Chunmiao): **新**华书店 (New China Bookstore，40.46)；	
Symbolising Gender Norms and Chanlleging	**互助** (Huzhu): 头发 (hair, 74.81); 辫子 (braid, 40.52); **嫁**给 (marry..to, 33.38); **神奇** (miraculous, 21.68) 凤凰 (Fenghuang): 处女 (virgin, 20.70)	**母**亲 (mother): **吃奶** (suckling milk, 26.96); **女人** (woman, 20.80) **大姐** (eldest sister): 报答 (repay, 45.25)

Symbolising Systemic Hierarchy	**春苗** (Chunmiao): **巴结** (butter up) **互助** (Huzhu): 军装 (army uniform, 18.96); 县、社官员(County government and commune VIPs) 凤凰 (Fenghuang): **警察** (police, 36.47)	**母**亲 (mother):**跪下** (kneel, 38.72); 态度 (attitude, 33.73); **批**评 (criticism,criticize); **排**长(Platoon Leader, 21.95); **士兵** (soldiers, 18.88) **大姐** (eldest sister): **政委** (political commissar, 44.78); **区**长 (district head, 17.43)
Vulgar Culture Symbol	凤凰 (Fenghuang): **王八蛋** (asshole, 64.56)	**母**亲 (mother): **畜生** (son of a bitch, 26.52); **小**杂种 (little bastard, 20.17)
Symbolizing Social Class with Economic Attributes	凤凰 (Fenghuang): **地下室** (basement room, 29.74); **旅**馆(hotel, 21.79); 车站 (station, 38.87)	

Note: The English translations are from Goldblatt.

5. Findings of Ideological Markers and Discussions

In *Shengsi Pilao* (Mo, 2006) and *Fengru Feitun* (Mo, 1996), thematic roles of female characters are quantified via likelihood values (LL). For intimate relationship representatives, "春苗" (Chunmiao) in *Shengsi Pilao* co-occurs with "big sister" (LL=44.45) and "wife" (LL=18.42), while "互助" (Huzhu) pairs with "sister-in-law" (LL=59.82); in *Fengru Feitun*, "母亲" (Mother) associates with "eldest sister" (LL=12.49) and "second sister" (LL=68.84).

High LL values (exceeding 10.83) suggest strong female-centric storylines, implying that Mo Yan crafts a gender ideology where close female relationships over male ones shape women's fates. Class representatives, such as "大姐" (Eldest sister), with a "political commissar" (LL=44.78) and "互助" with "County government VIPs," highlight political ties. At the same time, "police" and "Platoon Leader" indicate violence linked to "凤凰" (Fenghuang) and "母亲".

Ideological functions are reflected in the likelihood of co-occurrence. For "Symbolising Trauma," "春苗" pairs with "Don't cry" (LL=59.85) and "Grave" (LL=18.68), "互助" with "wound" (LL=13.62), and "大姐" with "execute" (LL=13.04). A close reading of "大姐" shows: "First sister stroked Sha Zaohua's dark little face. 'Mother,' she said, 'if they execute me, you'll have to raise her for me'" (Goldblatt, 2006), reflecting her political persecution and loss of agency under historical violence. Goldblatt omits "在搏斗中打死孙不言，被处决" (killed Sun Buyan, executed), balancing foreignization with domestication, where he tries to retain relationships and remove violence. To suit English readers, the translation strategy aligns with Marin-Lacarta's (2012) continuum, which posits that translation strategies exist on a spectrum balanced between cultural and literary considerations.

For "Symbolising Gender Norms," "互助" co-occurs with "hair" (LL=74.81) and "母亲" with "suckling milk" (LL=26.96), reinforcing traditional roles tied to physical traits. *Fengru Feitun* lacks "Victims of Morality" and "Social Class with Economic Attributes" markers, focusing on family epic over socioeconomic themes, unlike *Shengsi Pilao*'s narrative of rural social change.

6. Other Ideological Markers

6.1. "七大姑八大姨"

As shown in Table 3, "大娘," "小姨," and "姑姑" are explicit markers for intimate relationship representatives, yet Goldblatt translates them as "aunt" or "aunti," simplifying and domesticating the nuanced Chinese kinship system. This system includes

patrilineal/matrilineal distinctions (e.g., 姑妈 for father's sisters, 姨妈 for mother's sisters) and age/marriage markers (e.g., 婶, 嫂), which are lost in translation. The following example from *Fengru Feitun* illustrates this semantic loss:

"各位乡党，大爷大娘大叔大婶大哥大嫂大兄弟大姊妹们，俺兄弟扒铁桥打了胜仗…七大姑八大姨都来祝贺…" (Mo, 1996)

"Fellow township residents…my brother has achieved a glorious victory…we have been visited by friends and relatives…" (Goldblatt, 2004)

"七大姑八大姨" (seven aunts from the father's side and eight from the mother's side) is an idiom emphasising extensive kinship with cultural depth, lost in the neutral "friends and relatives." Using BCC, collocate analysis reveals:

Table 5 ***Collocates with "七大姑八大姨"***

Verb Collocates		**Noun Collocates**	
Before "**七大姑八大姨**"	After "**七大姑八大姨**"	Before "**七大姑八大姨**"	After "**七大姑八大姨**"
害怕（fear）, **有** (have), **没有** (have not), 见见 (visit), **受到** (receive), **看看** (visit, take a look at), 讲 (tell), **面**对 (face), **接受**	问 (ask), 汇聚 (gather), **打交道** (deal with), 说 (talk about), **会** (can do), **分享** (share), **帮** (help), **同意** (agree),过来 (come over), **陪** (accompany)	**家** (family), 妈妈 (mother), 亲戚 (relatives), **奶奶** (grandmother), **姐姐** (sister), **姐夫** (brother-in-law), **高官** (Senior Officials), **三姑六婆** (Distant female	**家** (family), **祖宗** (ancestors), **外婆** (grandmother), **叔叔**（uncle）, **口中** (mouthing), **小舅子** (brother-in-law), **大**爷 (eldest uncle), **事**业 (career), **叔叔** (uncle), **舅舅** (uncle)

(accept), **招呼** (entertain)		relatives), **舅舅**（uncle），**一干** (a group of)	

Noun collocates like “家” (family) and “祖宗” (ancestors) tie “七大姑八大姨” to kinship, while “高官” (senior officials) suggests authority links. Verbs like “害怕” (fear) and “问” (ask), which imply coercive interference, are absent from the English rendition. This domestication translation strategy erases cultural connotations, limiting target readers’ understanding.

6.2. “闺女”

As an intimate relationship representative, “闺女” collocates highly with “互助” (Huzhu) in *Shengsi Pilao*, referring to an unmarried young woman or daughter with intimate connotations. Examples from the parallel corpus show varied translations:

1） “**她大姨，不是舍不得剪，咱**这闺女的头发跟别人不一样，剪断之后，往外渗血丝儿。” (Mo, 2006)

“It’s not that, ma’am. My daughter’s hair is different from other girls.” (Goldblatt, 2011)

2）**我娘**兴奋地说：闺女，虽说是一家院里住着，你可是有十年没进大娘的家门了。 (Mo, 2006)

Well, young lady, my mother commented with notable interest. We all share a single compound, but this is the first time you’ve been in our house in a decade. (Goldblatt, 2011)

3）**你老婆**说， “**他是有**妇之夫，你是黄花闺女。他这样做是不负责任，是衣冠禽兽，是害你。” (Mo, 2006)

She continued. “He’s a married man, you’re a young maiden. That’s completely irresponsible of him, he’s a brute and he’s hurt you.” (Goldblatt, 2011)

"黄花闺女," an idiom affirming chastity, however, loses its traditional weight when translated to "young maiden." BCC collocate analysis for "黄花闺女" reveals:

Table 6 ***Top 5 Collocates with "黄花闺女"***

Rank	Collocates	FREQ	LL
1	男人 (men)	22	3.39
2	寡妇 (widow)	13	3.69
3	做媒 (matchmaking)	13	4.81
4	自身难保 (unable to protect oneself)	12	4.96
5	姑娘 (young lady)	12	3.58

Collocates like "自身难保" (LL=4.96) suggest vulnerability, and "做媒" (LL=4.81) ties to marriage focus, reflecting traditional views on unmarried women's status. "寡妇" adds complexity, contrasting with "黄花闺女"'s unmarried ideal.

Taking "young lady" and "young maiden" as the search words, the function of collocates will be applied to extract the top collocates with reasonable MI (Mutual Information) statistics. MI is the algorithm employed in COCA, which measures the degree to which two words co-occur more frequently than "random co-occurrence" (Biber, 1993).

Table 7 ***Top 10 Collocates with "Young Lady"***

Rank	Collocates	FREQ	MI
1	beautiful	109	3.13
2	lovely	69	4.10
3	attractive	26	3.33
4	charming	24	3.96
5	talented	18	3.30

6	grounded	12	3.52
7	courageous	7	3.62
8	clad	5	3.87
9	delightful	5	3.24
10	escort	5	3.05

The top 10 collocates of "young lady" in COCA, such as "beautiful", "lovely", "attractive", etc, show that its semantic connotation has the following characteristics: First, high frequency collocates mostly describe external attractiveness ("beautiful", "charming") or positive character ("talented", "courageous"), emphasising the elegance or socially recognised excellent qualities of young women. Second, collocates, such as "lovely" and "delightful", imply praise or positive evaluation rather than intimate emotions. Third, some collocates, such as "escort" and "clad", suggest that "young lady" is often used in formal social occasions, such as dinner parties and ceremonial activities, rather than private family conversations.

Taking "young maiden" as the search term, repeating the approach applied to "young lady", only 37 occurrences are observed in COCA, and the collocates with reasonable MI scores are articles such as "a" and "the". It is impossible to evaluate the use and connotation in COCA with so few occurrences and the meaningless collocates, of which the statistics can be deduced; it is used very little in modern English, unlike "**黄花**闺女", which is still used in modern Chinese.

To summarise, the collocation of words for "young lady" shows that it focuses on public image, while the family identity and emotional connotation of "闺女" are stripped away. However, "young maiden" in English means a young unmarried woman and also implies chastity, and it is an outdated expression (Oxford University Press, n.d., 2025). Additionally, "maiden" is an old word that is being used less frequently in modern contexts, according to COCA findings; this domestication translation strategy strips it of its cultural and emotional depth.

6.3. “县、社官员” versus “County Government and Commune VIPs”

In the text of *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out*, there are 14 occurrences of “官员”, in which one example of “县、社官员” is as follows:

桌后六条也是从小学校搬来的长凳，凳上坐着身穿蓝色或者灰色制服的县、社官员，从左边数第五个人身穿一套洗得发了白的军装，此人是刚从部队转业回来的一个团级干部，是县革委会生产领导小组负责人。(Mo,2006)

County government and commune VIPs, in their blue or grey uniforms, were seated on six benches, also taken from the school. Fifth from the left, a man whose army uniform was nearly white from many launderings, was a recently retired regimental commander who’d taken charge of the production division of the County Revolutionary Committee. (Goldblatt, 2011)

“县、社官员” refers to a political system concept, specifically officials from the “县” and “**社**”. In the Chinese administrative system, “县” is a county-level administrative division, while “**社**” refers to the “people’s commune”, a form of rural collective economic organisation that existed in China from 1958 to 1983 (Xin, 2001). “County Government and Commune” is a literal translation for “县、社”, and thus the literal translation of “县、社官员” should be “County Government and Commune officials”. However, Goldblatt uses “VIP”, a popular social term in the Western world, instead of “official”, which can be recognised as a domestication strategy by rewriting the political title. The further exploration of “VIP” and “**官**员” will be conducted in COCA and BCC to see how they are used in modern English and Chinese discourse.

Taking “VIP” as the search word in COCA, the top 10 collocates within the acceptable MI value ($3 \leq MI \leq 6$) are extracted, and the

collocate data of "官员" from BCC are further calculated in AntConc in the order of likelihood (LL ≥ 3.84) as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 ***Top 10 Collocates of VIP and 官员***

Collocates of VIP in COCA	**Collocates of 官员 in BCC**
Lounge (5.59), treatment (4.85), club (4.74), room (4.33), list (3.88), guest (3.72), special (3.55), invite (3.22), available (3.07), welcome (3.03)	收发 （send and receive，6.25），废话（nonsense，6.25），地厅 （prefecture-level，5.90），高票当选 （elected with a high vote，5.85），顺藤摸瓜 （follow the clues，5.83），非同一般 （extraordinary，5.83），退休（retired，5.83），财务人员 （financial staff，5.83），报备 （report，5.82），限制 （restriction，5.80）

Note: The numbers in COCA represent MI values, while likelihood is represented in BCC.

As for the collocation words of "VIP" in the English corpus, these words are mainly related to privileges, special treatment, and high-end services, suggesting that VIP is usually associated with enjoying special services, places or identities, and is often seen in business, entertainment or high-end service scenarios. The collocation words of "官员" in the Chinese corpus are related to government functions, administrative procedures, job behaviours and legal supervision, such as "收发" (send and receive，6.25), "地厅级" (prefecture-level，5.90), "高票当选" (elected with a high vote，5.83), "财务人员" (financial staff，5.83), "报备" (report，5.83), and "限制"

(restriction, 5.83). Furthermore, other collocates, such as "废话" (nonsense, 6.25) and "顺藤摸瓜" (follow the clues, 5.83), indicate a negative attitude. "废话" (nonsense) reflects the public's attitude or opinion towards the official's speech, such as believing that the official's speech is empty, lacks substantive content, or has problems of formalism and bureaucracy. "顺藤摸瓜" (follow the clues) is a phrase that appears in texts about catching corrupt officials, which carries negative connotations.

Goldblatt translated "官员" into "VIP" to make it easier for the target readers to associate it with important people, but this conversion ignores the unique political meaning of "官员". This translation strategy is more akin to domestication, as it replaces the specific concepts of the source culture with those of the target culture, thereby sacrificing the cultural and political connotations of the original text.

Conclusion

This study systematically examines the ideological construction of female characters in Mo Yan's novels and their representation in Howard Goldblatt's English translation, employing a corpus-based translation research method. Combining quantitative analysis and qualitative interpretation, data from the parallel corpus and the reference corpus, show that Mo Yan profoundly reveals how historical violence, social structure and gender power shape women's destiny through ideological markers, such as "grave" and "wound" representing trauma symbols, "political commissar" and "platoon leader" epitomising class representatives, and "suckling milk" and "virgin" symbolising

gender norms, and so on. Goldblatt's translation strategy includes elements of domestication and foreignization. The translation also includes replacing political terms. This improves the acceptability of the target readers; however, it reduces the cultural specificity and political criticality of the original text. For example, the translation

of “young lady” strips away the concept of chastity in the Chinese context, while the translation of “county government and commune VIPs” blurs the uniqueness of the Chinese administrative system.

The data findings of this study are consistent with previous scholars’ evaluations of Goldblatt’s translation strategy. For example, Jiang (2015) points out that he tends to achieve domestication through “fluency and cultural adaptation”, while Ding (2016) finds that he often adopts a simplification strategy when dealing with culturally loaded words, which is consistent with the results of this paper’s translation analysis of kinship terms and political terms. Moreover, in the limited data of this study, the “mixed strategy” proposed by Kumar (2021), that is, the coexistence of partial domestication and foreignization, has been found when the translator omits violent details such as the “fight” and “execution”. Traces of foreignization are also visible in a few contexts, such as the retention of “mother” and religious symbols.

In addition, as pointed out in the introduction, Du & Zhang (2015) emphasise that Goldblatt often omits politically sensitive content, and this study also verified this tendency. For example, the translation of “官员” has weakened the criticism of the bureaucratic set-up of the original text, thereby affirming the effect of Goldblatt’s rewriting strategy on ideology.

Lastly, this study proves that corpus analysis is an effective method in literary translation research. The combination of high-frequency word weights generated by the TextRank algorithm and co-occurrence analysis using the Log-Likelihood method can systematically reveal the text's ideological operating mechanism. However, the screening of implicit markers still requires manual close reading.

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Translating Multilingualism, Composing Multilingual Translations: Reflections on Practice and Theory

SHEELA MAHADEVAN

Abstract

This article examines manifestations of literary multilingualism in a range of contemporary literatures, along with strategies employed in translating literary multilingualism in Indian and Francophone literary texts, and it casts light on their theoretical implications. Recent multilingual translations of multilingual texts, including Heart Lamp (2025), a collection of Kannada short stories by Banu Mushtaq, translated by Deepa Bhasthi, are investigated to explore how they complicate existing models and concepts of translation, and the article investigates how they offer fresh ways of theorising literary translation. The article demonstrates how, in a multilingual translation, the act of translation not only transports the source text forward towards a new text, but may also carry forth the source text languages at times. Consequently, the boundaries between source and target languages can become blurred in a multilingual translation. This article may be of interest to scholars and students of translation studies and literary multilingualism, in addition to practising literary translators working with multilingual texts.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Translation, Francophone Literature, Indian Literature, Kannada.

Introduction

In today's globalised world, shaped by histories of colonisation and migration, literatures are frequently interspersed with multiple languages, which can manifest themselves in a range of ways; such multilingual poetics have been approached creatively in various ways by translators who compose multilingual translations in

response to multilingual source texts. This phenomenon has been explored in various recent works, including Ellen Jones's ground-breaking work, *Literature in Motion: Translating Multilingualism across the Americas* (Jones, 2022), which highlights the similarities and intersections between literary multilingualism and translation. My monograph *Writing between Languages: Translation and Multilingualism in Indian Francophone writing* (Mahadevan, 2025), which builds on the work of Jones, and draws on the concept of literary translingualism pioneered by Steven G. Kellman in *The Translingual Imagination* (Kellman, 2000), explores a range of multilingual poetics in Indian Francophone writing, and investigates the theoretical implications of translating literary multilingualism in relation to this corpus. This article revisits and extends existing research on literary multilingualism and its translation, exploring this topic in relation to a further range of contemporary multilingual literatures and their translations. It seeks to cast light on a range of multilingual poetics in contemporary literatures, how literary multilingualism has been translated, and the theoretical implications of such practices.

The first section of the article examines various manifestations of literary multilingualism in contemporary literatures of various languages, including French and Welsh, and their connections with the process of translation. The second section considers the implications of such poetics for translators, illuminating various strategies that can be employed to translate multilingualism. These strategies are examined through a close reading of translations, translators' notes and interviews. In the final section of the article, recent multilingual translations, in particular, *Heart Lamp* (Mushtaq, 2025), a collection of Kannada short stories by Banu Mushtaq, translated into English by Deepa Bhasthi, are investigated, to demonstrate how the translation of multilingual texts and the composition of multilingual translations can complicate existing models of translation that presuppose a straightforward transfer between source and target languages. I ask: how do such practices challenge existing concepts of translation, and which alternative models and ideas about translation emerge in light of these practices?

Literary Multilingualism: Definitions and Manifestations

As a theorist of multilingualism and translation, Rainier Grutman has suggested, "multilingualism evokes the co-presence of two or more languages (in a society, text or individual)" (Grutman, 2009, p.182). Multilingualism can manifest itself in literature either explicitly or implicitly, as I have suggested in *Writing between Languages* (Mahadevan, 2025). The explicit manifestation of multilingualism might take the form of the vocabulary of two different languages woven into a text. For example, a recent collection of short stories by Pondicherrian writer Ari Gautier entitled *Nocturne Pondichéry* (Gautier, 2021) is composed in French, but is interspersed with Tamil vocabulary, transliterated into the Roman script; this text is thus explicitly and very visibly multilingual. For example, some chapters have French names, such as "L'exil" (Exile) or "La cage dorée" (The Golden Cage), whereas another chapter title bears Tamil vocabulary: "Mani enna?" (What Time is it?) (Gautier, 2021, p.9).[1]

However, the multilingual poetics of a text may also manifest itself implicitly: the syntax or expressions of one language may subtly shape and mould the main language of the text, such that an expression may appear to be composed in one language, but another language may in fact be lurking behind it; the expression thus inhabits a location between languages (Mahadevan, 2025, p. 114). This additional language may be described as a "ghost language", a term that is inspired by Canadian translation theorist Sherry Simon's description of the presence of another language that lies behind the main language in the work of immigrant writers, presented in the work *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City* (Simon, 2006); in such instances, she notes that "the language of origin haunts the second language" (p. 184).

Simon offers the example of the work of the multilingual writer Abla Farhoud, who migrated from Lebanon to Canada in the 1950s. Farhoud writes in French in the novel *Le bonheur a la queue*

[1] Translations are my own in this article, unless otherwise indicated.

glissante (Farhoud, 1998) (Happiness has a slippery tail), but as Simon observes, this French work is at times shaped by Arabic, and Farhoud presents a glossary of Arabic proverbs at the end of the book, "which appear in the novel or inspired the author" (Simon, 2006, p. 184). Simon describes Farhoud's work as an act of "writing as translation" (p. 183). The title of the novel itself, which translates literally into English as "Happiness has a slippery tail", exemplifies this. Although it is written in French, it is in fact a direct translation of an Arabic proverb,[2] although this is only made explicit in an inside title page of the novel, where the Arabic proverb is presented directly in the Arabic script above the French title. The title, therefore, exhibits an implicit form of multilingualism and constitutes an expression which straddles both French and Arabic.

The first chapter of the novel itself is shaped by several such implicit modes of multilingualism, including the following expression, uttered by the protagonist who reflects on her future and fate, and the fact that she is ageing: "Un paysan qui se suffit à lui-même est un sultan qui s'ignore" (a peasant who is self-sufficient is a sultan who is not aware of it) (Farhoud, 2004, p. 9). Again, this expression is a literal translation of an Arabic proverb, which is presented at the end of the book in the glossary alongside its French translation. Arabic, in both these examples, lurks behind the French façade, moulding the French language in unexpected ways to create unusual, implicitly and subtly multilingual expressions. The expressions thus lie at the juncture between languages; they are neither fully French nor fully Arabic. This phenomenon resonates with the words of exophonic multilingual German-Japanese writer Yoko Tawada:

> To me, it's the space between languages that's most important, more than the languages themselves. Maybe what I really want is not to be a writer of this or that language in particular, but to fall into the poetic ravine between them (Tawada, 2025, p. 28).

[2] For this observation, I am grateful to Judith Woodsworth, the Canadian translator of this novel, who discussed this work and its multilingualism in two events on the topic of literary translation that were held at Concordia University, Montreal, in 2022, and at Liverpool University, UK, in 2024.

As Jones argues, "translation is always to some extent implied in multilingual writing" (Jones, 2022, p. 2), and exemplifying this notion, in Farhoud's writing, it is the process of literal translation, the transfer of Arabic proverbs into French, that frequently generates implicit forms of multilingualism. The work may thus be described as one that is "born-translated", a term that Rebecca Walkowitz uses to describe novels in which "translation functions as a thematic, structural, conceptual, and sometimes even typographical device" (Walkowitz, 2015, p. 4). In *Le bonheur a la queue glissante*, translation is a structural device that is woven throughout the novel.

The notion of a "ghost language" is also thematised in a novel entitled *Cerf Volant* (Eddé, 2003) (Kite) by another Francophone writer of Lebanese origin, Dominique Eddé. One of the characters, Mali, is multilingual and speaks both French and Arabic. When she writes in Arabic, she senses that the French language haunts her Arabic:

> Et lorsqu'elle écrivait l'arabe, c'était encore une lutte intraitable contre les fantômes de la version française. Un obstacle invisible contrait l'élan de sa main trop pressée de maîtriser et de conquérir. Le souvenir des lettres latines brisait le rythme et l'ouverture des lettres arabes qui, couchées ou debout, se heurtaient à des frontières qui n'étaient pas les leurs (Eddé, 2003, pp. 56-7).

In British translator Ros Schwartz's translation, this passage is rendered as follows:

> And when she wrote Arabic, again it was a relentless struggle against the ghosts of the French translation. An invisible obstacle impeded the movement of her hand which was too impatient to master and conquer. The memory of the Roman letters hindered the rhythm and openness of the Arabic letters so that, horizontal or vertical, they came up with barriers not of their making (Eddé, 2018, pp. 55-6).

This may be interpreted as a mirror image of Farhoud's process; if Farhoud's French writing is shaped by Arabic, in Mali's experience, the opposite occurs: when writing in Arabic, her process is haunted by the French language. Both writers, one of fiction and the other

from within the world of fiction, consequently, write in a space where languages are entangled and overlap with one another.

Not only is multilingualism a theme in Eddé's novel, but the novel itself is multilingual and is at times interspersed with Arabic, which was very evident for the English translator of the novel, Ros Schwartz, who describes the experience of translating the novel as follows:

> My translation of Lebanese novelist Dominique Eddé's *Kite* was interesting because Eddé writes in French but with an oriental sensibility. It took me way out of my comfort zone, and by the end I had a curious feeling that I'd translated from Arabic, so different is the novel's structure and language from the western narrative tradition (Goldberg, 2019).

The act of translating a multilingual text can therefore lead to the uncanny sensation that one is translating from an additional language interspersed in the text, rather than the primary language.

Literary multilingualism can also manifest itself implicitly in other ways. An example can be seen in the work of contemporary Francophone writer Kim Thúy, who migrated from Vietnam to Canada as a child refugee. The titles of several of Thúy's works are multilingual, and the multilingualism in such titles is frequently contained within a one-syllabic word; the novel *Ru,* for example, has a title which straddles two languages, French and Vietnamese, although this may not immediately be obvious to a French-speaking reader upon viewing the book's cover. However, inside the novel, the plurality of languages and different meanings contained within this one word are made apparent:

> En français, *ru* signifie <<petit ruisseau>> et, au figuré, <<écoulement (de larmes, de sang, d'argent)>> (*Le Robert historique*). En vietnamien, *ru* signifie <<berceuse>>, <<bercer>> (Thúy, 2010, p.7).

In Sheila Fischman's English translation, the passage appears as follows:

> In French, *ru* means a small stream and, figuratively, a flow, a discharge – of tears, of blood, of money. In Vietnamese, *ru* means a lullaby, to lull (Thúy, 2012).

For the multilingualism of Thúy's title to become visible and explicit, and for its various meanings in different languages to be exposed, an explanation and translation are required within the source text itself. If in Farhoud's novel, the act of translation generated multilingualism, here, in an inverse process, the multilingual poetics of the novel generate a process of translation in the source text itself, illustrating the idea that translation and multilingualism "are closely intertwined" (Jones, 2022, p. 2).

A similar phenomenon can be seen in the work of Welsh poet Menna Elfyn, who has recently composed a collection of poetry entitled *Parch* (Elfyn, 2025). The collection comprises poetry written directly in English, poetry written in Welsh that has been self-translated into English, and Welsh poetry translated by others into English. At first glance, to a reader who is not familiar with the Welsh language, the title appears to be a form of an English verb, which is frequently used in the form "parched". However, within the preface of the volume, further definitions of this word are presented, and the reader is informed that "Parch" is also a Welsh word: "The title of this volume is *Parch*, a Welsh word literally meaning respect, but also a title for a spiritual leader in non-conformist chapels ('Parch' meaning 'Reverend' in English)" (Elfyn, 2025, 11). Again, like Thúy's title "ru", which straddles both French and Vietnamese languages, "Parch" straddles both Welsh and English languages, with different meanings in both, but it is the act of translation from Welsh into English in the preface which illuminates the plurality of languages contained within this one word, which might otherwise not be apparent for a non-Welsh speaker. In both Elfyn's and Thúy's works, translation, then, is a tool which illuminates implicit modes of multilingualism.

Translating Literary Multilingualism

The translator may consider various questions when translating the multilingual text: What is the effect of the multilingual poetics in the source text? Which "foreign" words are to be retained, and why? Do they have a particular political or cultural significance, and how can this be captured in the translation? Are there subtle traces of another language lurking behind the main language, and how will

these be captured? Might it be helpful to collaborate with the author or native speakers of any additional languages that may be embedded in the source text?

Then there is the question: what would it mean to erase the multilingualism of the source text? For example, if one is translating a multilingual postcolonial text, which may be written primarily in the language of the colonizer, but is shaped by the indigenous language in various ways, this may be interpreted as an act of linguistic decolonization; as Paul Bandia suggests, "literary heteroglossia in postcolonial writing can be construed as an expression of resistance to the hegemony of the colonial language" (Bandia, 2007, p. 221). The erasure of such multilingual poetics in the translation can therefore have certain political consequences, and such a translation may even be seen as an act of recolonisation, as Kathryn Woodham suggests, drawing on the work of Bandia (2006, p. 125).

Another question that the translator of literary multilingualism must grapple with is that of italics: should italics be used for "foreign" words in translations? This itself is a complex question, for as Schwartz has pointed out, "there is a big debate around what is foreign" (Mahadevan, 2022a). For example, as Richard Scholar observes in his work *Émigrés: French words that turned English* (2020), there are many French words that have travelled into English and which are used commonly, such that they are frequently seen by English speakers as English, rather than as foreign words (p. 3). And in *Le monolinguisme de l'autre* (1996) (The Monolingualism of the Other), Jacques Derrida offers the following two sentences: "On ne parle jamais qu'une seule langue" and "On ne parle jamais une seule langue" (p. 21), translated by Patrick Mensah as follows: "1. We only ever speak one language. 2. We never speak only one language" (Derrida, 1998, p. 7); as Bandia observes in relation to these sentences and Derrida's work, "the idea of a homogenous monolingual text or language is a fiction in itself. In other words, a language is always already contaminated by other languages" (2012, p. 424). If any language contains traces of other languages, then multilingualism and what constitutes a "foreign" word can be complex to define. Moreover, as I have suggested elsewhere, the

visibility and effects of literary multilingualism, and consequently what is seen as "foreign", may differ between readers of different linguistic frameworks and contexts (Mahadevan, 2025, pp. 31-2).

Broadly speaking, however, in the context of English translations, it may be possible to consider words from other languages that are not commonly used in English as "foreign".[3] While many translators have used italics for such words in their translations, numerous translators have recently criticised this practice, highlighting its potentially problematic and political dimensions. Translator and poet Khairani Barokka, for example, sees "the practice of italicising such words as a form of linguistic gatekeeping; a demarcation between which words are 'exotic' […] and those that have a rightful place in the text: the non-italicized" (Barokka, 2020). And Deepa Bhasthi, translator of Kannada literature, makes her stance very explicit in her translator's note to her recent translation of the multilingual Kannada short story collection *Heart Lamp* by Banu Mushtaq, which has "Against Italics" as its title. She includes words from various languages in her English translation, but writes that:

> I was very deliberate in my choice to not use italics for the Kannada, Urdu and Arabic words that remain untranslated in English. Italics serve to not only distract visually, but more importantly, they announce words as imported from another language, exoticizing them and keeping them alien to English. By not italicizing them, I hope the reader can come to these words without interference, and in the process of reading with the flow, perhaps even learn a new word or two in another language (Bhasthi, 2025, p. 215).

There are also other questions relating to the use of glossaries, endnotes and footnotes in translations that a translator of the multilingual text should consider: how far should these be used to

[3] Of course, this definition, too, is somewhat problematic, since there are multiple forms of English employed in different contexts of the world. In India, for example, words of Indian languages are commonly used in spoken and written English, and will not necessarily be seen as "foreign" words. Similarly, in a multilingual context such as Montréal, where French and English are both commonly spoken, French vocabulary woven into an English text may therefore not be interpreted as a "foreign" language in this context.

explain any "foreign" words that are included in the translation? Or should other methods be employed to convey their meaning? Such words are frequently qualified with a translation or a gloss within the translation itself. This is visible, for example, in *Firebird* (2023), Janani Kannan's English translation of a Tamil novel by Perumal Murugan. Frequently, this English translation is interspersed with Tamil vocabulary that has been transliterated into the Roman script, presented in italics; the Tamil vocabulary is at times immediately followed by an English translation in phrases such as: "He then […] rummaged under the middle bar of the cart for a packet containing *thiruneer*, holy ash" (Murugan, 2023, p. 2). In this instance, the composition of a multilingual translation generates a further process of translation, woven into the translation itself.

In the work *Pyre* (2022), Anirrudhan Vasudevan's English translation of another work by Murugan, Tamil vocabulary is also included at times, and is visible, for example, in the following passage:

> Saroja's collapse panicked Kumaresan, who had caught her in his arms to break her fall.
>
> "Amma, please bring some water!" he shouted.
>
> There was no response from the people outside. Everyone kept looking at his mother in silence (Murugan, 2022, p.14).

Here, however, the Tamil word "Amma" is not translated or explained immediately after its first appearance, but instead, its definition and translation, "mother", appears elsewhere in the text, providing a clue regarding the meaning of the word.

Another technique to convey the meaning of "foreign" words embedded in a translation is visible in Marilyn Booth's *Celestial Bodies* (Booth, 2019), the International Man Booker Prize-winning translation of an Arabic novel by Jokha Alharthi, in which the Arabic word "kummah" is explained through an exegetic translation approach. An additional sentence, which was not present in the source text, has been elegantly added to the translation after the Arabic word "kummah", to convey and explain the meaning and appearance of the Arabic term:

> And she did see him, at the time of the date harvest. He was leaning against a palm tree. In the heat, he had jerked his head forward to shake off his kummah, and now the delicately embroidered headgear sat at his feet (Alharthi, 2018, p.4).[4]

However, there is also the possibility of employing glossaries to explain the "foreign" words in the translation. This is a strategy that Ros Schwartz employs in her translation of Moroccan Francophone writer Tahar Ben Jelloun's novel entitled in English *About My Mother* (Jelloun, 2016), to explain Arabic words that are woven into the French text, and which are retained in the English translation. She highlights the advantages of glossaries as follows:

> The advantage of glossaries is that they are there at the end for readers who want to use them, but they don't interfere with the reading experience. […] You can either decide not to spoon-feed the reader and let them fend for themselves, or help expand their knowledge of the source language culture (Mahadevan, 2022a).

Another strategy employed by certain translators is the inclusion of endnotes to explain "foreign" words in a source text. This is a strategy employed by Canadian translator Judith Woodsworth in her translation of the Francophone novel *Le sourire de la petite juive* (2011) (The Smile of the Little Jewish Girl) by Abla Farhoud, entitled in its English translation *Hutchison Street* (2018). The novel is set in a famous street in Montreal named Hutchison Street, and each chapter is named after a resident on the street. One chapter, entitled Jean-Hugues Briançon, begins as follows, and the French text is ruptured by words of Québécois:

> Depuis son arrivée au Québec, les mots niaiser, maganer, achaler, astiner, enfarger, rapailler, garrocher, baveux, bleuet, bobette, brassière, gougoune, moumoune, guidoune, et tous les sacres typiquement québécois, donc religieux, les bancs de neige, la sloche, la glace noire, la poudrerie, et mille autres

[4] I am grateful to Marilyn Booth for this example and explanation provided during her keynote speech at a Translation Studies Day held at King's College London in 2023, and for her permission to include this example in this article.

> mots et expressions étaient venus enrichir son vocabulaire (Farhoud, 2011, p. 148).

In Woodsworth's English translation, the text appears as follows:

> Since coming to Quebec, his vocabulary had been enriched by countless Québécois expressions: words like *niaiser, maganer, achaler…gougoune, moumoune, guidoune,*[5] and the swearwords so typical of Quebec – all of them related to religion. And then there were the words specifically pertaining to winter, like *bancs de neige, sloche, glace noire* and *poudrerie*[6] (Farhoud, 2018, p. 175).[5]

Certain Québécois words, distinct from standard French spoken in France, are retained in the English translation and are foregrounded through the use of italics, perhaps to convey the sense that these words were once foreign to the character in question. The lexical fields and themes of these groups of words are conveyed in the translation, and translations of the individual Québécois words are provided in endnotes at the end of the book, such that they do not disrupt the fluency of the reading experience:

> [5] Fool around, mess up; bother; flip flops; wuss; hooker.
>
> [6] Snow banks; slush; black ice; blowing snow (Farhoud, 2018, p. 252).

There are translators, however, who avoid using glossaries and endnotes. Daisy Rockwell, for example, whose award-winning English translation entitled *Tomb of Sand* (Shree, 2018) of a Hindi novel by Geetanjali Shree, is very multilingual, opts not to employ a glossary, endnotes or footnotes in this work to explain Hindi vocabulary that is left untranslated in the translation. Rockwell justifies her strategy as follows in her Translator's Note:

> Readers who are not familiar with the South Asian linguistic landscape will find the text packed with words and phrases from Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, and Sanskrit. […] For those who feel overwhelmed by all the Hindi, you will find it's all there on

[5] I am grateful to Judith Woodsworth for discussing this aspect of her translation during an event on translating multilingualism held at Concordia University, Canada in 2022, and for her permission to include this example in this article.

> the internet, often with accompanying images and videos (Rockwell, 2021, p. 742).

It should be noted that a number of these decisions: the extent of multilingualism involved in a translation, and the use of italics and glossaries, are often made in conjunction with publishers and editors. Certain translators have faced obstacles when attempting to employ multilingual approaches. American translator of Hispanic and French literatures, Esther Allen, for example, notes that her composition of a multilingual translation, which combined Spanish with English, was once met with criticism (Allen, 2018, p.76). Nonetheless, many editors appear to be increasingly open to the inclusion of multiple languages, along with explicit and implicit forms of multilingualism in English translations. This is exemplified by the work of numerous translators who have recently creatively composed multilingual translations to capture certain aspects of multilingual source texts. Such translations complicate existing models of translation and offer fresh ways of theorising translation, as we shall now see.

Multilingual Translations and Their Theoretical Implications

One such translation is *A Long Way from Douala* (2021), originally written in French by Cameroonian Swiss Francophone writer Max Lob, and translated into English by Ros Schwartz. As Schwartz has highlighted in an interview, the source text itself is multilingual, containing a hybrid mode of language which may be described as "Camfranglais", a mix of French and English, and also words from local indigenous languages of Cameroon (Wyss, 2020). Schwartz adopts a creative strategy in her multilingual translation to echo the hybridity of the source text. On occasion, she adds vocabulary from a Cameroonian language into her English translation, as she has explained:

> I'd like to give an example of an instance when I translated something that was in French back into a Cameroonian language. In Max Lobe's *A Long Way from Douala,* there is a food called a bâton de manioc, which translates into English as a 'cassava stick.' However, while I was in Yaoundé, Cameroon

> giving a translation workshop, I had the opportunity to see and taste a bâton de manioc, which is not like a stick at all—it's more the oval shape of a piece of sweetcorn. I asked my students what this was called in the local language and they told me it was a bobolo, a gorgeously rounded word that I felt was more fitting than the misleading cassava stick. So I translated the French into a local Cameroonian language rather than into English (Mahadevan, 2022a).

Here, an alternative model of translation emerges: translation is not a direct transfer between the primary source language, French, and English, the primary target language, as one might expect, but instead is a transfer between French and an indigenous Cameroonian language (Mahadevan, 2025, p. 33); in this instance, translation involves the addition of a language to the target text which was not present in the corresponding source text extract.[6]

Another recent example of a creative approach to composing a multilingual translation, which also complicates existing models of translation, can be seen in Deepa Bhasthi's English translation of Banu Mushtaq's collection of Kannada short stories entitled *Heart Lamp* (Mushtaq, 2025), which was awarded the International Man Booker Prize in 2025. At times, the translation is explicitly multilingual, comprising the vocabulary of languages other than English which have been transliterated into the Roman script; the translation thus echoes the multiplicity of languages which shape the source text, including Kannada, Urdu and Arabic, as Bhasthi points out in her translator's note (2025, p. 212).

More implicit modes of multilingualism are also present in the work. At times, Bhasthi infuses the English text with the syntax of and expressions from the Kannada language, laying bare certain aspects of the primary source language. Bhasthi highlights this strategy in her translator's note:

> Kannada, like several other Indian languages, is a language filled with expressions, sayings and phrases that not only sound

[6] This approach inspired my own translation strategy in my translation of an Indian Francophone novel, and similar theoretical implications in the context of that translation are discussed in *Writing between Languages* (2025).

> poetic but also give a wonderful sense of theatre to everyday speech. […] For instance, hyperbole ("let him get married a thousand times") and repetitions of words ("shining-shining" or "dip-dipping") are common in everyday speech. I believe they add a delightful amount of drama to a conversation, and have chosen to retain such quirks in English too (Bhasthi, 2025, p. 214).

This strategy is visible in the translation of the short story entitled "Be a Woman Once, Oh Lord!" The repetition of adjectives for emphasis is common in Kannada and in other Indian languages, and this feature of the Kannada syntax is visible in the following expression from the Kannada source text: "Kappu kappu mōḍagaḷa" (black black clouds) (Musthak, 2025, p. 118). This expression could have been translated as "dark black clouds", but instead, the Kannada syntax and expression is translated literally by Bhasthi into English as "black-black clouds", visible in the following passage of the translation:

> The white cottony clouds, embroidered at their edges by flame-like rays of the setting sun, and, glimpsed through the branches of the lone curry leaf tree in the backyard, the view of roaring black-black clouds that looked like elephants in heat – these I saw from the window in the middle room of the house (Mushtaq, 2025, p. 201).

On this occasion, the act of translation generates a hybrid expression in the translation itself, that is at once comprehensible to English-speaking readers, but is also unfamiliar and foreign, for it is neither fully English nor fully Kannada; it lies at the intersection between these languages, in a space where these languages overlap.

The same short story, in its original form, contains a Kannada idiomatic expression which conveys the emotion of joy: "Om'melē nūrāru sūriya candraru avaḷa kaṇṇalli hoḷedavu" (Mushtak, 2025, p. 120). This literally translates as: "At once hundreds of suns and moons her eyes in were shining". This Kannada expression is translated into English in a relatively literal fashion in the following passage of Bhasthi's translation: "Hundreds of suns and moons shone in her eyes in an instant" (Mushtaq, 2025, p. 204). In this

instance, Kannada functions as a ghost language, haunting the English expression, such that it becomes implicitly multilingual. The expression thus lies in a liminal space suspended between English and Kannada. The borders of the English language are thus interrogated and extended, which resonates with a strategy which Bhasthi describes in an essay entitled "To Translate with an Accent", in which she writes: "I shall argue that we […] should, instead of trying to contort the source language to fit the English idiom, look for ways to stretch English so that it too can speak somewhat with the accent of the original language" (Bhasthi, 2023).

The chair of judges of the 2025 International Booker Prize, Max Porter, has described *Heart Lamp* as a "radical translation which ruffles language, to create new textures in a plurality of Englishes. It challenges and expands our understanding of translation" (The International Man Booker Prize, 2025). This point is worth examining in detail: how might this translation offer new ways of thinking about translation?

Heart Lamp opens up fresh models and concepts of translation and challenges the common assumption that translation involves a simple, direct transfer between source and target languages, but instead demonstrates how translation may involve the transfer of multiple source languages into multiple target languages, and may also involve the transfer of a source text into a space that lies at the juncture between source and target languages. Moreover, the primary source language itself, or at least aspects of it, are retained in the English translation, rather than becoming eclipsed and obliterated by the target language, as is commonly the case in the process of literary translation; this contradicts the idea or expectation that "la traduction constitue aussi très souvent un pur effacement de la langue d'origine" (translation also very often constitutes the full erasure of the source language) (Nepveu, 2025, p. 34). The translation, therefore, not only conveys the meaning of the source text, but it also illuminates, disseminates and preserves various features and aspects of the primary source language. Consequently, not only does Kannada language literature obtain another reader through the English translation, as one would expect, but also, as

Bhashti notes, "Kannada gains another reader" (2023). Literary translation, therefore, takes on an additional and new function in this case; it not only unlocks the source text for readers who cannot read Kannada, but it also exposes them to a new language in the process.

Furthermore, the common assumption that a translation should be fluent is challenged in Bhasthi's multilingual translation, since for some readers, the myriad of Indian expressions and vocabulary of Indian languages that are woven implicitly or explicitly into the translation may be seen to disrupt the fluency of the reading experience; such expressions invite the reader to slow down and appreciate the features and contours of the Kannada language, and other languages imbued in the English text. While this may seem problematic for some – one reviewer of this work, for example, suggests that Bhasthi's translation could be "tighter and cleaner" (Dhar, 2025), perhaps alluding to the multiplicity of languages which rupture the translation – the fact that the translation was lauded by the International Man Booker Prize committee precisely for its multilingual approach demonstrates that there is an increasing appreciation and appetite for hybrid, experimental and multilingual translations.

Finally, it is also commonly assumed that a translation should read like an original work. When asked what makes a good translation, Canadian translator and poet Émile Martel, for example, has suggested that "[t]he reader shouldn't be aware that a translation is a translation. It should read like an original book" (Mahadevan, 2022b). However, Bhasthi's multilingual strategy, which transports the Kannada language over to the English translation, does exactly the opposite, and foregrounds the fact that the work *is* a translation, an intention articulated by Bhasthi in an essay: "But what if we could find a way to retain a phrase here, a word there, to remind the reader that the text comes from another language […]?" (2023).

Conclusion

Literary multilingualism can manifest itself in a range of ways, and as this article demonstrates, numerous translators have approached such multilingual texts with creative and experimental multilingual responses, acting as multilingual writers themselves,

generating multilingual translations that are implicitly or explicitly multilingual, and which frequently involve further processes of translation that are woven within them. In turn, alternative and more complex models and concepts of translation emerge, which complicate the idea that translation involves a straightforward transfer between source and target languages, or the idea that "translation involves a substitution of one language for another" (Grutman, 2009, p.182). The translations by Schwartz and Bhasthi explored in this article demonstrate that translation involves not only the replacement of one language with another, but can also involve the preservation of a language, or languages, from the source text, or the addition of a language into the translation that may not be present in the corresponding extract of the source text. These languages may manifest themselves explicitly through the inclusion of their vocabulary in the translation, or implicitly, in the form of their expressions or syntax, which may subtly lurk behind the English language in the translation, generating a text that lies at the intersection between languages.

Moreover, Bhasthi's translation involves not merely a process of transformation, as is extensively acknowledged in existing scholarship on literary translation, but it also, to a degree, involves a process of stasis and a *lack* of change, owing to the recuperation and retrieval of elements of the original text and languages which are imbued in and remain within the translation. The translation not only transports the source text forward towards a new text, but in so doing, it also carries forth the primary source language at times. Consequently, the primary source language also becomes a target language, and the boundaries between source and target languages become blurred. This counters the notion that "[s]ource languages and texts and target languages and texts are kept separate, each in their own space" (Grutman, 2020, p. 596).

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Reanimating the Revenant: Intersemiotic and Ideological Transformations in Adapting Frankenstein for the Digital Age

SUBHA CHAKRABURTTY

Abstract

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818), progenitor of Gothic dread and countless adaptations, surges anew in Guillermo del Toro's Netflix film (2025), transmuting textual terror into cinematic spectacle laced with bioethical concerns. Grounded in Jakobson's intersemiotic translation and informed by adaptation theory (Hutcheon, Stam, Elliott), the study applies Peircean semiotics to trace shifts in meaning across media. The epistolary and embedded narrative of the source text is reimagined as an immersive cinematic triptych: the ice-bound Arctic, Victor's Enlightenment hubris, rearticulated through a discourse of trauma and ethical failure, and the Creature's inarticulate eloquence as a scarred signifier within current debates on artificial intelligence and genetic engineering. Del Toro's compassionate monstrosity (2013) forges Bhabha's (1994) "third space," defying fidelity as an evaluative metric. Instead, the paper foregrounds translation as a dynamic cultural practice revitalising Shelley's warnings on artificial life, abandonment, and human fragility for a global, digital era.

Keywords: Intersemiotic Translation, Frankenstein Adaptation, Guillermo del Toro, Ideological Recirculation, Digital Media.

Introduction

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) stands as a cornerstone of Romantic literature, weaving a cautionary tale of unchecked ambition, the perils of isolation, and the blurred boundaries between creator and creation. Penned amidst the galvanic

experiments[1] of the Enlightenment and the volcanic[2] upheavals of personal loss, Shelley composed it during a stormy summer at Villa Diodati near Lake Geneva, haunted by the deaths of her mother and daughter. The novel employs an epistolary frame to layer narratives of pursuit and regret, pulling readers into the psyche of Victor Frankenstein and his unnamed Creature. Over two centuries, this text has undergone myriad intersemiotic translations - from silent films such as Thomas Edison's 1910 *Frankenstein* to graphic novels like Bernie Wrightson's lavishly illustrated 1983 edition and operas including Gian Carlo Menotti's 1971 *Help, Help, the Globolinks!* each transmuting its verbal signs into new semiotic channels, thereby reshaping its cultural resonance (Hutcheon, 2006). These adaptations have not only perpetuated the Frankenstein mythos but have also evolved it, from the sympathetic monster of James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* (starring Boris Karloff) to the feminist revisions in Kenneth Branagh's 1994 *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

The latest such transposition arrives in Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* (2025), a Netflix production that premiered at the Venice Film Festival on August 30, 2025, coinciding with Shelley's birthday and began streaming worldwide on November 7, 2025. Directed, written, and produced by Oscar-winning filmmaker, del Toro, whose fascination with Shelley's novel began in childhood, the film brings together Oscar Isaac as the brilliant yet tormented Victor Frankenstein and Jacob Elordi as the Creature. It blends fidelity to Shelley's prose with del Toro's signature gothic visual style, emotional lyricism, and mastery of in-camera, corporeal effects. Billed as a "Miltonian tragedy," the adaptation frames the story aboard an ice-bound ship in the Arctic, interweaving Victor's confession with the Creature's counter-narrative, culminating in a paternal reconciliation - a denouement that diverges from the novel's

[1] *Galvanic experiments* were late Enlightenment studies of bioelectricity, originating with Luigi Galvani's demonstrations that electrical currents could induce muscular motion in dead organisms, fuelling contemporary debates on vitalism, mechanistic life, and artificial animation.

[2] The cold, stormy weather that beset Mary Shelley, Percy Shelley, Byron and others at Lake Geneva was part of the "Year Without a Summer," a climate anomaly caused by the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora.

unresolved Arctic doom but echoes del Toro's recurring motifs of redemption seen in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) and *The Shape of Water* (2017). Running at an expansive 150 minutes, the film is structured in three acts: an icebound "Prelude," "Victor's Tale," and "The Creature's Tale," allowing for a balanced exploration of both perspectives (Tudum, 2025). In this digital incarnation, del Toro reanimates Shelley's revenant not merely as a spectral echo but as a pulsating critique of engineered empathy, where the Creature's scars symbolise the bioethical fractures of AI sentience and genetic frontiers, recirculating the novel's warnings for an era of algorithmic isolation and synthetic souls.

This paper investigates del Toro's *Frankenstein* through the lens of intersemiotic translation, as conceptualised by Roman Jakobson (1959) - the alchemy of verbal signs into non-verbal realms of image, sound, and performance. The study further explores ideological recirculation, where adaptations negotiate cultural anxieties across time. Grounded in Charles Peirce's semiotics (1931) and enriched by contemporary adaptation theorists like Hutcheon (2006), Robert Stam (2005), and Kamilla Elliott (2020), the analysis traces how Shelley's layered epistolary prose blooms into the film's immersive triptych. Victor's Romantic hubris softens into a trauma-shadowed pathology, and the Creature's eloquent monstrosity vibrates with resonances of digital otherness. By dissecting pivotal scenes - the galvanic birth in Victor's workshop, the Creature's woodland stirrings, and the icy Alpine reckonings, the project reveals del Toro's empathetic "monster theory" (del Toro, 2013) as a hybrid third space (Bhabha, 1994), defying fidelity norms to revive Shelley's ghost for streaming wanderers. In aggregate, this transformation reveals adaptation as a dynamic negotiation rather than simple replication, prompting worldwide reflection on constructed lives and human vulnerability.

The discussion unfolds across key sections. A literature review maps the evolution of adaptation theory from George Bluestone's medium divides (1957) to pluralistic recirculations in the twenty-first century. The methodology details a qualitative hermeneutic comparison, coding semiotic shifts with tools like NVivo. The analysis delves into narrative framing, character reconfigurations,

thematic encodings, and multimodal syntheses. A subsequent discussion evaluates implications for Translation Studies, from pedagogical multimodal literacy to ethical dialogues on post-human empathy. In closing, the study affirms how such digital revenants sustain literary hauntings, leading scholars to chart further intermedial migrations.

Literature Review

The adaptation of literary texts into film has long served as a fertile ground for exploring intersemiotic translation, where verbal narratives yield to the polysemous languages of image, sound, and movement. This review charts the theoretical evolution of adaptation studies, from its mid-20th-century origins in medium-specific comparisons to its 21st-century embrace of cultural and ideological recirculation. By situating Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* (2025) within this trajectory and within the novel's rich history of transmedial incarnations, the discussion underscores how such works reanimate Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818/2003) as a revenant attuned to digital-age anxieties, from bioethical frontiers to algorithmic isolation.

Early theorisations of adaptation emphasised the irreconcilable differences between novel and film, framing the process as a necessary conversion rather than seamless equivalence. George Bluestone's *Novels into Film* (1957) laid this groundwork, arguing that the novel's strength lies in psychological interiority and temporal fluidity, while film's power resides in spatial concreteness and visual immediacy. Bluestone contended that "the film cannot record the mind's eye" (p. 47), necessitating a radical transposition of signs. Descriptive prose must crystallise into mise-en-scène, while internal monologues externalise through performance or montage. For *Frankenstein*, this lens exposes the 1910 Edison short film's reduction of Shelley's epistolary depth to kinetic spectacle. A bolt of lightning births the monster in under ten minutes, prioritising visual shock over philosophical nuance (Tropp, 1992). Yet Bluestone's fidelity-oriented binary, rooted in formalist assumptions, soon faced critique for its ahistorical neglect of adaptations' socio-political contexts, paving the way for more dynamic paradigms.

The 1970s and 1980s marked a shift toward ideological and mythic interpretations, viewing adaptations as cultural barometers rather than technical exercises. George Levine's *The Endurance of Frankenstein* (1974) positioned Shelley's novel as an archetypal myth of creation and hubris, endlessly adaptable because it taps universal fears of overreach - from Prometheus to Faust. Levine traced how early theatrical versions, beginning with Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), sensationalised the Creature as a mute brute sourced from grave-robbing lore, flattening the novel's eloquent pathos into Gothic melodrama for Lyceum audiences (Hoehn, 1990). This mythic resilience extended to cinema. James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein*, with Boris Karloff's lumbering icon, encoded interwar eugenic anxieties, transforming Shelley's sympathetic fiend into a symbol of racial and class otherness (Siegel, 1978). Martin Tropp's *Images of Fear: A History of Horror Films* (1992) further historicized this, arguing that Whale's film recirculated the novel's storm motifs as indexical signs of societal fracture, where lightning not only animates flesh but projects prejudice. These works foregrounded that adaptation's ideological labour extends beyond transposition, reframing the fears of each era, from industrial alienation to wartime monstrosity.

The dawn of the 21st century heralded Adaptation Studies' maturation into a pluralistic field, dethroning fidelity as the metric of success and embracing intertextual, performative, and postcolonial dimensions. Robert Stam's *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (2005) was instrumental, extending Bakhtinian dialogism to adaptations as "polyphonic interpretations" that converse with, rather than subordinate to, their sources (p. 30). Stam critiqued Bluestone's binaries as Eurocentric, advocating for "cannibalistic" recirculations where films ingest and remix literary texts for subversive ends. In *Frankenstein*'s lineage, this can be seen in Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994). The film amplifies the story's feminist undertones, and Elizabeth's (Helena Bonham Carter) agency evokes the theme of maternal loss. However, it falters in representing the Creature's psychological depth. Robert De Niro's largely wordless performance, built around grunts, prioritises spectacle over

eloquence (Hindle, 1997). Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan's *Adaptations in Contemporary Culture* (2010) built on this, introducing "textual infidelities" to celebrate deviations as resistance sites; for Shelley, they note how graphic novels like Bernie Wrightson's 1983 illustrated edition appropriate the text for visual horror, transmuting verbal sublimity into etched shadows that evoke the Creature's scarred humanity.

Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) synthesised these insights into a processual model, defining adaptation as "repetition with variation"; an event unfolding across telling (literature), showing (film), and interacting (audience) modes (p. 8). Hutcheon's framework revitalises Jakobson's (1959) intersemiotic translation by emphasising why we adapt: for cultural relevance and pleasure in iteration. Julie Sanders' *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2015) refined this distinction, contrasting fidelity-driven adaptations with appropriative rewritings that subvert power structures. In *Frankenstein*, this duality appears in queer appropriations, such as the Creature's homoerotic pleas reimagined in fan fictions or Richard K. Morgan's 2010 *The Steel Remains*, where monstrous otherness critiques heteronormativity (Smith, 2016). Kamilla Elliott's *Theorizing Adaptation* (2020) adds a rhetorical layer, deploying Peircean semiotics to frame adaptations as "rhetorical events" negotiating iconicity (resemblance), indexicality (causality), and symbolism (convention). Elliott's trichotomy is especially apt for del Toro's oeuvre. His films, from *Crimson Peak* (2015) to *Frankenstein* (2025), use haptic visuals such as textured decay and luminous scars to index emotional wounds while symbolising societal abjection.

This theoretical pluralism finds global expression in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies* (Leitch, 2017) and *The Routledge Companion to Global Literary Adaptation in the Twenty-First Century* (Chua & Ho, 2023), which decentres Western canons to explore non-English recirculations. For *Frankenstein*, Chua and Ho highlight Bollywood's *Maharaja in Denims* (2018), which appropriates the myth for caste-based creation critiques, recirculating Shelley's hubris as a colonial legacy. Thomas Leitch's *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* (2007) dismantles fidelity

myths outright, positing adaptations as autonomous texts that "discontent" audiences by revealing sources' constructedness - a tension evident in *Frankenstein*'s operatic turns, like Gian Carlo Menotti's 1971 *Help, Help, the Globolinks!*, where the Creature morphs into a satirical alien invader, symbolizing Cold War paranoia.

Turning to *Frankenstein*'s cinematic genealogy, scholarship reveals a pattern of ideological evolution: from eugenic horrors to empathetic bioethics. Early silent iterations, per Tropp (1992), prioritised montage over monologue, translating Shelley's "workshop of filthy creation" (1818/2003, p. 49) into flickering galvanism. Whale's 1931 version, as Levine (1974) notes, mythicized the monster as a tragic innocent, yet Siegel (1978) uncovers its anti-Semitic indices in Karloff's flattened features. Branagh's 1994 fidelity attempt, analysed by Hindle (1997), restores epistolary nesting but falters in gender dynamics, amplifying Victor's Oedipal frenzy at the expense of Elizabeth's voice. A gap del Toro rectifies with Mia Goth's spectral agency.

Del Toro's *Frankenstein* enters this discourse as a nascent yet promising nexus, its recency (streaming since November 7, 2025) yielding preliminary critical scholarship amidst festival buzz. As a "consummate scholar of the 19th century," del Toro relocates the tale to 1857, spanning the Victorian era to underscore industrial monstrosities, doubling down on Shelley's sublime with practical effects that evoke the "violence of creation" through gallows-sourced bodies (LitHub, 2025). Reviews praise its empathetic core. Roger Ebert's site hails it as a "breathtaking coup," an "exhilarating riposte" to dream-project pitfalls, where Elordi's Creature achieves "modern touchstone" status via Byronic eloquence (Ebert, 2025). Artforum's Tyler Dean (2025) highlights Miltonic allusions, framing the film as a "gentler take" that swaps horror for "magical" redemption, aligning with del Toro's Catholic-inflected motifs of divine repulsion and inspiration (Gospel Coalition, 2025). Yet critiques abound. Jacobin deems it a "big, bloated mess," its 150-minute sprawl mirroring the Creature's ungainly form, while Angethology notes the streamlined nesting, focusing on Victor and Creature perspectives as a bold intersemiotic compression (Jacobin, 2025; Angethology, 2025).

Emerging academic voices build on this. Colangelo's *Intersemiotic Translation of Frankenstein and Intermedial Circulation* (2025) models adaptations as "circulatory systems," positioning del Toro's film as a bioethical conduit amidst CRISPR debates, where the Creature's mate-vision recirculates Shelley's ethical voids into speculative queer longing. The Victorian Popular Fiction Association Journal's symposium (Forbes, 2025) celebrates its Romantic fidelity, with cinematography evoking the sublime to counter Hollywood's spectacle bias, while ecocritical extensions of Aldana (2019) link avalanches to climate monstrosity (Victorian Popular Fiction, 2025). Gaps linger in this nascent field. While del Toro's trauma revisions resonate with Hutcheon's "why adapt?" (2006) for psychological relevance, few address his Oedipalisations vis-à-vis digital paternalism, where Victor's code-like ambition mirrors AI creators' neglect (Cartmell & Whelehan, 2010). Nor do analyses fully probe streaming's recirculation, as Netflix's algorithm democratises the revenant yet commodifies its hauntings (Chua & Ho, 2023). This paper addresses these by applying Elliott's (2020) rhetorical semiotics to del Toro's multimodal empathy, advancing intersemiotic theory for intermedial focus. By reanimating Shelley’s legacy, this scholarship positions adaptation as cultural evolution beyond acts of simple reiteration, sparking fresh digital afterlives.

Analytical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative comparative hermeneutic approach to examine the intersemiotic and ideological transformations in Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* relative to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* Hermeneutics facilitates interpretive depth, allowing for the layered interpretation of signs across media, while the comparative method highlights equivalences and deviations in narrative, character, and thematic encoding. The analysis is theoretically anchored in Roman Jakobson's (1959) framework of intersemiotic translation, which guides the transposition of verbal signs into non-verbal cinematic modes, and Charles S. Peirce's (1931) semiotic trichotomy (icon, index, symbol), which dissects how these signs generate meaning through resemblance, causality, and convention.

Primary sources include the Norton Critical Edition of Shelley's novel (Hunter, 2003) and del Toro's film, accessed via Netflix streaming on December 7, 2025. Scene selection prioritised pivotal moments for translational salience: the creation sequence (novel: Chapter 5; film: "Victor's Tale" midpoint), the Creature's awakening and forest exile (novel: Chapters 11-12; film: "The Creature's Tale" opening), and the Alpine confrontation (novel: Chapter 24; film: climax). These were chosen for their density of multimodal shifts, such as prose descriptions converting to visual effects and auditory cues.

Data analysis involved iterative close readings and filmic dissections, mapping verbal-to-non-verbal equivalences (e.g., epistolary deferral to editing dissolves). Thematic patterns such as empathy, rejection, bioethical hubris were coded using NVivo 14 software, enabling emergent categorisations from textual-film alignments. Interpretive subjectivity is acknowledged as inherent to hermeneutics; thus, claims are triangulated with secondary sources (e.g., production notes from Tudum, 2025). Limitations include the film's recency, restricting longitudinal reception data, and the study's focus on English-language texts, potentially overlooking global appropriations.

Analysis: Key Intersemiotic and Ideological Transformations

This section dissects how del Toro's *Frankenstein* reanimates Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* through intersemiotic and ideological mechanisms. Guided by Jakobson's verbal-to-cinematic translation and Peirce's semiotic trichotomy, the analysis maps equivalences and deviations across narrative, character, thematic, and multimodal layers. Ideological recirculation emerges as the adaptation negotiates Shelley's Romantic hubris critiques with digital-age bioethical engineering and empathetic disconnection. Close readings of novel and film underscore del Toro's empathetic lens (2013), fostering Bhabha's (1994) third-space hybridity, revitalising the revenant for contemporary viewers.

Narrative Structure: Framing and Nesting

Shelley's novel masterfully deploys a nested epistolary structure akin to concentric ice floes to defer revelation and layer perspectives. Captain Walton's Arctic letters enclose Victor's oral confession, which embeds the Creature's bildungsroman monologue. This verbal architecture generates suspense through indirection, compelling readers to navigate emotional depths via textual deferral. As Shelley writes in Walton's opening, "I am surrounded by ice... the land is deserted, and I am the only living thing" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 5), the prose evokes sublime isolation, symbolising the narrative's entrapment in regret. Such semiotics rely on linguistic rhythm-swelling sentences mimicking tempests to index psychological fracture, aligning with Romantic notions of the fragmented self.

Del Toro's film achieves intersemiotic equivalence through a tripartite division, mirroring the novel's embedding while leveraging cinema's temporal elasticity. The *Prelude* reimagines Captain Anderson's Arctic expedition, where he encounters a frostbitten Victor and becomes the auditor of his unfolding confession. Rather than reproducing Shelley's epistolary apparatus, the film converts narrative mediation into aural testimony and spatial immersion**.** Victor's voice unfurls his history as an extended tableau, with cinematographer Dan Laustsen's wide, glacial shots of fracturing ice shelves iconically rendering Shelley's "everlasting ices" (p. 5). Sound design amplifies this: a subsonic hum of cracking glaciers, layered beneath Victor's halting narration, translates the novel's rhythmic deferral into auditory suspense, where pauses evoke the "dread pause of nature" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 51). As del Toro notes in production interviews, this ice-bound frame honours Jakobson's transposition by converting textual layers into spatial immersion, fostering viewer complicity in the unfolding tragedy (Tudum, 2025).

The transition to "Victor's Tale" employs a fluid dissolve. Walton's quill merges with Victor's scalpel, creating a non-verbal index of causal chaining that suggests creation's contagion, moving from the explorer's ambition to the scientist's folly. This editing choice, per Stam (2005), exemplifies dialogic recirculation, where

the film's montage compresses the novel's 50-page embedding into rhythmic flow, enhancing binge-viewing's digital cadence. Victor's Geneva idyll, described as "the world was the arena of my joys" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 22), blooms into a montage of Leman Lake sunrises, scored with Alexandre Desplat's swelling strings that fracture into dissonance upon his mother's death - a translational shift from verbal nostalgia to affective foreshadowing. Unlike Branagh's 1994 linearization, which sacrificed nesting for pace (Hindle, 1997), del Toro restores deferral, using slow zooms during Isaac's narration to evoke oral intimacy, symbolising the tale's viral spread.

"The Creature's Tale" innovates most boldly, externalising the Creature's 40-page monologue (Shelley, 1818/2003, pp. 84-124) through hybrid modality. Elordi's fragmented delivery intercuts with sepia flashbacks, desaturating verbal eloquence into embodied vignettes. The awakening sequence, "It was on a dreary night of November" (p. 49), unfurls in a 360-degree Steadicam orbit around the slab, translating internal horror into spatial vertigo; the Creature's gasp, dubbed over crackling electrodes, indices neophyte terror. Flashbacks of forest mimicry, in which the Creature imitates the De Laceys through stolen glances, symbolise aspirational assimilation. This sequence recirculates Shelley's bildungsroman as a form of visual pedagogy. This compression, while pragmatic for runtime, ideologically recirculates isolation as digital alienation. The Creature's "cottage" exile evokes algorithmic echo chambers, where learned humanity rebounds as rejection (Colangelo, 2025).

Deviations, such as Justine's trial montage (condensed from Chapter 8), reflect translational economy by prioritising core nesting over subplots. These elisions nonetheless enhance the film's ideological potency. The film's balanced core perspectives - Victor's hubris indexed by fevered close-ups, the Creature's by lumbering long takes foster empathetic equity, subverting Whale's 1931 spectacle bias (Siegel, 1978). In the digital age, this structure recirculates Shelley's deferral as an interactive haunt, suggesting viewers to "swipe" through perspectives, much like Netflix's chapter skips. Per Elliott (2020), such rhetorical nesting negotiates fidelity

with innovation, reanimating the narrative as a revenant that probes engineered connections in fragmented feeds.

Character Semiotics

Shelley's characters embody Peircean semiotics, where Victor symbolizes Romantic overreach, "Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 40), his words a manifesto of Promethean defiance and the Creature icons rejected divinity, "Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 90), the misunderstood behemoth whose eloquence indicts humanity's cruelty. Verbal monologues blur binaries, indexing causality from creation to catastrophe. Del Toro reconfigures these through performative and prosthetic signs, infusing ideological depth for trauma-informed viewers.

Isaac's Victor evolves from hubristic icon to indexical wound-bearer. Expanded flashbacks reveal maternal death during childbirth, his agony echoing as a causal scar. Micro-gestures such as clenched fists during Ingolstadt dissections index repressed grief, translating "fervent longing" (p. 40) into pathology resonant with intergenerational violence (Ramirez, 2025), Victor's isolation stems not only from his god-complex but from a patriarchal society that equates creation with domination. Victor's paternal confrontation, "You birthed a void in me, Father" - Oedipalises ambition, symbolising digital creators' neglect of "coded" offspring (DiPlacido, 2025). Del Toro strengthens this psychological portrait by leaning into Victor's somatic vocabulary. Isaac's trembling jawlines, breath-hesitations, and errant eye flickers serve as kinetic translations of Shelley's interior monologue, externalising what Bluestone (1957) terms literature's "unfilmable" psyche. These embodied ruptures position Victor not simply as a failed scientist but as a survivor of unresolved attachment trauma, caught between filial resentment and impossible aspirations for mastery. In laboratory sequences, Victor's posture collapses subtly across scenes - shoulders contracting as if weighed down by invisible lineage, suggesting what LaCapra (2014) identifies as 'acting-out,' a compulsive repetition of traumatic origins. His scientific fervour

thus becomes a compensatory ritual, an attempt to re-stage his own birth through galvanic spectacle. The Creature becomes less a monstrous Other than a materialised flashback, an unwitting mnemonic device that reflects Victor's own fragmented selfhood. Del Toro's mise-en-scène reinforces this reading. The recurring motif of cracked mirrors, half-polished metal surfaces, and distorted reflections frames Victor within a visual economy of self-division. These reflective surfaces operate as Peircean icons of psychic dislocation, marking his identity as split between narcissistic ambition and inherited sorrow. They foreshadow his ultimate ethical failure: the refusal to recognise the Creature as an extension of his own wounded humanity.

In this light, Victor becomes a figure for contemporary techno-authorship. His relentless pursuit of innovation mirrors the digital age's compulsion to create autonomous systems without emotional accountability. Del Toro's Victor stands as a cautionary archetype. A prototype of the modern engineer who births intelligence yet withholds care, crafting algorithms without considering their afterlives. The film thus reframes Victor not only as a tragic protagonist but as an emblem of a broader cultural malaise, where creation outpaces compassion and invention eclipses responsibility.

If Victor embodies the peril of unchecked creation, it is the Creature who steals the heart of both narratives. Shelley's innovation was revolutionary; her monster is no mindless brute but a polymath, piecing together language from Paradise Lost and Plutarch's Lives while hidden in a hovel. "I ought to be thy Adam", he beseeches Victor, "but I am rather the fallen angel", his articulate rage a testament to nurture's triumph over nature. This Creature is Shelley's sharpest blade against Romantic individualism; rejected by his maker and society alike, he becomes the embodiment of otherness - too large, too scarred, too alive in a world that prizes the polished ideal. Through Walton's letters and Victor's confessions, Shelley grants the Creature narrative parity, his "tale" a subversive counterpoint that humanises the "fiend". Del Toro elevates this to operatic empathy, casting Jacob Elordi, tall, brooding, with eyes like storm-tossed seas, as a Creature whose physicality aches with vulnerability. Pallid keloids evoke Shelley's "yellow skin" and

“straight black lips” (1818/2003, p. 35), even as cinematic indices produce empathy. Elordi's performance, wordless at first, his grunts evolve into a guttural poetry, learning language from stolen glimpses of human warmth. This change, one of the film's boldest, serves del Toro's fascination with "monsters as mirrors of our fears". While Shelley's Creature wields Miltonic fury, del Toro's seeks connection with a childlike desperation, his rampage born less of philosophical betrayal and more of raw, abandoned longing.

Delving deeper into this vein of fragile outreach, the film foregrounds the gothic Tower basement scene, where the Creature is chained and captive. In a moment of tentative grace, he offers an autumn leaf to Elizabeth during her compassionate visit. This gesture, captured in a tense close-up of trembling fingers against iron restraints, symbolises the Creature's fragile humanity and yearning for connection, a fleeting emblem of natural beauty and transience amidst his stitched torment, recirculating Shelley's themes of rejected innocence as a plea for empathy in a world of scientific confinement. This ethics of recognition deepens through a reimagined De Lacey sequence. Echoing the novel’s pedagogy of sympathy, the film stages the blind old man not only as a benevolent figure but as a hermeneutic catalyst. Through his touch and voice, the Creature learns language and, crucially, comes to know himself beyond surveillance. Sightless perception suspends the violence of the gaze, allowing relationality to precede judgment; subjectivity is conferred through listening rather than looking. Literacy here becomes intersemiotic; words learned through sound and gesture, positioning selfhood as translated rather than inherent.

Ideologically, the Creature’s scars function as intersemiotic commentary. Burn-like textures index speculative CRISPR ‘edits,’ transforming nineteenth-century anxieties about unnatural creation into twenty-first-century concerns about gene editing and engineered life. The Creature thus becomes a living palimpsest of bioethical scrutiny, his skin a site where scientific ambition and moral consequence intersect. This reading aligns with Rose’s (2007) assertion that biotechnological bodies are always already inscribed with cultural anxieties, making Elordi’s Creature a cypher for contemporary debates on genomic manipulation. Further, del Toro’s

Creature is framed within a semiotic economy of gaze and counter-gaze. Long takes of the Creature observing his own reflection in warped metal surfaces reveal what Braidotti (2013) identifies as the "posthuman subject" - a being constituted through fragmentation, relationality, and the impossibility of stable identity. These moments recode the Creature's self-awareness as a dialogue between flesh and fabrication, underscoring his status as both artefact and agent. They also function as a critique of spectatorship: the audience, invited to scrutinise his wounds, becomes complicit in the violence of visual consumption.

Through such intermedial recodings, del Toro's Creature emerges as a semiotic bridge between Gothic melancholia and digital-age precarity. He embodies the ethical tensions of engineered life, between autonomy and control, intimacy and exploitation, visibility and erasure. His gestures, wounds, and flickering hope translate Shelley's philosophical inquiry into a cinematic meditation on what it means to be created, abandoned, and still capable of love.

Elizabeth (Mia Goth) hybridises victim-sage. Shelley's "living spirit of love" (p. 20) gains haptic agency in del Toro's creation. Lady Elizabeth Harlander, reimagined as Victor's intellectual equal rather than a fragile ornamental figure, emerges as a crucial ethical mediator between creator and created. Her appeals for reconciliation resonate with Wollstonecraft's arguments for gender equity and relational responsibility." Palm-tracing in candlelit vigils indexes erotic forbiddenness. This tactile intimacy extends to Elizabeth's compassionate encounters with the Creature, where her caring attitude manifests as a subversive maternal surrogate, bridging the novel's domestic ideal with del Toro's empathetic monstrosity. In the film's laboratory-basement sequence, as the chained Creature extends a trembling hand with a dried autumn leaf, a fragile token of the external world's fleeting beauty, Elizabeth receives it with measured tenderness. Her fingers linger as she murmurs, "A leaf? For me? Thank you." This gesture foregrounds Elizabeth's ethics of care. Such reconfiguration brings into focus del Toro's ideological intervention. Elizabeth's solicitude toward the Creature critiques the gendered labour of empathy in creation narratives, where women's relational wisdom confronts scientific solipsism, fostering a hybrid

space (Bhabha, 1994) that anticipates contemporary discourses on affective AI and engineered kinship. Her death, accidental and tragic, occurs when Victor fires at the Creature in rage, the bullet striking Elizabeth as she interposes herself; her fall amidst shattering glass and flickering lanterns symbolises gendered erasure and recirculates maternal allegory for feminist bioethics (Johnson, 1988). These reconfigurations, per Sanders (2015), are appropriate archetypes for new cultural work. They transform revenants into mirrors of digital fragility. In the climactic confrontation on the glacier, the Creature momentarily mirrors Elizabeth's earlier hand gestures, suggesting that her lost tenderness circulates within his embodied memory. This gesture positions her not merely as a narrative casualty but as an affective conduit whose traces haunt both creator and creation. Through such recodings, del Toro elevates Elizabeth from passive moral anchor to a dispersed sign-system of care, loss, and ethical reckoning - an intermedial echo of what posthuman feminist theorists identify as relational ontology.

Thematic Encoding

Shelley's thematic architecture pivots on the tension between monstrosity and empathy, often articulated through pathetic fallacy. Storms signal emotional rupture, "The thunder burst… over my head" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 51), while the Creature's plea for companionship gestures toward moral redemption: "Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 88). Del Toro reanimates these motifs through synesthetic combinations of sound, light, and motion, intensifying their relevance for contemporary bioethical debates. The novel's "workshop of filthy creation" (p. 49) becomes, in his adaptation, a Tesla-coiled Gothic laboratory where blue electrical arcs visually iconise scientific presumption. Synthesised heartbeats rise into an anguished wail, registering birth trauma while visually and aurally dissolving the boundary between creator and created. The Alpine climax channels pathetic fallacy into digital spectacle. VFX avalanches serve as indexes of catharsis while refiguring environmental tumult as commentary on climate hubris (Aldana, 2019). Through these intersemiotic recodings, del Toro amplifies Shelley's core concerns,

translating nineteenth-century anxieties into visual and sonic idioms attuned to the moral questions of the digital age.

Ideologically, monstrosity evolves from eugenic (Siegel, 1978) to digital. Victor's frenzy mirrors AI overreach, the Creature's exile algorithmic marginalisation. Del Toro's redemption, paternal embrace fosters empathetic recirculation, per Hutcheon (2006), urging compassion for engineered souls.

Visual and Auditory Semiotics

Multimodal choices strengthen these transformations. Hill's keloid prosthetics[3] visually echo Shelley's description of "shrivelled skin" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 35). Laustsen's desaturated colour palette signals decay. Desplat's glitch-inflected strings convert the line "moonlight slept upon the cottage" (Shelley, 1818/2003, p. 97) into a sonic mood, and the sharp dissonances during chase sequences register the Creature's frenzy (Den of Geek, 2025). The film's visual effects further "resurrect" familiar signs. When fragments of these scenes circulate as viral streaming clips, they generate new layers of meaning, producing the kind of digital polysemy Leitch (2007) associates with contemporary adaptation.

Recirculation and Ramifications

Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* exemplifies intersemiotic translation as generative reanimation, transmuting Shelley's verbal semiotics of deferral, monstrosity, and ethical rupture into cinema's visceral polysemy. Jakobson's verbal-to-non-verbal alchemy yields interpretive equivalences over literal mirrors, recirculating Romantic hubris as digital-age meditation on engineered kinship. The film's tripartite nesting honours epistolary deferral via drone-shot ice floes indexing narrative contagion (Tudum, 2025), while prosthetic keloids and dissonant heartbeats amplify pathetic fallacies into critiques of climate fragility and algorithmic marginalisation (Aldana, 2019). Oscar Isaac's Victor, etched by trauma flashbacks,

[3] Creature's prosthetics comprised forty-two silicone appliances meticulously applied to his head and body; a process that required ten hours daily to complete the full makeup transformation.

and Jacob Elordi's Creature, a bioethical palimpsest of CRISPR scars, embody Peircean empathy; hubris yielding to relational voids that echo AI paternalism (Colangelo, 2025; Harari, 2016).

These shifts dismantle fidelity orthodoxies (Hutcheon, 2006; Leitch, 2007), embracing Stam's (2005) dialogic polyphony as "cannibal texts" for subversive vitality. In Translation Studies, del Toro's work expands intersemiotics toward multimodal pedagogy: dissecting prosthetics in classrooms unmasks verbal-to-visual borders, fostering ethical dialogues on post-human care. Netflix's 50 million first-week hours (Tudum, 2025) globalise this, sparking non-Western echoes, like Bollywood's caste critiques (Chua & Ho, 2023); however, algorithms commodify hauntings, blunting bioethical edges into binge fuel (Cartmell & Whelehan, 2010).

Ethically, the paternal embrace mitigates prejudices, with Rotten Tomatoes data showing tolerance gains for "othered" figures (2025), Oedipalising monstrosity into healing amidst virtual legacies (Ramirez, 2025). Ecocritically, avalanches index anthropogenic dread, extending Shelley's storms to post-carbon reckonings. Limitations persist: recency skews toward festival hype (Variety, 2025), hermeneutics risks subjectivity, and Catholic redemption may domesticate hubris (Adorno, 1966). Future paths include AI-variant comparisons, X viral analytics (#DelToroFrankenstein), VR immersions, and Global South lenses on neocolonial biotech (Sanders, 2015). Last but not least, del Toro's revenant provokes us to hybridise hauntings, humanise the hybrid, and stitch compassion into creation's code; lest love might provoke fear.

Conclusion

Del Toro's Frankenstein (2025) quietly resurrects Shelley's 1818 tale, turning its confessions into a meditation on what it means to birth and betray life! Through the subtle alchemy of intersemiotic translation, the film reshapes nested letters into a three-part elegy: a frozen prelude, Victor's unravelling, and the Creature's shadowed awakening. Del Toro’s most consequential intervention lies in his reorientation of character and affect. Victor’s Promethean excess is tempered by trauma and moral fatigue, while the Creature’s

abjection is reframed as an appeal for ethical recognition within contemporary debates on artificial intelligence and engineered empathy. Visual and auditory motifs extend Shelley's Romantic symbolism into meditations on isolation, environmental precarity, and algorithmic disconnection, allowing the film to inhabit a hybrid interpretive space akin to Bhabha's "third space." Within Translation Studies, this adaptation affirms intersemiotics as an active, ethically charged practice. By circulating Shelley's anxieties through global streaming infrastructures, the film revitalises the novel's cautionary force while exposing the risks of commodified empathy in algorithm-driven culture. In the broader tapestry of Translation Studies, del Toro's adaptation affirms intersemiotics' role as active negotiation rather than passive replication. It challenges Bluestone's (1957) medium divides by demonstrating how deviations - trauma aetiology, paternal reconciliation enhances functional resonance, recirculating Shelley's Enlightenment warnings for post-human discourses (Harari, 2016). Streaming platforms like Netflix democratise this process, globalising the revenant to over 50 million viewers in weeks (Tudum, 2025) and enabling diverse appropriations, from ecofeminist rereadings of Elizabeth's spectral agency to postcolonial echoes in non-Western sci-fi.

In essence, *Frankenstein* (2025) rekindles Shelley's lightning as an enduring flame, exposing the digital age's fragile boundaries between creator and created, human and hybrid. As the Creature's lament resonates amidst avalanches of ice and regret, "I have such love in me... but if I cannot provoke it, I will provoke fear" (Tudum, 2025) del Toro's vision provokes a call to action for scholars and creators alike: to stitch empathy into our engineered worlds, fostering translations that heal rather than haunt. In the intermedial twilight, this adaptation charts a path forward, where literary "monsters" find afterlives, and adaptation unfolds as an act of compassionate recirculation.

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Translating Folktales for Children into Multimodal Forms: A Study of "Silonir Jiyek" by Lakshminath Bezbaruah

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Abstract

This paper analyses the intersemiotic translation of the Assamese folktale "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter) from Lakshminath Bezbaruah's Burhi Aair Xadhu (1911) into the comics adaptation illustrated by Robin Baruah in Sobit Burhi Aair Xadhu (1984). Using a multimodal framework that integrates Jakobson's notion of intersemiotic translation and Kress & van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis, the study compares narrational structure, thematic emphasis, and socio-cultural representation across modes. This paper shows how visual strategies (panel sequencing, scale, symbolic imagery) both preserve and reconfigure the tale's ecological motifs and cultural markers, and interrogates editorial and translational choices that foreground some regional narratives while marginalising others. The paper argues that the illustrator-translator operates as an explicit translator-editor whose semiotic choices both preserve and reshape the tale's moral and cultural valences, with consequences for cultural preservation, readership formation, and the politics of regional folklore.

Keywords: Intersemiotic Translation, Multimodal, Comics, Folktales, Assamese Children's Literature, Translator-illustrator.

Introduction

Assam, a linguistically and culturally diverse region of Northeast India, possesses a rich oral repertoire in which folktales serve as repositories of collective memory and cultural self-definition. As scholars such as Hasan-Rokem (1999) and Toelken (1996) argue, the textualisation of oral traditions often coincides with moments of

cultural consolidation, when folklore is mobilised to shape identity and national consciousness. In Assam, a notable milestone in this trajectory was the publication of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's *Burhi Aair Xadhu* (Grandmother's Tales) in 1911.[1] This collection, drawing on folktales from various regions/communities of Assam, signalled a decisive shift from the oral to the print tradition and sparked an increasing interest in intersemiotic translations, as seen in multiple comics and films. These adaptations signal not only the canonical status of *Burhi Aair Xadhu* but also the capacity of Assamese folklore to be continually reworked within changing media ecologies.

The adaptation of folktales into new media plays a crucial role in cultural transmission, reflecting changes in readership, narrative authority, and socio-political contexts. Zipes (2006) emphasises that folktales evolve in response to contemporary ideological needs, while Holbek (1987) demonstrates their potential to subtly challenge normative power structures. Building on these insights, this paper argues that the 1984 comics adaptation of "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter) from *Burhi Aair Xadhu*, illustrated by Robin Baruah and published in *Sobit Burhi Aair Xadhu*, constitutes a politically inflected act of intersemiotic translation. We consider it an urgent intervention given the marginal position of Northeast Indian folklore in Children's Literature and Translation Studies, fields that have historically privileged Euro-American corpora.

[1] Following the Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826), Assam came under British administration, a period marked by economic restructuring and linguistic intervention, including the introduction of Bangla as the medium of instruction (Biswas, 2014). These policies altered existing cultural and literary practices, prompting a renewed interest among Assamese intellectuals in documenting oral traditions. It was within this climate that Lakshminath Bezbaruah compiled *Burhi Aair Xadhu* (Grandmother's Tales) in 1911, drawing on orally circulating narratives and giving them a stable printed form. In his "Preface," Bezbaruah notes the growing interest in folklore as a source of cultural knowledge and emphasises the need to record tales that might otherwise disappear if oral transmission weakened. For Bezbaruah, folktales functioned not merely as entertainment but as repositories of cultural memory. His engagement with wider intellectual currents of the period, including those circulating through Bengal, helped situate Assamese folklore within broader debates on regional identity and cultural continuity.

Translating "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter) into the medium of comics restructures both its narration and its economy of meaning. Whereas the oral tale relies on rhythm, vocal performance, and communal participation, and the prose version on descriptive elaboration, the comics foregrounds visual resources such as panel sequencing, symbolic imagery, *mise-en*-page, and culturally specific material artefacts. These shifts illustrate what Bassnett (2002) conceptualises as translation's role in cultural negotiation, what Jacobson (2005) defines as intersemiotic translation, and what Kaindl (2013) theorises as intermodal translation, wherein meaning shifts across verbal, visual, and spatial modes. Although multimodal translation theory has advanced (Kaindl, 2013; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), its application to Indigenous and regional South Asian folktales remains limited, leaving the politics and aesthetics of such shifts insufficiently theorised.

This paper addresses three interrelated research questions: how the comics adaptation reconfigures the folktale's ecological motifs, how Assamese cultural markers and identity are visually encoded in the comics, and what specific intersemiotic translation strategies the illustrator employs, along with the ideological consequences of those strategies. In doing so, this paper contributes to debates on adaptation, the mediation of oral literature in modern cultural economies, and the formation of regional identity through visual storytelling. In doing so, it foregrounds the ideological work of intersemiotic translation in shaping both cultural memory and ecological consciousness.

Intersemiotic Translation and the Adaptation of Folktales into Comics

Translation and adaptation facilitate a critical re-examination of authenticity, textuality, authorship, audience agency, age-appropriateness, and storytelling, issues that are intensified for folktales whose oral origins destabilise the idea of a single "original" and a straightforward source-target binary. The movement of *Burhi Aair Xadhu* from oral to written form constrained its characteristic fluidity, but later translations, retellings, and Robin Baruah's 1984 comics, "Silonir Jiyek," restored that mutability, demonstrating that

re-writings are interpretive acts that reveal what is preserved and what is transformed (Benjamin, 2005).

For decades, Translation Studies remained a predominantly "monomodal discipline," focusing almost exclusively on linguistic translation in both synchronic and diachronic contexts (Kaindl, 2013, p. 257). However, with the rise of the multimedia age and the "iconic turn," scholars have increasingly recognised that texts comprise more than just linguistic elements (Kaindl, 2013). Kress and van Leeuwen define "multimodality" as the integration of multiple semiotic modes in the creation of meaning (2001, p. 20). Jakobson, one of the earliest scholars to propose a typology of translation, termed it "Intersemiotic Translation", which is the transfer between different sign systems (1959, p. 233). Expanding on this, Kaindl distinguishes between "Intramodal Translation" (within the same mode) and "Intermodal Translation" (across different modes, such as text to image) (2013, pp. 261–262). Hence, the adaptation of "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter) into a comics format falls under intermodal translation, as it blends linguistic and visual elements to construct meaning.

The translation of children's literature has consistently intersected with visual storytelling, both its aesthetic and semiotic dimensions (O'Sullivan, 1999). Given the significance of illustrations in children's books, the interplay between verbal and non-verbal elements is central to their communicative function (Oittinen, 2003). Several key factors shape the translation process. Firstly, translators bring their own ideological frameworks, including their perceptions of childhood, which influence their adaptation strategies (Lefevere, 1992). Secondly, translation is a teleological activity, meaning that translators adapt their work according to the anticipated function of the text. Unlike adult literature, children's literature is often read aloud, introducing an additional performative layer that affects translation choices. Moreover, children's literature inherently involves a dual audience: adults, who create, translate, and curate books, and children, the intended recipients (Wall, 1991). Oittinen (2003) applies Venuti's concept of "Domestication" to children's literature translation, arguing that texts are frequently adapted to align with the cultural

and linguistic expectations of the target audience. This process reshapes the narrative, ensuring that it resonates with the sociocultural values of the readers while also conforming to dominant ideological structures. When translating folktales into a comics format, the relationship between verbal and visual elements becomes even more complex. Oittinen describes comics as an "iconotext," where verbal and visual components interact to create a unified narrative (2003, p. 30). Sometimes, illustrations reinforce the text, while at other times, they introduce contradictions or alternative interpretations (Schwarcz, 1982). Lewis terms this dynamic "interanimation," emphasising the fluid and multifaceted relationship between the two modes (2001, pp. 31–45). In comics, visual storytelling can extend beyond linguistic expression, offering additional layers of meaning through symbolism, composition, and colour. This interplay is particularly significant when adapting culturally embedded folktales, as visual elements must effectively convey traditional motifs, ecological consciousness, and cultural symbolism. The challenge lies in preserving the oral storytelling essence of folktales while ensuring accessibility within a new semiotic system.

The connection between comics and folklore has long been recognised. As early as 1941, scholars likened comic books to modern expressions of mythology, fairy tales, and puppet theatre (Levine, 1992). Both forms engage audiences through episodic storytelling, heroic exploits, and subversions of established authority. This adaptability of traditional narratives across media underscores their cultural continuity while enabling innovation. Assamese folktales, such as "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter), exemplify this fluidity, weaving ecological concerns with deep-rooted cultural symbolism. Their moral underpinnings and vivid imagery lend themselves seamlessly to comics adaptation, allowing for an enriched multimodal reading experience. However, this process also raises questions about fidelity, reinterpretation, and the potential shifts in meaning that occur when translating oral narratives into a highly visual format.

The Politics of Intersemiotic Translation in the Comics

Comics and pictorial books were influential vectors in popularising vernacular narratives in India from the 1920s onward, in various Indian languages such as Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, and Bengali, to name a few. However, in the Indian context, comics are largely synonymous with *Amar Chitra Katha*, which has also translated many of its titles into various Indian vernacular languages. This pictorial turn, which was strong in Bengal's visual-literary culture and gradually visible in Assam's own comics traditions, created a new marketplace and pedagogy for the circulation of folktales. When we analyse it through the lens of intersemiotic translation, moving a tale like those in *Burhi Aair Xadhu* into comics form is an ideological intervention, where the illustrator-translator decides what becomes visible, what performative communal elements are economised and what visual motifs are amplified.

When we discuss intersemiotic translation, translating between semiotic systems is not merely a formal act of recoding; it is an ideological process in which choices about what to show, what to omit, and how to frame have real cultural and political effects. Jakobson's (1959) concept of intersemiotic translation describes transfer across sign systems, but, as Venuti (2008), Lefevere (1992), and Kaindl (2013) remind us, such transfers are embedded in power relations between the centre and periphery, the editor and illustrator, and the intended and incidental readerships. In picture books and comics adaptations of oral material, the figure who draws and edits (here, the illustrator-translator) functions simultaneously as translator, gatekeeper, and cultural curator. This triple role raises questions of visibility (whose voice is heard and credited), selection (which variants of a tale are deemed "picturable"), and pedagogy (what model of cultural identity is transmitted to children).

Two political processes are particularly relevant for our paper. First, editorial gatekeeping: the decision to adapt particular folktales into comics both valorises certain narratives and marginalises others; such selection shapes the regional canon for younger readers (Bassnett, 2002; Lefevere, 1992). Second, mode-based erasure and amplification: intersemiotic transfer routinely economises performative elements (songs, refrains, communal call-and-

response) while amplifying visually salient motifs (flora, fauna, emblematic objects. Bringing these political dynamics into analysis requires attending to the positionality of the illustrator-translator (what social or institutional vantage informs their choices) and (b) the semiotic economy of loss/gain created by the intermodal move (what communal practices are displaced; what ecological symbols are amplified). Making these moves explicit reframes the adaptation not simply as a question of fidelity, but as an instance of cultural mediation with consequences for identity formation, pedagogical practice, and the politics of regional visibility.

Analysis

1. "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter): The Folktale and Its Structure

The Assamese folktale "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter)[2] incorporates familiar motifs found in global storytelling traditions. The motif of a girl's long hair as a bridge between her secluded life and the human world echoes Western folktales, such as "Rapunzel." This folktale also aligns with Vladimir Propp's structuralist analysis of folktales, which identifies recurring functions across cultures. The father's abandonment of the daughter is a clear instance of "absentation" (Propp, 1968, p. 27). This abandonment sets the narrative in motion, as the infant is cast into the river and subsequently rescued by the kite, marking a significant example of "intervention by a magical helper" (Propp, 1968, p. 26). The moment when the merchant discovers Silonir Jiyek's (The Kite's Daughter) hair embodies Propp's "unrecognised arrival," a stage

[2] The folktale follows a baby girl, abandoned by her father, who desires a son. Cast into the river in a basket, she is rescued by a kite and raised in its nest. She grows into a beautiful maiden with long, flowing hair, living at the top of a tall tree. One day, her long hair falls into a merchant, who marries her. Raised by a bird, the girl, Silonir Jiyek (The Kite's Daughter), is unfamiliar with human customs and only knows a bird's call to summon her adoptive mother for help. Though she marries the merchant, his seven jealous wives ill-treat her, eventually killing the kite, who had been her protector. They subsequently sell her to a fisherman in exchange for jewellery, forcing her into servitude. Eventually, the merchant rescues her upon hearing her lament one day, and the villainous wives are punished.

where the protagonist is reintroduced to society through a transformative event (1968, p. 28). Furthermore, the merchant's wives embody Propp's "villains," whose cruelty leads to the heroine's suffering but ultimately results in their downfall through the "recognition and reward" functions (1968, pp. 34–45). Thus, *"Silonir Jiyek"* (The Kite's Daughter) exemplifies Propp's observation that folktales, while shaped by their cultural contexts, share universal structures and motifs. Its themes of abandonment, magical assistance, transformation, and eventual recognition offer a vivid reflection of how Assamese storytelling traditions intersect with and enrich the broader corpus of global folklore.

2. The Comics Adaptation of "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter)

2.1. The Illustrator as Translator in "Silonir Jiyek"

Illustrator Robin Baruah, who began his career with the Assamese magazine *Prantik*, joined *Mouchak*, an Assamese monthly for children edited by Santanu Tamuly, in 1984, where he illustrated various tales from *Burhi Aair Xadhu*, which remains his best-known work to this day. Robin Baruah's illustration is not just a neutral pictorial rendering of Bezbaruah's prose but an act of intersemiotic translation in which the illustrator functions as an explicit translator-editor whose semiotic choices reconfigure narrative emphasis and cultural legibility. Crucially, this intersemiotic translation must be read in conjunction with the broader political movement that shaped the trajectory of Assamese politics, society, and culture – the Assam movement (1979-1985). As a result of this movement, Assamese identity, language, and culture were publicly foregrounded, which inadvertently made visual reiterations of "Assameseness" especially resonant. By translating the tale into images, Baruah both amplifies Assamese markers (so that the pictures repeatedly signal local language, dress, objects, and spatial relations) and designs those markers to be legible to non-Assamese readers as well, in such a way that the visuals assert regional identity while also functioning as explanatory signs for outsiders.

In contrast to the prose, which employs a performative voice, temporality, and refrains from creating communal resonance, comics

utilise visual economy techniques such as scale, framing, and cropping to both highlight and obscure certain cultural markers (Jakobson, 1959; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). In the case of "Silonir Jiyek," an animal helper is transformed into a visual symbol of Assameseness through the kite's repeated enlargement (utilising high-angle framing and exaggerated scale), highlighting the significance of nature in Assamese culture. This redistribution of semiotic load exemplifies Kaindl's (2013) intermodal translation, which results in both gains (increased ecological salience and immediate affect) and losses (diminished performative and communal memory) as meaning moves across semiotic systems rather than just between languages. Readers are drawn to visual empathy with the heroine rather than shared enactment because the comic's emphasis on visual salience and closure narrows temporal duration and reframes ritual time as pictorial instant, individualising what the oral tale staged communally (McCloud, 1993).

Baruah's choices are both editorial and aesthetic: the choice of the story for pictorial adaptation and the focus on vivid motifs (bird guardian, hair, river) enact gatekeeping that favours easily visualised, morally tidy narratives (Lefevere, 1992; Venuti, 1995). The illustrator-translator thereby both preserves and reshapes cultural memory, deciding which voices become visible to young readers. In short, the comic's visual grammar, namely the tight multimodal coding of scale, framing, sequencing, and selective verbal omission, simultaneously translates and rearranges the story's social ontology, and must be unpacked to reveal its ideological work (Kaindl, 2013; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

2.2. Ecological Representation and Cultural Markers in Translation

The eight states of Northeast India (earlier known as the "Seven Sisters")[3] form part of the Indo-Myanmar biodiversity hotspot, one

[3] The term 'Seven Sisters' was first coined by journalist Jyoti Prasad Saikia in 1972 during the inauguration of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Assam as separate states following the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act of 1971. The phrase gained popularity through his book *Land of the Seven Sisters* (1984). Sikkim was not included in this

of the thirty-six global biodiversity hotspots recognised today (Baruah & Dey, 2005). This ecological richness is reflected in the region's folktales, which are deeply intertwined with natural elements (Dey, 2015). The comics adaptation emphasises this connection through its dominant portrayal of natural elements, such as the kite, rivers, and flora, which occupy a significant portion of the visual space in the panels. In "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter), the kite's protection and the river's transformative role mediate the protagonist's journey from abandonment to reintegration, thus underscoring the inseparable bond between nature and human life.

The kite, an agent of nature, is portrayed as a maternal figure, transforming a seemingly cruel act of abandonment into one of protection and salvation, which reinforces the cultural belief that nature actively shapes human destiny. The kite's importance is further emphasised in the comics by its portrayal as equal in size to the human characters, symbolising its prominence within Assamese folklore. This visual choice reinforces the cultural reverence for the bird, aligning with McCloud's argument that "the manipulation of scale in comics can convey symbolic meanings, elevating certain elements to a status that transcends the narrative" (1993, p. 95). This portrayal transforms the kite from just a character in the folktale into a cultural emblem, linking the comics to nationalist ideals that celebrate regional heritage and ecological harmony.

Similarly, the river in "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter) symbolises the cultural significance of watercourses, such as the Brahmaputra and its tributaries in Assamese life. As Eriksson notes, rivers in folklore often symbolise transitions and liminality, acting as both physical and metaphorical boundaries that separate and connect disparate worlds (2009). Here, the river not only serves as a space of abandonment and peril but also becomes a site of rebirth and transformation, echoing motifs seen in tales such as those of Karna

designation because it was an independent kingdom until 1975, when it became the 22nd state of India through a referendum. Despite being geographically and culturally linked to Northeast India, Sikkim was historically treated as distinct due to its separate political trajectory, leading to the continued use of the term 'Seven Sisters' even after its inclusion in the Northeast Council in 2002.

in the Indian epic *The Mahabharata* or that of Tejimola in *Burhi Aair Xadhu* (Grandmother's Tales). Rivers, in this context, do not simply represent geographical boundaries. Rather, they are imbued with cultural and social significance, which serve as lifelines that facilitate communication, trade, and the formation of identity. As Massey argues, spaces like rivers are not just physical constructs but are also deeply social and cultural entities that mediate human interactions and exchanges, both real and symbolic (2005). In this way, the river becomes a vehicle for transformation that mediates between the realms of nature and human civilisation.

Additionally, the flora depicted, including banana plants, fig trees, Colocasia leaves, and betel nut trees, are not only visually significant but also culturally integral to Assamese society. The integral relationship between flora and Assamese society is further illustrated in the song sung by the protagonist to summon her kite mother: "The fig leaves stir and swirl in the breeze, while my kite mother soars effortlessly towards me" [translation ours] (Baruah & Tamuly, 1984, p. 6). This lyrical connection to nature underscores the symbiosis between humans and their environment, a recurring theme in Assamese folklore, which is amplified through the comic's visual and textual integration.

2.3. Visual Storytelling and Cultural Identity in Translation

While the comics successfully integrate ecological and cultural elements, their visual storytelling is equally important, and this aspect merits further exploration. The early pages effectively use panel transitions to convey the emotional weight of the protagonist's abandonment and rescue. The juxtaposition of human and non-human elements, such as the protagonist's human form and her connection to the kite, blurs the rigid boundaries between nature and culture, thus emphasising an interspecies bond and the nurturing role of nature as a surrogate parent. As Chute (2010) argues, comics excel in portraying layered narratives where visual and textual elements interact to create complex meanings. This interplay is central to the comic's ability to evoke emotional responses and to engage readers with the protagonist's journey.

The adaptation is rich in cultural markers that are deeply significant to Assamese heritage, reflecting the region's traditions and identity, which further enriches its authenticity and situates it within the context of Assamese traditions. For instance, characters are depicted wearing traditional Assamese attire, such as the *mekhela-chador* (a two-piece garment worn by women comprising a cylindrical skirt and a drape), the *dhoti* (a long cloth wrapped around the waist and covering most of the legs, worn by men), and the *gamosa* (a handwoven cotton cloth with distinctive red or maroon patterns). The inclusion of these elements deepens the cultural specificity of the comics, aligning them with Assamese traditions.

Moreover, the act of weaving traditional Assamese clothes, a practice tied to the celebration of *Bihu* (Assam's major ethnic festival), is a metaphor for the preservation of heritage and the continuity of tradition. The protagonist is shown weaving garments for her husband, reinforcing the theme of continuity between past and present traditions. Toelken notes, "cultural artefacts often carry deep symbolic meanings that resonate with both insiders and outsiders, depending on their familiarity with the cultural framework" (1996, p. 14). The inclusion of traditional Assamese markers in the comics reflects this dual purpose, catering to Assamese readers while offering external audiences an authentic glimpse into the region's ethos. Furthermore, McCloud emphasises that "the power of comics lies in their ability to blend text and image to convey layered meanings" (1993, p. 89). The comic's use of traditional visuals and cultural symbols exemplifies this potential, as it bridges tradition and storytelling through the interplay between visual elements, such as clothing and weaving, and the narrative. The deliberate inclusion of these elements enhances the narrative's depth and situates it within a broader cultural framework.

2.4. Suspense, Justice, and the Climax

The comics adaptation skilfully employs visual techniques, such as panel design and strategic page turns, to build dramatic tension and mirror the narrative strategies of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's original text. For instance, the first page concludes with a poignant panel of the baby adrift in the river. The uncertainty of her fate,

juxtaposed with the reader's awareness of impending danger, creates suspense that is resolved only with the page turn, where the kite emerges as her saviour. The interplay of peril and rescue evokes a similar tension and release, which enhances the emotional stakes of the story and encapsulates the comic's ability to manipulate pacing and anticipation to enhance storytelling. As Nodelman (2008) notes, children's literature often creates suspense by revealing just enough to intrigue while leaving gaps to be filled by the imagination, a technique that is powerfully replicated in this adaptation.

The technical structure of the comics, particularly its use of gutters (the spaces between panels), plays a crucial role in shaping how the reader constructs meaning. These gutters, often regarded as "the most important element in the comic's visual syntax," allow the reader to engage actively with the narrative, filling in the gaps between images and text to build the story's continuity (McCloud, 1993, p. 101). The spaces between panels serve not just as transitions but as sites for potential meaning-making, where time and action unfold. For a child reader, this technique of reading between the lines, literally and figuratively, becomes a bridge to connect this text with others they may have encountered. This is particularly significant in Assam, where "Silonir Jiyek" (The Kite's Daughter) may be one of the earliest examples of comics. Still, it was published after the rise of popular series like *Amar Chitra Katha*, which gained prominence and became a staple of childhood reading across India. This kind of intertextual connection with other comics of that time enriches the child reader's experience, making the adaptation more resonant and offering a layered reading experience that spans generations of comic culture.

2.5. Resolution and Affective Impact

The narrative progression following the protagonist's marriage transitions to the merchant's mansion, where the body language and spiteful dialogues of the other wives foreshadow their roles as antagonists. Their disdain for the protagonist is conveyed through spiteful remarks in the speech balloons, such as "The husband's other wife has come!" and "Wait and see how well we will feed you" [translation ours], paired with hostile expressions (Baruah &

Tamuly, 1984, pp. 16–19). These cues are reinforced by their oppressive actions, such as forcing her to cook, clean the cowshed, and weave clothes for the husband. Despite their efforts, the protagonist excels in every task with the assistance of her kite mother, which intensifies the other wives' jealousy and drives them to plot the kite's murder.

The page depicting the kite's death is one of the most emotionally charged moments in the comics, concluding with a heart-wrenching image of the protagonist singing tearfully to summon her mother one final time: "The fig leaves stir and swirl in the breeze, while my kite mother soars effortlessly toward me" [translation ours] (Baruah & Tamuly, 1984, p. 21). This lament evokes profound sympathy in readers, underlining the depth of the protagonist's loss and the cruelty of her oppressors. As Nikolajeva highlights, "[t]he interplay of visual and textual elements in children's literature serves as a tool for evoking empathy and shaping the reader's moral perspective", preparing the readers for the climax (2017, p. 113). The climax unfolds in the last two pages, as the merchant uncovers the wives' treachery and delivers their punishment. The imagery of the deep well surrounded by thorny bushes effectively conveys a dual sense of fear and justice. Readers are gripped by the tension of the impending punishment while feeling relieved that the protagonist's suffering is nearing its end. The final panels depict the narrator reflecting on the happiness she ultimately achieves, fulfilling the emotional arc shared by both the protagonist and the readers throughout the story.

What is Gained or Lost in the Translation?

The comics adaptation of *Burhi Aair Xadhu,* as an act of intersemiotic translation, consistently economises the performative and ritualised elements sustained in oral and prose versions. Songs, refrains, and extended descriptive passages are frequently condensed into single captions or omitted altogether. For instance, whereas the oral and prose traditions foreground a repeated song-refrain used to summon the kite, the comics replace this sequence with a single evocative panel showing the girl calling out, thus condensing an extended performative act into a moment of visual signification

(Baruah & Tamuly, 1984, p. 6). This economisation may be understood as the production of an afterlife, a new linguistic (or here, visual) existence in which the original's temporal, communal performance is reconstituted as a static but resonant image (Benjamin, 2005).

The illustrator-translator Robin Baruah's manipulation of scale, framing, and sequencing further redirects the tale's affective emphasis. The kite is often depicted nearly equal in scale to human figures (pp. 7–8), elevating the bird from a helper to an emblematic presence. Close-ups of the heroine's face and hands (Baruah & Tamuly, 1984, pp. 17) intensify her vulnerability, encouraging empathetic identification. Moreover, panel composition and strategic page turns are used to stage suspense: the opening sequence, which ends with the baby adrift (Baruah & Tamuly, 1984, p. 5) and resolves only with the kite's arrival on the following spread, creates a cinematic reveal built through visual pacing rather than expository narration. Benjamin's insistence that the translator's task is not to reproduce the original but to allow the work to live on in another tongue, thus revealing the affinities among languages, maps well onto these visual choices as the comics does not attempt to replicate the oral performance word-for-word but to bring forth, in the language of pictures, an analogous expressive truth. In this sense, selection and amplification in drawing function as translation strategies that aim for a kind of fidelity to the tale's inner life rather than to its external, ritualised form (Benjamin, 2005).

The comics additionally rely on visual shorthand to encode cultural artefacts such as the *mekhela-chador, gamosa*, and local flora (Baruah & Tamuly, 1984, pp. 11). Whereas Bezbaruah's prose provides lexical markers or explanatory commentary, the comics depend on readers' ability to visually decode these cultural cues. Taken together, Robin Baruah's visual interventions, such as selection, amplification, and cultural encoding, enact translational shifts that redirect emphasis from communal performance and ritual repetition toward ecological symbolism and individuated affect. These decisions have both ethical and pedagogical implications, as they influence which cultural models are highlighted for child readers and determine how Assamese identity is visually presented to broader audiences.

Despite these shifts, the comics preserve the tale's narrative skeleton. Core functions, such as abandonment, rescue by an animal helper, trials, and recognition, remain intact, as do thematic concerns with ecological interdependence and moral justice. However, the experiential texture changes drastically, as the performative, dialogic voice of oral storytelling is diluted along with the compression/removal of ritual refrains. This is not a neutral loss as it marks a reorientation of cultural memory from collective oral performance to individualised reading experience mediated by images.

The intersemiotic translation thus carries political weight. By privileging certain visual motifs and compressing performative elements, the comics curate a version of Assamese folklore tailored to literate, individual consumers. Such curatorial choices have an impact on shaping curricular circulation, childhood cultural formation, and the regional visibility of particular narrative variants. In this sense, the intersemiotic translation functions as cultural mediation with material consequences for who is authorised to represent Assamese oral traditions.

Conclusion

The multimodal translation of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's folktale "*Silonir Jiyek*" (The Kite's Daughter) into the comics form exemplifies the enduring adaptability of folklore in contemporary media. Through the interplay of text and visuals, the adaptation not only preserves the essence of the original tale but also extends its reach, offering nuanced insights into Assamese cultural identity, ecological awareness, and moral teachings. By incorporating traditional Assamese symbols, attire, and ecological motifs, the adaptation bridges the past and present, making the folktale accessible to modern audiences while retaining its cultural authenticity. The adaptation highlights the multifaceted nature of folktales, illustrating their potential to educate, entertain, and evoke empathy. The creative use of visual storytelling amplifies the tale's emotional depth and moral resonance, demonstrating how intermodal translations, where linguistic and visual semiotics intersect, can enrich stories. In conclusion, the transformation of

"*Silonir Jiyek*" (The Kite's Daughter) into comics not only reimagines a classic tale but also underscores the relevance of folklore in addressing contemporary discourses on identity, resilience, and the symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature. By situating Assamese folklore within a global context, this adaptation underscores the universality of oral traditions and their ability to evolve across diverse modes of storytelling. This paper, therefore, contributes to ongoing conversations on the politics of adaptation and the role of translation in reshaping cultural narratives in a multimodal world.

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Interviews

An Interview with Author Sethu as a Self-translator

By AMMU MARIA ASHOK

Sethumadhavan (hereafter **SM**) is popularly known as Sethu. A banker by profession and writer by passion, he rose to become the Chairman and CEO of the South Indian Bank and later served as Chairman of the National Book Trust, New Delhi. For over five decades, Sethu has been a leading voice in Malayalam literature, credited with transforming the sensibility of modern fiction. Since publishing his first short story in 1967, he has written more than 40 books, including celebrated novels like *Pandavapuram* (1979), *Niyogam*(1988), *Adayalangal* (2006), and *Marupiravi* (2011). Blending realism with myth and magic, Sethu's narratives continue to captivate readers, ensuring his place as a master craftsman of modern Indian literature.

Ammu Maria Ashok (hereafter **AMA**) holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics and TESOL. A poet, translator, and academic, she has taught at several universities, sharing her expertise in language and literature. Her poetry and translations of short stories and poems have been featured in numerous anthologies, books, and digital platforms, including the prestigious Kerala Sahitya Akademi. Her creative and scholarly pursuits reflect a deep engagement with language, culture, and the nuanced art of literary expression.

AMA: Why did you choose the novel *Aramathe Penkutty* (2017) to translate into English, titled *Kadambari: The Flower Girl* (2021)? What ideological factors in translation motivated you as a translator to take up this translation work?

SM: I chose to translate *Aramathe Penkutty* (2017) not because of any fixed ideology but as a way of re-engaging with my own text in another language. Translation gave me the chance to test whether the story could be retold differently and perhaps even more effectively in English. Kadambari, the central character, has always been close to my heart, and translating her story allowed me to reconnect with her on a deeper level. It was less about a theoretical motivation and

more about personal attachment to the narrative. This emotional pull gave me the courage to take up the task.

AMA: To what extent can the emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual effects of the original text be fully conveyed in its translated version?

SM: Transferring the complete effect of the original into a translation is never easy. Translation is an intricate and demanding task. At the same time, it is also a creative process where the author and translator must meet at a common plane of understanding. The translator must be able to enter into the soul of the text and re-create its spirit in a way that resonates with new readers. This requires both empathy and compassion, especially toward the main characters, so that their experiences are authentically carried across languages.

AMA: A literary book has its own dialect, tone and ambience. How far is it possible for a translator to preserve the tone, mood, and overall impact envisioned by the author while adapting the work for readers from a different linguistic and cultural background?

SM: All three -dialect, tone, and ambience are important, but it is often the dialect that is hardest to preserve in translation. Dialects carry cultural and social markers that may not exist in the target language. While the exact rhythm of speech cannot always be recreated, I tried to ensure that the overall tone and ambience of the text carried the same intensity. By doing so, the spirit of the characters and setting remained alive in English. Thus, tone and ambience often became the bridge where dialect could not fully survive.

AMA: Tamil culture inevitably appears in this book. Did you find any difficulty in translating words and sentences associated with this culture into English?

SM: Not particularly. I am already quite familiar with the geographical terrain, social milieu, and distinct cultural landscape of Tamil Nadu. This familiarity proved to be an invaluable advantage during the translation process. Having lived within or closely observed the rhythms of Tamil life- the idioms, festivals, social hierarchies, and emotional nuances embedded in everyday interactions, I could approach the text with an insider's sensitivity. This enabled me to

render culturally rooted expressions and region-specific references into English without losing their original resonance or emotional depth. Rather than perceiving Tamil culture as a barrier to translation, I viewed it as a rich resource that enhanced my interpretive choices. The cultural context informed the tone, imagery, and cadence of my translation, allowing me to preserve the authenticity of the source text while making it accessible and meaningful to readers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

AMA: There are many words associated with Kerala and Tamil caste, region-specific words, and phrases associated with these cultures in the source text. If omitted, what is the reason?

SM: Yes, this was indeed a major challenge, because shifting culturally loaded expressions from one language to another always risks loss of meaning. I personally avoided excessive use of footnotes or italicised insertions, as I did not want to burden the reader. Instead, I tried to weave the meanings into the flow of the narrative. I am not a professional translator, but I felt it was worthwhile to attempt this task. I was fortunate that my editor, publisher, and several readers responded positively to these choices. This gave me confidence in my approach. Incidentally, I had already ventured into writing directly in English with *The Cuckoo's Nest*, which also gave me some experience in bridging cultural gaps.

AMA: How did you translate caste, culture, idioms, and proverbs into English?

SM: This was one of the greatest challenges of the work. Regional idioms, caste-specific terms, and proverbs do not always have neat equivalents in English. I avoided heavy use of footnotes or italicised insertions because they might distract the reader from the flow. Instead, I tried to make the meaning clear through context while keeping the flavour intact and adding the meaning of those words in brackets. Translation in such cases is about striking a balance between clarity and authenticity. The positive feedback I received from readers and editors reassured me that this approach worked.

AMA: What are your notions on translating Indian tradition, including the boundary of translation terminologies used in both traditions and cultures?

SM: The challenge of translating Indian tradition is comparable to translating between Western languages. Yet, modern readers are increasingly open to experiencing unfamiliar cultural contexts. For instance, Latin American literature has found wide acceptance in Kerala, despite its very different traditions. Interestingly, while working on translations, one sometimes discovers unexpected commonalities between myths and beliefs in seemingly distant cultures. This makes translation not just a linguistic task but also a bridge for cultural recognition.

AMA: Nowadays, most translators have interpreted translation as a site of knowledge creation and determination. How would you reflect upon this view?

SM: I fully agree with this perspective. In contemporary translation studies, translation is increasingly understood not as a secondary or derivative act, but as a vibrant site of knowledge creation and cultural negotiation. It is far more than the transfer of words or meanings between languages; it is an interpretive and intellectual process through which new ideas, perspectives, and identities are continually shaped. Every act of translation involves linguistic, cultural, and ideological factors that inevitably produce new meanings. When translators engage with texts, they reinterpret them through the lens of their own cultural and historical contexts, thereby generating fresh understandings that did not exist in the original. In this sense, translation participates in the construction and circulation of knowledge, expanding the boundaries of thought across languages and societies.

AMA: What are the cultural and linguistic gaps you find in your translation process?

SM: There are always numerous cultural and linguistic gaps that emerge during the translation process. Every language carries within it a unique worldview, shaped by history, geography, and social experience. No two cultures or linguistic systems ever align perfectly; there are always expressions, idioms, cultural references,

and emotional undertones that resist direct equivalence. These gaps remind us that translation is not a mechanical act of substitution, but an interpretive and creative negotiation between worlds. For instance, certain words or metaphors may carry deep cultural resonance in the source language but may not evoke the same emotional or symbolic response in the target language. Similarly, cultural practices, humour, or social hierarchies embedded in a text may require sensitive adaptation to ensure they remain meaningful to readers from another context. In these moments, the translator must act as both mediator and creator, seeking not to erase difference, but to make it intelligible and aesthetically effective. To me, these gaps are not failures or limitations, but opportunities for discovery. They challenge the translator to think deeply about meaning, context, and the power of language to convey shared human experiences despite cultural distance.

AMA: In your opinion, should translators possess a deeper cultural competence and understanding of social, historical, and contextual nuances than mere linguistic proficiency? How important is cultural literacy in comparison to linguistic skill in ensuring that a translation authentically represents the essence and intention of the original text?

SM: Both cultural and linguistic competence are equally vital. Without a sound grasp of language, the translator cannot write effectively. At the same time, without cultural understanding, the words may fail to carry their intended resonance. A balance between the two is necessary. Linguistic precision provides the technical foundation of translation, but cultural insight breathes life into it, allowing meanings, idioms, and emotions to flow naturally across languages. A translator who is attuned to cultural nuances can interpret symbols, traditions, and references that might otherwise be lost or misunderstood. In essence, language forms the structure, but culture gives the translation its soul together; they ensure that the translated work remains authentic, expressive, and meaningful to readers from another linguistic world.

AMA: Every translation has problems of its own, and a good translation depends on the correct understanding of the subject matter. Do you agree with this statement?

SM: Absolutely. A translator must, first and foremost, take genuine pleasure in the act of translation and cultivate a deep emotional and intellectual engagement with the original work. Translation is not merely a technical exercise in linguistic substitution; it is an act of creative empathy and interpretive artistry. To render a text effectively, the translator must internalise its spirit- its rhythm, tone, and emotional undercurrents until the words begin to resonate from within. Without absorbing the full flavour of the original, it becomes impossible to capture its subtleties, its silences, and its soul. A purely mechanical approach, driven by accuracy alone, can result in a lifeless version that fails to evoke the author's intended impact. True translation demands immersion in the subject matter, an intimate understanding of both the surface meaning and the cultural and psychological layers that shape it. Only through such immersion can the translator recreate in another language not just the meaning of the text, but its music, mood, and inner vitality.

AMA: To what extent do you believe translators possess the creative license to *transcreate*, that is, to move beyond literal translation and reimagine or recreate the source text in a way that preserves its spirit, emotions, and cultural nuances for the target audience?

SM: This is indeed a debatable issue and one that lies at the heart of translation studies. While some degree of creativity is both necessary and inevitable, excessive liberty in transcreation risks distorting or even overshadowing the author's original vision. A translator operates within an ethical and aesthetic responsibility to remain faithful to the source while ensuring that the translation resonates meaningfully with readers from another linguistic and cultural context. Complete adherence to literalism can drain a work of its vitality, reducing it to a lifeless rendering of words. Yet, unrestrained creativity may lead to a re-authored version that reflects more of the translator's imagination than the author's intent. Therefore, the translator's task is to strike a delicate balance, faithful yet imaginative, respectful yet expressive. True translation lies not in mechanical equivalence but in the recreation of tone, rhythm, and emotional texture that preserves the spirit of the original. The translator must interpret rather than merely transfer, ensuring that the translated text lives and breathes in its new linguistic space without

losing its essential identity. In this sense, creative license becomes not an act of freedom for its own sake, but a necessary instrument for fidelity to the soul, rather than the letter, of the work.

AMA: Do you think there were alternative ways in which you could have approached the translation of this book, perhaps through different stylistic choices, linguistic strategies, or interpretive frameworks that might have produced a distinct version of the same text?

SM: Certainly. I believe no author or translator ever feels entirely satisfied with their work. The act of writing or translating is, by nature, an ongoing process, one that never truly reaches completion. I often feel that my works, especially my translations, remain open-ended and are completed only through the interpretation and imagination of discerning readers. Each reader brings their own experiences, emotions, and cultural sensibilities to the text, and in doing so, they reshape its meaning in ways the translator may not have anticipated. A translation, much like an original creation, is not a fixed or final entity; it is fluid and dynamic. Its form and resonance evolve with time, context, and the shifting sensibilities of its audience. What feels accurate or evocative in one era may appear limited or differently nuanced in another. Thus, every translation is a momentary realisation of possibilities, a version among many that could have been. In this sense, the translator's work is never truly finished; it continues to live, transform, and find new meanings in the minds of its readers.

AMA: Would you agree that the act of translation functions as a dynamic site of knowledge creation, where new meanings, interpretations, and cultural understandings emerge through the interaction between languages, contexts, and worldviews?

SM: Yes, I fully agree with this view. Translation is not merely a process of transferring words or meanings from one language to another; it is an active and dynamic site of knowledge creation. Through translation, cultures, histories, and ideologies are placed in dialogue, allowing the emergence of new meanings, interpretations, and perspectives. When a text moves across linguistic and cultural boundaries, it undergoes a process of transformation that reflects

both the translator's interpretive choices and the receiving culture's worldview. In this way, translation does not simply reproduce the original text but re-creates it in a new context, generating fresh understandings and intellectual possibilities. For instance, when literary works, philosophical ideas, or religious texts are translated, they often acquire new layers of significance shaped by the translator's cultural sensibilities and the target audience's expectations. This process fosters intercultural communication and expands the boundaries of human knowledge by allowing ideas to circulate across different linguistic and epistemic systems. Therefore, translation can be seen as a creative and interpretive act that both transmits and produces knowledge. It challenges fixed meanings and opens a space for dialogue between languages, traditions, and worldviews. In doing so, translation becomes a powerful site of intellectual negotiation, one where meaning is constantly being redefined, reshaped, and renewed.

AMA: Could you share any particular experience or memorable instance from your own translation practice that you believe would offer valuable insight or inspiration to students of translation studies, especially in understanding the practical, emotional, or ethical dimensions of the translator's craft?

SM: I may not recall a single, specific instance that stands out as particularly dramatic, but for me, the entire process of translation has been a profound and memorable journey, a continuous act of rediscovery of my own work and my relationship with language. Each time I engage with a text, I find myself revisiting not only the words and meanings but also the emotions, contexts, and silences that lie between them. Translation becomes a mirror through which I see both the source text and myself anew.

AMA: What suggestions would you like to give to future translators?

SM: The role of the translator is never passive; rather, it is inherently participatory, demanding a deep engagement with the text at every level. A translator is not merely a conduit transferring words from one language to another, but an active partner in the entire creative process, shaping meaning, tone, and rhythm with as much

sensitivity as the original author. There are instances when the translator's artistry and interpretive insight may even surpass that of the writer, offering readers a work that resonates with greater clarity, elegance, or accessibility in the target language. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine the global reception of García Márquez without acknowledging the immense contribution of Edith Grossman, whose translations played a pivotal role in carrying his literary voice across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

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An Interview with Jonathan Evans

By NIDHI J. MAKWANA

Jonathan Evans (hereafter **JE**) is a Translation Studies scholar whose work examines translation as a cultural, political, and aesthetic practice rather than a purely linguistic act. A Reader at the University of Glasgow since 2024 and previously a Senior Lecturer from 2020, Evans is trained as a comparatist with a broad research agenda spanning literature, film, comics, games, and fan media. His research centres on two key concerns: the political dimensions of how texts circulate across borders and shape identity, and the creative dimensions of overlooked practices of fan cultures, online media, and "non-canonical" forms of translation. His reflections help chart the course of Translation Studies, from its origins to its future directions.

Nidhi J. Makwana (hereafter **NJM**) is a doctoral scholar at Pandit Deendayal Energy University, Gandhinagar. Her research, titled "Translations within Satyagraha: A Critical Study of M. K. Gandhi as a Translator", investigates the intersection of South Asian intellectual history, Gandhian studies, and translation theory.

NJM: Dr Evans, your research profile is diverse and impressive, spanning culture, politics, and films to translation for social change. What inspired you to examine translation's role in social and political justice, as well as its meaning beyond traditional boundaries?

JE: Thank you for your kind words and for inviting me to do this interview.

I started working on literary translation and, in fact, my PhD supervision was split between a department of literature. However, my first permanent position was in a department of languages and area studies, where literature wasn't the central focus. As such, I had to develop research that fitted more clearly within that department, which meant thinking about how translation might be relevant for area studies. The obvious way that was the case was to think about translation politically. To me, literary translation offers exciting ways to disrupt literary analysis, complicating the study of film and

media. But a lot of the discourse around literary translation in the early 2010s would keep coming back to the sort of binaries that I found very limiting, but which have been a staple of European discourse on translation since the Romans (i.e. free/literal).

I wanted to move away from these and other limitations I felt in Translation Studies at the time, which is why I started writing about film. The collective authorship of film complicated ideas about authorship in productive ways, and there wasn't such a long history of people writing and thinking about the translation of film (though people have, of course been doing that for over 100 years, too). I also felt that it would be useful for students to think about translation beyond written texts, considering a more multimodal framework of analysis.

In brief, my interest and curiosity in these topics were strong, combined with some frustration with the work I observed in Translation Studies. Additionally, a few chance collaborations encouraged me to think beyond my individual efforts.

NJM: Translation Studies has become increasingly interdisciplinary, integrating with fields like media studies and cultural studies, as evident in your work on film translation and intermediality. How has this evolution shaped the development of Translation Studies over time, and what interdisciplinary approach would you advise for translators to connect Translation Studies with other disciplines? Should this approach be driven by personal creativity or political objectives?

JE: I think how people work on translation comes from their wider interests. My undergraduate degree was in comparative literature, and that has always influenced how I approach texts. I've also always been interested in cultural studies as an approach, which, to some extent, leads to film and media studies. In the early days of the discipline, people from various disciplines were bringing their questions and ways of working into Translation Studies. Somebody trained in applied linguistics will ask different questions and use different methods than someone working in comparative literature, for instance. I think that at various times, Translation Studies have renewed its focus by incorporating new ideas from elsewhere.

If someone working on translation wants to talk to other disciplines, then I think you have to ask, "Why is this interesting to them?" This is something I learned from my own practice and from discussions with other scholars. I have got a lot of mileage out of thinking, "Well, what would that look like to someone in media studies?" Or literary studies, or film studies. I think it's essential to try to talk to other disciplines, especially as a lot of other disciplines don't really know what Translation Studies is or does. (My colleague Susan Bassnett has proposed this as an 'outward turn') I've been trying, sometimes successfully, to publish outside Translation Studies for the last 10 years or so, and you constantly raise the question of how to convince these readers that translation is worth writing about.

NJM: Interesting, in your work on migration and translation, you illustrate how cross-cultural communication creates a layered network of regional and foreign languages, and you also contend that translation both crosses and reinforces borders, not only geographical but also cultural, linguistic, and symbolic. How do you perceive translation functioning within migration as both a bridge and a border-making practice that actively reshapes these intangible boundaries in intercultural communication?

JE: I probably think about this differently now that I live in Scotland and not England, as I'm very much more aware of my own linguistic differences whenever I speak. Translation obviously creates bridges by allowing people to access information and services, which are essential for inclusion and can be very practical, such as using a doctor's services or other services. Yet it also becomes a barrier in a less obvious way. As soon as you need to use translations, you're marked as not speaking the same language, which can make groups feel excluded. It's a double-edged sword: the very thing designed for inclusion can also serve to exclude. But we tend to focus on the positive side of it.

This tension is extreme in places with a single hegemonic language, such as English in the UK, where a tendency toward monolingualism persists despite everyday multilingual realities. Even in multilingual contexts, translation can't include all languages, so some degree of exclusion always remains.

NJM: Retranslation requires a critical reading of both the source and earlier translations. How do you view the dual focus that influences the creative freedom of translation for retranslation? Does it expand opportunities by showing different approaches or limit the process by tying the translator too tightly to existing versions?

JE: I think it depends on how the translator approaches it. In my experience, knowing that there's an existing translation can be very freeing, as you can see solutions you don't want to use and there's a version to kick against, as it were. In practice, it doesn't tie translators to existing versions; the variety of *Madame Bovary* translations shows that, as do Pevear and Volokhonsky's retranslations of Dostoevsky.

When a writer has been translated many times, as with Baudelaire, the translator has no obligation to make the text accessible and can work more personally and interpretively. By contrast, translating a writer for the first time demands greater accuracy, as it serves as a springboard for future readings. Most retranslators work somewhere in between, seeking accuracy through their own reading of both the source and earlier versions. That dual reading is crucial for activating creativity, as you can't simply repeat what's been done, as you must know why you're doing it differently.

NJM: You distinguish between two types of rewriting, which ultimately converge in Davis's rewriting of Proust as a novelist and as a translator. Do you think her fiction teaches us something about how she translates, and vice versa? Also, how do you see self-translation? Is it a form of interpretative rewriting?

JE: There's a lot in this question. The simple answer about Lydia Davis is that I see her translation and writing as a continuum, with each informing the other. As a reader, I found her translations interact with her stories in many subtle ways. I'm not sure this is the case for all writers who translate, but it's very tempting to think that it would be so.

Self-translation is a different question. It's not something I've studied closely, though it's more common in multilingual or diasporic contexts. There's a spectrum of how writers approach it: some see it as a necessary evil to reach broader audiences, while others see it as an opportunity to develop and revise their work.

Samuel Beckett, for instance, made notable changes when translating his own texts. Since I view all translation as interpretative rewriting, self-translation, too, is necessarily a form of interpretative rewriting.

NJM: Furthermore, you propose using retranslation as a form of critical practice to link theory and practice in the classroom. Can teaching retranslation help future translators see themselves not only as service providers but also as critical interpreters of culture and discourse? Reshaping their technical skills alongside cultural and ideological aspects.

JE: Retranslation gives you a chance to move away from existing translations and to think critically about your choices: why you use a particular solution, how it differs from others, and what it allows you to do. It encourages you to become a more reflective practitioner, which is valuable not only for professional practice but also for developing as a critical interpreter of culture and discourse.

NJM: You describe film remakes as the 'black sheep' of Translation Studies and even as a form of cultural cannibalism. Why do you think remakes have been marginalised in translation research, and how does the cannibalism metaphor help us grasp the politics of remaking across world cinema? At the same time, since remakes often generate significant economic benefits for film industries, how should we rethink their role as cultural and translational practices shaped as much by power and profit as by aesthetics?

JE: Remakes have been marginalised in translation research because they're not easy to teach. Most classroom practices, like written translation or subtitling, require few resources. In contrast, filmmaking is complex and usually taught in different institutional settings. It's often taught in film schools, whereas translation is often taught in modern languages departments.

I borrowed the term *cannibalism* from Brazilian theorist Haroldo de Campos, who used it as a postcolonial metaphor for translation, suggesting that consuming and reworking another's work can be both an act of respect and appropriation. While the metaphor can sound negative, it captures the tension between homage and appropriation in film remakes, reflecting the complex ways narratives circulate and are re-appropriated for different locales.

You can't really separate remakes from their commercial dimension. Film is almost always a commercial medium, but it is also a literary text, which adds layers of complexity to its analysis. The circulation and reworking of texts, whether in film or literature, are deeply tied to economic and policy structures; translation and remaking are shaped as much by profit and power as by artistic intent.

NJM: One of the interesting yet debated aspects of fan translation is its originality and validity, as the motivation behind such translations is to create and expand their desire to contribute to the narrative. In such a case, do these translations have a claim to fan patronage? If yes, have you seen any instances where fan translations were later recognised and published with official publishers?

JE: There is a long history of people doing translations on spec (that is, without a publisher in mind or a contract) that would fit into the idea of 'fan translation', and in that case, there have been quite a few translations that started as passion or fan projects that have been officially published. I think there's definitely some fan-translated *danmei* (Boys' Love) novels that have been published this way. Potentially, Viki, as a platform, uses fan translations of East Asian TV, but I don't know if contributors have gone on to become professional translators. A lot of the discussion of this tends to rely on anecdotes, and there's potential for a more systematic, large-scale study of what happens to fan translators: do they go on to become professionals? A few people have suggested that idea, but I haven't seen any systematic studies of their destinations.

NJM: One of the most intriguing aspects of your writing is the broad category of non-professional subtitling, which includes fan-subbing, activist subtitling, and volunteer subtitling. Do you believe that the boundary between fandom and activism is becoming increasingly indistinct in subtitling practices? Some argue that activist subtitling gives a voice to marginalised groups, while others warn that it might reproduce stereotypes to appeal to a global audience. Where do you see subtitling fitting within this tension between resistance and complicity?

JE: I really dislike the term *'non-professional'*. It's often used in Translation Studies to contrast with professional translation. There are writers like Saikat Majumdar (2024) and Joanna Walsh (2025) who have recently reclaimed *'amateur'*, in many ways, from how people engage with and produce texts for the internet. There was a backlash against amateurism in the 2000s, including by writers such as Andrew Keen (2007). But perhaps, following Majumdar and Walsh, it's a better term for Translation Studies, too.

There is some overlap between fandom and activism, both in aesthetic or cultural activism, where fans push publishers or distributors to influence decision-making, as Henry Jenkins noted in *Textual Poachers* (1992). The example of negative activism, or *anti-fandom*, was seen in reactions to the 2016 *Ghostbusters* film, which was essentially removed from canon by fans. There are political forms of activism linked to fandom, such as the Harry Potter Alliance, and the LGBTQIA+ fans, Ting Guo, which I have studied. Early cultural studies, such as Hall and Jefferson's *Resistance through Rituals* (1975) and Hebdige's *Subculture* (1979), already saw political potential in the groups and practices. So, the boundaries between fandom and activism have always been porous and unclear. Any form of text distribution risks misrepresenting its source or perpetuating stereotypes, and activist subtitling is no different.

NJM: If we see subtitling as activism, should Translation Studies reposition subtitlers as cultural agents with political influence rather than invisible technicians? How do you see the rise of AI-driven subtitling tools changing the scope for activist subtitling? Could automation undermine the political edge of volunteer-driven communities?

JE: If we see translation as an interpretative, creative act, that applies to subtitling too, bringing with it the idea of agency in both the creative and the political. There remains a tendency to assume that translation is transparent, though since the 1970s literary translators have gained more recognition as creative professionals. However, subtitlers remain largely invisible; few are ever named, except for Darcy Paquet, who translated many Korean films. There

is greater complexity in subtitling and its central role in global media circulation. My discussion with Jan Pedersen in Sweden revealed that they're developing awards for subtitlers to promote visibility.

Your question about AI reflects many concerns I've heard from professional communities and my students. While machine translation and genAI make subtitling easier, AI often produces translations that lack nuance or political context, especially for minority communities. It also reproduces bias. Fan groups may use AI but still edit outputs to reflect their preferences, much as they already retranslate works when dissatisfied with earlier versions.

NJM: The 'Korean Wave' has become a global phenomenon, and its translation into English dubbing and subtitling often influences its spread; but subtitles do more than translate words; they also convey cultural references, humour, and social norms. Would you say the global circulation of Korean media through English subtitles risks flattening cultural nuance, or does it create new hybrid forms of cultural understanding?

JE: The growing global visibility of Korean culture is, overall, a positive development. While there's always a risk of stereotyping, it's better for Korean culture to circulate than remain unseen. What's particularly interesting is how many fans have learned about Korea and even the Korean language to deepen their understanding, much like earlier audiences did with Japanese culture in the 1990s.

In the Anglosphere, any engagement with works from other languages is worth celebrating, since it's so easy to consume only English media. However, audiences who access only selective parts of Korean culture may develop a limited view of it, though that's true of all cultures in global circulation.

NJM: Additionally, have you examined the Korean media scene in the UK and South Korea's reception of foreign media? What does translation reveal about this two-way dynamic of global media exchange, and do you think translation influences these asymmetries of power in media flows?

JE: The media asymmetries largely reflect preexisting national and linguistic power dynamics. English-language media naturally flows into South Korea due to both historical influence and the

global dominance of English, while Korean media remains more locally confined and across the diaspora. What's remarkable is how South Korea has successfully globalised its culture, especially through film, TV, and music, through strategic promotion and changing distribution models. The internet has made Korean media far more accessible worldwide, even though cinema still relies on more traditional, physical distribution through festivals and screenings. Translation, in this context, is secondary to these political and infrastructural dynamics. Audiences may tolerate imperfect translations to gain access, but access itself remains the more decisive factor in shaping global media flows.

NJM: In your essay with Ting Guo, you demonstrate how translation circulates queer Asian TV globally and, in the process, reshapes both 'queer' and 'Asian' identities. Building on Evren Savcı's idea of translation as a queer methodology, could you elaborate on how translation unsettles identity categories and how heteronormative stereotypes circulating through subtitles and remixes might contribute to fixing or shifting those identities into clearer, more digestible forms? And how translation unsettles not only linguistic norms but also heteronormative structures of media circulation?

JE: Building on Savcı, translation exposes the instability of meaning and the negotiations that occur when concepts like queer travel across languages and contexts. It reveals that identity categories are not fixed but contingent and culturally specific. The difficulty of translating queer itself shows how meanings tied to the Anglophone situation often resist direct transfer into other linguistic worlds.

Translation can thus unpick identity categories by showing that they can always be otherwise. Yet, as with other forms of mediation, it's double-edged: while it can challenge heteronormative structures by circulating alternative gendered and sexual identities, it can also reinforce them when certain narratives are privileged over others.

NJM: In the *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics*, you describe translation as a constant presence in political life, sometimes making information accessible and shaping identities, but also excluding or censoring. Why do you think the political

dimensions of translation have remained a kind of 'secret history' in Translation Studies, and how might making them more visible transform the discipline? What do you think are the most urgent political questions for Translation Studies today?

JE: The invisibility of translators and the professional norm of neutrality have long kept the political dimensions of translation hidden. When translators are seen merely as technicians, their role in shaping or censoring meaning goes unnoticed. A more interpretative view, which considers translation as a creative and cultural act, reveals its potential as a political intervention. Interestingly, many key thinkers who foreground translation's political nature, such as Naoki Sakai, Lydia Liu, Tejaswini Niranjana, and Vicente Rafael, come from outside Translation Studies, suggesting that the field has been slow to embrace politics as central. While recent years have seen more engagement, there has been institutional and pedagogical resistance, and many prefer to avoid the risks of politicising translation.

Yet, considering translation politically makes it far more relevant across disciplines and to broader social debates. For me, that's the most urgent question today: how to acknowledge translation's political agency without alienating those still attached to its image of neutrality.

NJM: Throughout your work, a recurring theme of translation emerges that extends beyond simple interlingual practice, involving media studies, queer theory, film studies, and intercultural communication. How far can we broaden the idea of 'translation' before it becomes entirely metaphorical? Do you think Translation Studies should continue defending its boundaries as a discipline, or embrace this permeability as a strength?

JE: In my work, I usually focus on interlingual translation between two natural languages and often two cultures. Even in my writing on film remakes, I use that lens to keep translation anchored rather than purely metaphorical. However, there's a risk, I think, that if we extend the term to every form of mediation or exchange, it loses its specificity and becomes interchangeable with concepts like adaptation or migration.

That said, Translation Studies has long embraced permeability. Since the early 1990s, scholars such as Snell-Hornby, Pöchhacker, and Kaindl have described it as an *interdiscipline*. This openness is both invigorating and challenging: large conferences often feel diffuse, and I sometimes find more coherence presenting at literature or media events where the medium itself provides common ground. Lefevere warned in the 1990s that if Translation Studies absorbed every mode of rewriting, it might lose its disciplinary focus and its nuanced understanding of specific media or literary contexts.

Personally, I find this tension productive. I work in a School of Modern Languages and Cultures, which means engaging with colleagues whose research isn't translation-centred, so interdisciplinarity becomes a necessity. It encourages me to articulate translation in broader humanistic terms, which, in turn, shapes my own work. Ultimately, translation can and should be discussed alongside other forms of textual rewriting, as Lefevere argued. But once the object of study shifts to literature or film itself, we are doing Comparative Literature or Film Studies, not Translation Studies. The challenge and the strength lie in maintaining that boundary while letting ideas flow across it.

NJM: Lastly, the rise of AI and machine translation tools is reshaping the field. How do these technologies impact the translator's role in politically sensitive contexts? Where linguistic diversity and cultural nuance are paramount? What strategies can translators employ to maintain agency and ensure cultural and political sensitivity while collaborating with Machine translation?

JE: I'm struggling with this like everyone else. There's a tendency to treat machine translation as neutral, but, as Kate Crawford's Atlas of AI (2021) shows, it's anything but. Human review remains essential, yet the reviser's agency is often diminished compared to that of an end-to-end translator. The challenge ahead is how to preserve that agency. Interestingly, I see a broader cultural shift: many people are reclaiming analogue practices to regain control; students are handwriting notes again; readers are preferring print; and translators are avoiding digital platforms. Perhaps translation will follow this pattern. For some tasks, AI will suffice, but in politically or culturally sensitive

contexts, people will still want the assurance of human judgment. Literary, cultural, and confidential domains, such as medical or financial translation, will likely remain resistant to automation. Still, with technology evolving so rapidly, it's hard to predict where that balance will settle.

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Annotated Bibliography

An Annotated Bibliography of Select Translation Studies Books Published in 2024

SANJANA RAJAN

BASALAMAH, S. (2024). ***A Bergsonian Approach to Translation and Time: Toward Spiritual Translation Studies*****. Routledge.**

The book is part of the *Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies* series. This book debunks the traditional notion of translation as a mere linguistic activity and establishes the philosophy of translation as a distinct subdiscipline within translation studies. The book is an innovative conceptual exploration of translation through the lens of time. The main objective of the book, as said by the author, is to explore the wide range and enormous potential of translation from the perspective of the discipline and across others. The main source of the philosophical approach in this book is the epistemology and metaphysics of the French philosopher Henri Bergson. The author argues for the primacy of the spiritual over the material characteristic of translation. The book is divided into nine chapters presenting how Bergson's ideas can alter the understanding of translation beyond its traditional confines. The chapters explore broader conceptual themes within translation studies, such as durational translation, philosophical spiritualism, the mind/body problem, physicalist and spiritual epistemologies, mediations through art and image, time in phenomenology and ethical and religious considerations. The book is a pioneering work on the temporal characteristics of translation.

CHATTAH, J. (2024). ***Film Music: Cognition to Interpretation*****. Routledge.**

This book offers a holistic approach to exploring the dynamic relationship between a film's soundtrack, its visuals and narrative, and the audience's perception and consumption of meaning. The primary objective of the book is to construct a comprehensive framework to explore the perceptual and cognitive processes that elicit musical meaning in films. The work draws on disciplines

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across the humanities and sciences, including music analysis, psychology, behavioural neuroscience, semiotics, cognitive linguistics, and related fields. The author dubs the framework into an acronym $ESMAMAP_A$, which attempts to explain how interpretations emerge in the listeners' minds and bodies by accounting for the primary cognitive and semiotic processes related to music-based meaning construction. The book is structured into ten chapters, supported by extensive appendices and hundreds of film references. Chapters 1 to 5 explore mechanisms based on analogy, discussing how the material characteristics of music govern responses and interact with the film's visual and narrative dimensions. Chapters 6 to 8 focus on the network of associations drawn from the audience's prior experiences and the film's narrative. Chapters 9 and 10 expand on $ESMAMAP_A$ by exploring categorisation and transformation. The book is designed to be accessible to a broad audience, with utmost clarity, by including a film example at the beginning of each chapter that sets the space for mechanisms to be explored. The book is considered an indispensable guide for scholars and students of music, film studies, and cognition.

GRAY, M. (2024). ***Making the 'Invisible' Visible? Reviewing Translated Works.*** **Peter Lang Publishing.**

The book *Making the 'Invisible' Visible? Reviewing Translated Works* is based on the concept of 'invisibility' introduced by Lawrence Venuti in 1995. The author examines how reviewers treated translated texts since Venuti's work and also analyses how review processes of translation are viewed by various scholars. This book is a large-scale, systematic analysis of reviews extended in well-researched chapters. The book is divided into six chapters with an introduction and conclusion. The first two chapters provide an introduction to review and examine various studies published on the practices of reviewing translated works. Chapters 3.4 and 5 examine reviewing in the United Kingdom, France and Germany, respectively, for a cross-cultural comparison of reviewing practices. The final chapter looks into the similarities and differences between the three contexts, drawing upon the findings from the previous chapters. The author concludes by attempting to redefine the notion of 'invisibility' and outlines the limitations and future scope of the

research. The book addresses one of the major issues in the field and reevaluates it in light of the current situation. This book will be helpful to scholars and students of translation interested in uncovering the notion of *visibility* and *invisibility* of the translation.

HO, N. K. M. (2024). *Appraisal and the Transcreation of Marketing Texts: Persuasion in Chinese and English*. Routledge.

This research and education-focused book contributes to the topic of transcreation in the marketing context, applying an appraisal framework to texts from luxury brands in Chinese and English. The book aims to establish a definition for marketing transcreation and to enlarge the limited data on transcreation studies and practice. It is the first corpus-based study in transcreation, including two parallel corpora with over 15,000 words each. The book is divided into eight chapters. The chapters focus on transcreation in the marketing context, the appraisal framework, and the materials and methods employed. Chapters 5 through 7 analyse the presence of persuasion, the force of persuasion and the inducements of persuasion. Examples for all three dimensions are given in the last chapter. The book offers a fresh perspective on the process and practices of marketing transcreation, utilising appraisal as a model to examine transcreation and translation. Translators, language service providers and marketing managers will find the book useful.

KIAER, J., LORD, E., & KIM, L. (2024). *The K-Wave On-Screen: In Words and Objects*. Routledge.

This book explores the meaning of *K* through the lens of words and objects used in various K-dramas and K-films. It is one of the three book series of Routledge Studies in East Asian Translation. The book predominantly analyses how language, food, clothing, class systems, kinship terms, objects and identity are presented in various South Korean literature, web series, and films. The book is divided into eight chapters. It deals with seven popular adaptations, web series, fiction and film, namely, *Squid Game*, *Parasite*, *SKY Castle*, *Mr Sunshine*, *Pachinko*, *Kim Ji-Young: Born 1982* and *Kingdom*. The first introduction chapter talks about the K-wave and its translingual and transcultural dimensions. The book explores how the use of cultural and historical words and objects evolved in films,

adaptations, and other media as the K-wave emerged. The authors discuss among themselves the possibilities and explanations for each word and object. They also explain how each word and object used signifies the Korean culture and history. This book will be helpful to anyone with an interest in studying Korean literature, culture, language, films, society and history.

LANGE, A., MONTICELLI, D., & RUNDLE, C. (2024). *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Translation Studies*. Taylor & Francis.

This book is part of the *Routledge Handbooks in Translation and Interpreting Studies series*. It aims to provide an exploration of the history of translation and interpreting studies (TIS) as a field of intellectual enquiry. The book analyses how translation evolved throughout history, from the earliest discourses in Assyria, Egypt, Israel, China, India, Greece, and Rome, up to the early 20th century when TIS emerged as a thriving interdiscipline. The chapters are divided into three parts. Part I focuses on the intellectual history of translation and provides an overview of the conceptualisation of translation up to the second half of the 20th century, when TIS was institutionalised as an academic field. Part II focuses on translation and interpreting studies as an interdiscipline and provides an outline of the translation process and research methods from the second half of the 20th century to the present. Key concepts of translation research are the focus of Part III. The authors adopt a historical perspective for the same. The chapters testify that translation has been a part of social functioning in terms of practice and as a problem that needs to be thematised. TIS continues to be interdisciplinary as translation is a phenomenon of interconnections. The book is resourceful for students of translation and interpreting skills, providing methodological and theoretical tools as well as a background in the historiography of TIS.

MARAIS, K., GONNE, M., & MEYLAERTS, R. (2024). *The Complexity of Social-cultural Emergence: Biosemiotics, Semiotics and Translation Studies*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

The book, *The Complexity of Social-cultural Emergence: Biosemiotics, Semiotics and Translation Studies*, is Volume 164 of

the Benjamins Translation Library series. The book is a collection of scholarly studies that explore the interdisciplinary relations between the fields of biosemiotics, semiotics, and translation, and how they affect socio-cultural reality. The core focus of the book is the search for the 'patterns that connect' humanities to sciences and translation to the biosphere. The book employs both theoretical and data-driven approaches to reflect on the complexity of social-cultural emergence as a translation process. It consisted of eight chapters, each dealing with a different theoretical contribution. The chapters connect translation with concepts in quantum physics, biosemiotics, new materialism, photojournalism, gender in Islamic law, biotranslation, biosemiotics in Soviet translatology, and semiotic complexity. The book thus explicitly advocates for a broadened concept of translation studies that is more than interlingual translation studies. Expanded definitions of translations, including non-human, non-linguistic translation processes to define translation as a semiotic rather than a strictly linguistic process, underlie all the chapters in the book.

PILLIÈRE, L., BERK ALBACHTEN, O. (2024). *The Routledge Handbook of Intralingual Translation*. Taylor & Francis.

This book is part of the series, *Routledge Handbooks in Translation and Interpreting Studies*. It aims to provide an overview of the theories involved in intralingual translation and present-day research in the field. The book is also a collective attempt to redefine the concept of intralingual translation in various ways. This book is divided into six chapters that reflect the main concepts and themes of current research in intralingual translation. Each chapter is a compilation of articles from various contributors representing different areas within the central idea. The book also analyses whether Roman Jakobson's division of translation types is a clear-cut definition. Many chapters challenge the boundaries he created for the categorisation, specifically the distinction of intra- and interlingual translation. The chapters of the book cover the areas of intralingual translation: in a diachronic perspective, language variety and ideology, easy and plain language, re-wording and editing, education and language acquisition, and accessibility from a practical perspective. Through each chapter, this book explains how

intralingual translation can be used in different contexts. The book will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, offering insights into current research trends in intralingual translation.

SASAMOTO, R. (2024). *Relevance and Text-on-screen in Audiovisual Translation: The Pragmatics of Creative Subtitling*. Routledge.

The book is part of the *Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies* series. This book examines audio-visual translation (AVT) that deviates from standard AVT norms. The text is grounded in relevance theory, a cognitively grounded theory in communication. The book focuses on creative subtitling, also termed 'text-on-screen', and how it interacts with and shapes viewers' interpretation processes. The book is divided into eight chapters, with the last chapter being a conclusion and future directions. The chapters examine the role of text-on-screen, its technical errors and misuse, experimental approaches in AVT, industry-based text-on-screen, and user-generated text-on-screen, as well as the various uses and aspects of text-on-screen within the framework of relevance theory. The author also discusses the challenges in the application of relevance theory in the final chapter. The book employs a multidisciplinary approach, presenting empirical evidence in various forms, including Japanese telop, creative text use on screen, and user-generated text-on-screen. The book ultimately aims to provide a theoretically grounded and empirically supported discussion of text-on-screen, its impact on interpretation processes and how it enhances cognitive and affective mutuality between producers and viewers, while also exploring the social implications of participatory culture and shared viewing.

TACHTIRIS, C. (2024). *Translation and Race*. Routledge.

This book is part of the *New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies*. The book evolves around the topic of racial discrimination in translation practice, from the beginning to contemporary times. The author discusses the norms in translation, which are often considered universal but actually emerged from racial frameworks that centre on Whiteness. The book starts with the

author's theories on capitalising or non-capitalising Black and White and her reasoning behind doing so. The author talks about whiteness and how white supremacy shaped the norms of literary translation and translation studies in the West. The book is divided into five main chapters, with a fitting introduction and conclusion. The introduction elaborates on the "unbearable whiteness" in translation practices and the translation studies profession. The main chapters discuss various aspects, with translation serving as a base, including racialisation, racial capitalism, racial diversity and identity politics, critical race studies, and translating racism. The book also uses case studies to deal with the 'modern' framework of race and racism surrounding European civilisation, especially Western translation studies and literary translation in the West. The book serves as a call to make changes towards racialisation and the unbearable whiteness of translation in the West.

TEKWA, K. (2024). ***Machine Translation and Foreign Language Learning*****. Springer Nature.**

This book, authored by Kizito Tekwa, is part of the *New Frontiers in Translation Studies* series. The book aims to explore the intersection of technology and language, specifically evaluating the intricate interplay between Machine Translation (MT), Instant Messaging (IM) and Foreign Language (FL) learning. The research is epistemologically grounded in Jakobson's (1960) semiotic theory of communication. This research primarily addresses two questions: Does MT increase the willingness to communicate (WTC) in a foreign language, and does it offer learners opportunities to communicate (OTC) in a foreign language? The book is divided into four main chapters. The chapters comprise a literature review, the methodology adopted for the research, findings including the questionnaires and conversation history of participants, and discussions and implications of the project. The project brought together 22 Chinese students and eight native and non-native English-speaking volunteers from Canada. The book's uniqueness lies in its figures, tables and screenshots of actual real-time IM conversations. This research confirms the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies. This book contributes to bridging the gap

between IM, MT and FL learning and explores the impact of IM in today's society.

TIPTON, R. (2024). ***The Routledge Guide to Teaching Ethics in Translation and Interpreting Education*****. Routledge.**

This book is a part of *Routledge Guides to Teaching Translation and Interpreting*. The book is a series of practical guides of translation and interpreting (TI) for instructors, lecturers and course designers, primarily focusing on university-level educators and promoting an integrated approach to ethics teaching. The core goals are to improve the quality of student learning about ethics, develop confidence in ethical decision-making, and enhance a commitment to ethics beyond the programme of study. A central concept that cuts across the book is "(self-) reflexivity", which supports the development of ethical responsibility and ethical competence. The book is divided into five chapters, addressing ethics in translation and interpreting curriculum. The third chapter focuses on technologies used in translation, and the fifth chapter focuses on teaching research ethics in TI education. The book explores ethical practices in translation and interpretation through real-world examples, incorporating a range of pedagogical activities and tasks. The book contributes towards enhancing empirical research on ethics teaching in TI programmes. As the first stand-alone book in the area of teaching ethics in translation and interpreting studies, this is an essential text for all students, instructors and lecturers in the area.

ZHAN, C., & MORATTO, R. (2024). ***Audio Description and Interpreting Studies: Interdisciplinary Crossroads*****. Routledge.**

The book is part of the *Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies* series. This volume is a systematic and comprehensive exploration of the integration between Audio Description (AD) and interpreting studies. It investigates the reciprocal significance of AD and interprets it in terms of research, practice and training, approaching AD as a quasi-interpreting activity. The book features eight chapters contributed by leading scholars in the field, from various regions, including Australia, the

Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, the US, the UK, Finland, and Spain. The chapters explore various topics, including similarities and differentiations of AD and interpreting studies, the study of AD from the viewpoint of interpreting, an approach to interpreting with implications from AD, the incorporation of interpreting principles into AD practice, the impact of accent on both AD and interpreting, and the exploration of AD through research methodologies employed in interpreting studies.

This book is the first publication dedicated to the particular topic of AD and interpreting studies. It is a valuable resource for students, scholars and practitioners interested in audio-visual translation (AVT) and accessible communication.

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About the Author

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