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From Mountain to Metaphor: Purpose, Audience, and Fidelity in Two Intersemiotic Poetic Retellings of 'Puteri Gunung Ledang'

J. Yasodhara Menon[1]*, Krishnavanie Shunmugam[2], and Selvajothi Ramalingam[3]

[1,2,3]*Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

*Corresponding Author
J. Yasodhara Menon
E-mail: jaymenon@um.edu.my

Author(s):
Author 2: Krishnavanie Shunmugam
E-mail: krishnav@um.edu.my

Author 3: Selvajothi Ramalingam
E-mail: selvajothi@um.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Intersemiotic translation, the transformation of a text from one semiotic system to another, remains under explored in Translation Studies. This study examines how purpose, audience, and fidelity influence two intersemiotic poetic renditions of the Malay folktale 'Puteri Gunung Ledang', originally documented in prose. **Methods**: The analysis employed Chatman's Narrative Theory (1978) combined with Freytag's Pyramid Model (1863) to identify invariant and variant elements and Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis to classify themes by comparing each poetic version with the source folktale. Vermeer's Skopos Theory (1978) was applied to interpret the translators' stated purposes, gathered through semi-structured interviews. **Results**: Despite multiple variant features introduced in both renditions, a clear invariant narrative core persists, ensuring functional fidelity to the original. Thematic mapping of interview data revealed that the translators' creative choices were shaped by personal experiences, their understanding of the role of art, and their aspirations to transmit cultural heritage to future Malaysian generations. **Discussion**: The findings demonstrate that fidelity in intersemiotic translation is maintained not by literal replication but by preserving a functional core, in line with Skopos Theory. Variations served to adapt the folktale for intended audiences while reflecting the translators' artistic visions and socio-cultural commitments. **Conclusion**: This study highlights how intersemiotic translation balances fidelity and creativity, with translators' purposes and audience considerations guiding variance. Such works serve as both artistic reinterpretations and vehicles for cultural continuity and heritage preservation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the interlinking of verbal and non-verbal semiotic systems has markedly transformed communication trends, linking cultures across the globe, in ways that previously were not thought possible. In the field of Translation Studies (TS), this has massive implications as the study of translation can no longer be confined to interlingual translations based purely on the verbal linguistic system but must include all forms of sign systems. This is stressed by Marias, who forewarns

that "with technological development, multimodal communication is becoming the norm, and TS will define itself out of existence if it limits its interests to interlingual translation only" (2019, p. 22-23). Marias's concerns have been alleviated by TS coming into the 'era of intersemiotic translation', a phrase used by Fabbri (2000, p. 282), in reference to the "spread of visual and verbal literacy and the intensification of mass communication technologies" (Kourdis and Yoka, 2014, p. 164) resulting in the overlapping of linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic systems.

Introduced by Jakobson (1959) as a triadic division of translation, 'intersemiotic translation or transmutation' is defined as "the interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems" (Venuti, 2012, p. 127). While Jakobson's initial definition of intersemiotic translation was based on the premise of language as the primary mode, Aguiar and Queiroz (2009) stress that intersemiotic translations should include "translations of texts of all kinds" (p. 1) which implies that an intersemiotic transfer can occur between two non-verbal sign systems (i.e., where no written text is involved) for example, a painting being represented as a sculpture or even between two types of verbal systems like prose to poetry.

Gottlieb's (2017) division of intersemiotic translation into three main categories, almost sixty years after Jakobson's (1959) initial definition, further demonstrates the fluidity of this type of translation. The three categories are: diasemiotic (uses different channel(s) than in the original e.g., written into played music categorized as monosemiotic or silent movie into a radio play characterized as polysemiotic), ultrasemiotic (uses more channels than in the original, e.g., novel translated into film) and infrasemiotic (uses fewer channels than in the original e.g., a mime performing a drama which initially had spoken lines)' (p. 51). O'Halloran (2016) maintains that the "definition of intersemiotic translation has been broadened to include translations across non-linguistic semiotic resources" (p. 199) owing to the emergence of multiple semiotic systems in the digital age. The cultural turn in TS has also extended translation activity beyond the domain of language to include cultural and social domains with purpose and functionality becoming key issues in translation theories and research areas.

This paper which focuses on poetic recreations of a folktale implicitly makes a case for poetry arising from prose to be viewed as intersemiotic translation. Two reasons for this research focus are: firstly, poetic translations in the past have not been considered as intersemiotic translations and secondly, intersemiotic renditions of a Malay folktale are yet to be studied in relation to the skopos/purpose of the translator. Before

proceeding further, the following explanation provides justifications as to why poetic retellings should be regarded as intersemiotic translations. Although poems and folktales, use similar sign systems i.e., verbal, the shift from a folktale documented in prose to a poem involves the application of different structures and language symbols to express meaning. "Poetry expresses concepts and things by indirection. To put it simply, a poem says one thing and means another" (Riffaterre, 1978, p.1). Thus, when a story with a narrator is translated to a stanzaic poem with a persona there occurs a change in the "semiotic composition" (Gottlieb, 2005, p.11) which signifies a shift in mode and thus qualifies the poem to be an intersemiotic translation.

Furthermore, Sütiste and Torop (2007, p. 203) aptly emphasize that "one and the same verbal text may exist within culture simultaneously as a verbal, multimedial, audiovisual, or audial text," and Damaskinidis (2016) argues that "it is impossible to ignore the relationship between them" (p. 300). In this study, the source text (ST) in prose form exists simultaneously with its target text (TT) in poetic form. Although, there is no change in the explicit verbal sign system between the prose narrative and the 2 poems, there is an implicit shift as the folktale is a straightforward, literal narrative whereas the poems display qualities of visual iconicity to communicate meaning through a range of sensual imagery which includes auditory perceptions.

Since the poetic renditions differ significantly in comparison to the prose ST, this paper aims to firstly, identify the invariant core, namely the elements of the story and the theme/s in the original narrative which have been kept intact in the target intersemiotic rendition, and the variant features, which are the changes (i.e., amplifications, omissions, additions, modifications) that have been made in the intersemiotic TTs when compared with the original folktale recorded in *Sejarah Melayu*/ the 'Malay Annals' (1612). This will reveal the degree of fidelity of the translators to the original folktale. Secondly, it aims to determine the skopos which is the translators' purpose in producing the intersemiotic poetic retellings of 'Puteri Gunung Ledang'; this will provide insight on why their poems are recreated with certain variances.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An extensive literature review has revealed that intersemiotic research on Eastern literary narratives like novels, epic poems, or plays are generally distinctly fewer than those produced in Western countries, and in relation to folk or fairy tales, the dearth in research is even more evident. Some recent studies on Western fairy tales include Sahakyan (2024) who discusses the intersemiotic interpretations of Brothers Grimm's, 'Hansel and Gretel'

(1812) and H.C. Andersen's, 'The Little Match Girl' (1845) in a series of book illustrations, animated films and movies, Jivanyan (2024) who studies the intersemiotic recreations of de Villeneuve's 'Beauty and the Beast' (1740), and Li and Zlatev (2022) who undertake a cognitive semiotic study to explore the narrative range and force of H. C. Andersen' fairy tale, 'The Little Mermaid' which is represented in Edvard Eriksen's sculpture Den lille Havfrue by in Copenhagen. Bubnášová (2020) has analysed the Slovak radio adaptations of Andersen's fairy tales as intersemiotic translations owing to the transference of the written word to an acoustic mode and provides a case study on Peter Gregor's 1992 radio dramatization of the 'Wild Swans' and Sohár (2019) examines the translation of Brothers Grimm's 'Snow White' (1812) which are represented via language and pictures. All of these studies are centred on Western fairy tales, thus excluding Eastern fairy tales as potential research data for TS.

In relation to folktales, only one study by Liu (2022) was found that focuses on Eastern folktales. He (2022) investigates the intersemiotic transference of Chinese folktales on gods and demons from classical novels like 'Xiyouji' (Journey to the West), 'Fengshen yanyi' (Creation of Gods) and 'Jingshi tongyan' (Stories to Caution the World) into Chinese animated films. Liu's (2022) intersemiotic study on Chinese folktales is a rare find and this underscores the need to extend research on Eastern folktales which are represented intersemiotically. This paper intends to contribute to this lack in research by analysing the popular Malay folktale, 'Puteri Gunung Ledang' also known as 'The Princess of Mount Ophir' and 2 translated versions of this folktale in the form of poems titled 'Puteri Gunung Ledang' (2012) by Ninot Aziz and 'Message of Princess of Mount Ledang to Sultan Mahmud' (2013) by Zurinah Hassan.

As there are 32 variants of the 'Sejarah Melayu' ('Malay Annals') where the written version of this folktale originates from, the ST in this paper refers to C.C. Brown's (1952) English translation of this story which is about 841 words. It is translated from Raffles M.S. 18 which is acknowledged to be the oldest version of the 'Sejarah Melayu' ('Malay Annals') written in 1612. The importance of the 'Malay Annals' lies in it being a prolific text on Malay history and literature as it gives insight into the Malay medieval court, culture, and political system. In 2001, the 'Malay Annals' was listed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme International Register marking it a document of significant heritage with universal value, worthy of preservation.

The earliest reference to the Princess of Mount Ledang is found in Tomé Pires's (1944) travelogue written between 1512-1515. The author describes her as an "enchanted queen in the hill of Malacca called Gunong Ledang (Gulom Leydam) (p. 162)". In his book, 'Description of Malacca' (1613), Godinho de Eredia (1997) compares Mount Ledang to Mount Sibilla in Italy, where at the peak of the mountain lies the Sibyl cave and its sorceress. Eredia states that the princess was Parameswara's consort who retreated to Gunung Ledang and attained immortality by practising magic. Winstedt (1951) in 'The Malay Magician being Shaman, Saiva and Sufi' writes that the princess has the ability to change her appearance according to the time of the day; in the morning, she appears as a girl, in the afternoon as a woman and at night as an old lady.

In the 'Malay Annals' (1612), this folktale begins with Sultan Mansur Shah's quest to find a wife who fits his grandiose status. A delegation is sent out to the mountain to request for the princess's hand in marriage. The princess, however, sets seven implausible conditions for the king to fulfil before he can marry her:

"… let him make for me a bridge of gold and a bridge of silver from Malaka to Gunong Ledang: and for a betrothal gift let there be seven trays of mosquitos' hearts, seven trays of mites' hearts, a vat of young areca-nut water, a vat of tears, a cup of the Raja's blood and a cup of his son's blood. On these conditions I approve the request of the Raja of Malaka…" (lines 36-40). Upon hearing the requests, the king states that "All that she demands we can provide, save only the blood of our son; that we cannot provide, for our heart would not suffer us to take it" (lines 48-49).

The differences between this 500-year-old version against the 19th century intersemiotic poetic translations suggest that intersemiotic translators have high visibility in their works and therefore highlight the need for research to better understand the role of translators as intersemiotic re/creators.

3. METHODS

The study comprises two sets of data: (i) the ST (a narrative prose) and TTs (2 poems) and (ii) the interview responses from 2 poets. The first set of data i.e., the poems were obtained via a thorough internet search carried out multiple times over a period of six months The criteria used to select the poems was firstly, they have to be of international standard, produced by well-known professionals. Table 1 below attests to this.

Secondly, there needed to be an explicit or implicit link between the ST and the intersemiotic recreation and this connection had to be acknowledged by the poets. This confirmation was provided by the translator's response to Question 4 in the interview i.e., What are some important sources that you have used to create your art? How much of the 'Puteri Gunung Ledang' story have you heard/read/watched? Did any of these works have an impact on your own work? Their responses are recorded in Table 2 below.

Table 1: *Selected Intersemiotic Poetic Translations*

No	Mode	Translator	Semiotic Mode	Year
1.	Poem *Puteri Gunung Ledang*	Ninot Aziz (Zalina Abdul Aziz) (Writer) - award winning Malaysian author and poet - specialises in Malay and Asian legends - actively publishes young adult novels based on folktales which have received awards	Verbal (English)	2012
2.	Poem: *The Message from Princess of Mount Ledang to Sultan Mahmud*	Zurinah Hassan (Writer) - Malaysian National Laureate - winner of numerous awards locally and internationally - works translated into English, Japanese, French, Spanish and Russian	Verbal (English)	2013

Source: Author, 2025

Table 2: *Translators Acknowledgement of the Link between the ST and the selected Intersemiotic Translations*

Translator	Response to Interview Question 4
Ninot Aziz (NA)	Puteri Gunung Ledang was something that I grew up with. So, yeah, I grew up with it, you know, it was in the movies so this was the inspiration that I got from …Yes, yeah…that is the PGL I grew up with and err though I did not watch the movie again to write this poem but aah, we tell each other this story all the time in the family, so it is more like oral storytelling yes, so that is how it was….
Zurinah Hassan (ZH)	The first time I come across the story, I was in primary school, aah, so, through kita punya cikgu-cikgu selalu cakap lah [our teachers who always said] and aah then, there is one teacher yang lah macam kata inspiring juga lah aah he told us about, dia kata, he told us PGL ni actually is a social critic…

Source: Author, 2025

The rest of the interview questions focused mainly on insights as to who/what influenced the translators in their decision-making process and the purpose for the creation of these intersemiotic works.

As this study was part of the author's doctoral thesis, the first step was to obtain consent from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the related educational institution. Once the research plan was approved, the participants of the study (for the second data set, i.e., the interviews) were identified based on the criteria above (refer to Table 1 & 2). The complete study included 6 intersemiotic translators of PGL comprising the 2 poets discussed in this present paper, 2 artists, 1 sculptor and 1 exhibitor. Next, a set of interview questions was formulated, focusing mainly on the translator's *skopos* i.e., their purpose and reason for changing or retaining aspects of the original tale in their recreations. A pilot study was also carried out to further restructure and modify the final interview questions. Finally, the participants were contacted and the scope of the study was explained to them. With the participants' consent, the interview was carried out and transcribed for analysis.

For the analysis of the first set of data, the ST and both poems were deconstructed in accordance with Chatman's (1978) narrative framework (Figure 1). Chatman's structuralist model was used as it caters to both verbal and non-verbal narrative texts. The narrative structure of the poems was broken down and further examined in terms of story i.e., the main elements or content of the story and its discourse or how the story is expressed. It was important to combine Freytag's Pyramid Model (1863) with Chatman's as Freytag's model traces the plot or progression of the story which is not included in Chatman's framework. The combination of both these models aided in identifying the invariant core and variant features of the folktale in the intersemiotic poetic translations.

As a first step, the ST (narrative prose of PGL) was deconstructed based on the two models above and the findings were classified as the content (*fabula*) and discourse or forms of expression (*sjuzet*) which included Freytag's plot structure. This was recorded in a table. Likewise, the 2 poems content and discourse were also deconstructed and presented in a table. Following this, the content and discourse which makes up the narrative structure of the poetic TTs were compared with the narrative structure of the ST to identify the invariant core and variant features of the folktale manifested in the 2 poetic retellings. This final table of the findings for data set 1 which relates to research question 1 is presented in Table 3 in the analysis section.

For the analysis of the second data set, i.e., the responses to the interview questions, the interview transcripts were examined using Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis (2006). Reflexive Thematic Analysis
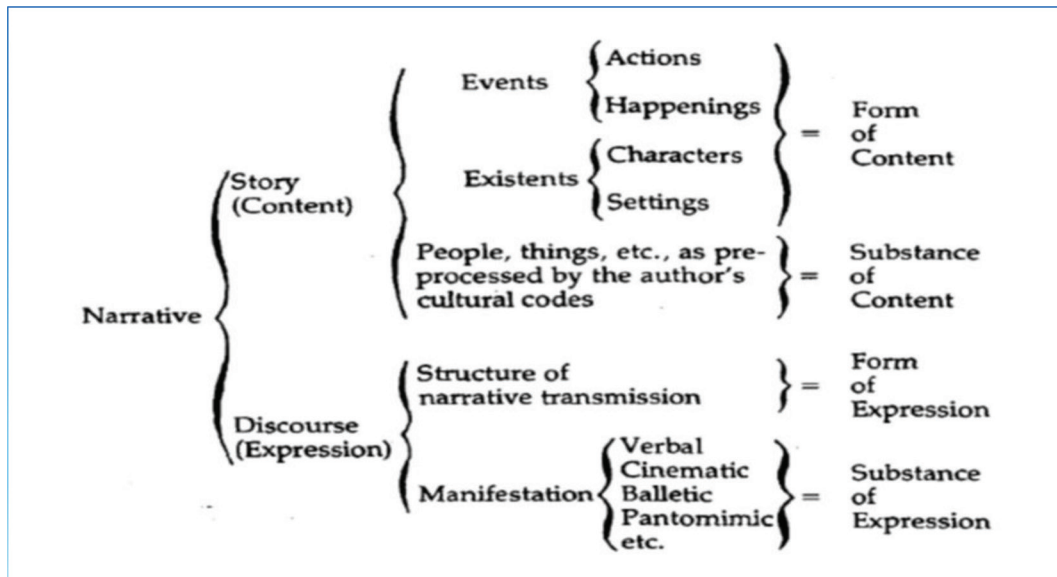
Figure 1. *Chatman's Elements of Narrative Theory (Chatman 1978, p. 26)*
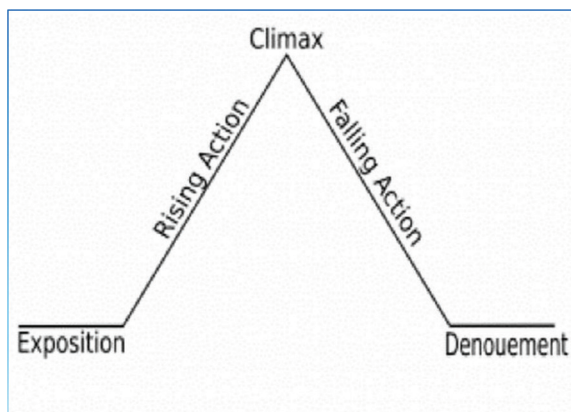

Figure 2. *Freytag's Pyramid Model (Freytag 1900/1863)*

(RTA) is a flexible, interpretative approach to qualitative data analysis which is used to identify and analyse patterns or themes in a data set. It is a six-phase systematic process used to identify specific themes from the interview transcripts which are then coded for analysis. This process, which is crucial to answer research question 2, provides insight into the purpose of the intersemiotic translations and the translators' decision-making process. The coded themes were then studied to identify the degree to which the translators had adhered to the fundamentals of Skopos Theory in reference to the concepts of aim and fidelity. Aim refers to translators' first obligation which is to ensure that translatums fulfil the purpose of the translations (which is determined wholly by a commissioning client or the translator or as a collaborative purpose by both parties) while fidelity is the degree to which the TT features and message match the ST. Here, the fidelity rule is subservient to the Skopos rule which means that the ST plays a limited role in the translation process.

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed five major themes (C1 - C5) and three minor themes (C6 – C8). Major themes were directly or indirectly related to the skopos of the translator, while the minor themes expressed other aspects of the translator's work or worldviews as a whole. To identify these themes, the interview transcripts were read over multiple times and the utterances with similar themes were coded carefully. Interrater reliability was ensured by the researcher's supervisors; the coding of the interview responses were validated after several rounds of discussion. C stands for code followed by a number which represents a theme while a number in a bracket after these as in C3 (8) refers to the sequence of the utterance in the interview.

The data collection and analyses procedures used in this research were carried out systematically. Triangulation in the form of narrative mappings and interviews were used to validate the research findings. It encapsulates a bottom-up process where data was collected in a realistic setting by conducting interviews which were then analysed using a meaning-making/ interpretative process, with conclusions drawn at the tail-end of the research process.

4. ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The mapping of the ST with the 2 intersemiotic poetic TTs with regard to content of the story (*fabula*) and the discourse or form of expression (*sjuzet*) showed that each poet has kept intact some core aspects (the invariant core) of the ST and simultaneously added multiple shifts (the variant features) to their recreations. Table 3 below shows the summarized analysis of the invariant core and variant features found in the poems when compared to the ST.

Table 3. *Summarized Analysis of the Invariant Core and Variant Features in the Selected Intersemiotic Translations Mapped Against the ST*

Intersemiotic Translators /Translations	Kernels-Major Events Mostly/Fully Retained from the ST (INVARIANT CORE)	Kernels-Major Events Presented Differently or Omitted from the ST (VARIANT FEATURES)	Satellites – Minor Events Mostly/ Fully Retained from the ST (INVARIANT CORE)	Satellites - Events Presented Differently or Omitted from the ST (VARIANT FEATURES)
Ninot Aziz (NA)	- King looking for a new wife	- Omission of King's name	- Difficult to climb the mountain	- Addition of dialogues
'Puteri Gunung Ledang' (2012)	- 7 conditions are stated	- King's reaction to the conditions and his decision to sacrifice his son	- Only Tun Mamad reaches the summit - The magical garden on the summit	- Addition of mystical and eerie mood Hang Tuah goes into the forest
	- Depicts the following characters: Princess, King, Tun Mamad, Sang Setia, Hang Tuah	- Depiction of the Princess as a strong persona and the king as a weak persona - Depiction of Tun Mamad as a round character	- Meeting the ladies-in-waiting	
	- Setting is Mount Ledang and Malacca	- Description of the suffering of the people		
	- Meeting the old lady			
Zurinah Hassan (ZH) 'Message of Princess of Mount Ledang to Sultan Mahmud' (2013)	- The identity of the King is given in the title	- The Princess herself meets Tun Mamat, he does not meet the old lady	**NONE**	- Omission of the difficult journey to the mountain
	- King looking for a new wife is implied	- The Princess is the mouthpiece, the main character		- Omission of the magical garden on the summit
	- 7 conditions are stated	- Created based on one event only, the meeting of the Princess and Tun Mamat.		- Omission of meeting the ladies-in-waiting
	- Depicts the following characters: Princess, Tun Mamad	- One-sided dialogue		- Addition of all other princesses that the King has desired
	- Setting is Mount Ledang and Malacca	- Omission of the King's reaction to the conditions		
		- Feminist viewpoint		

Source: Author, 2025

The invariant core shared by both the poems are the 7 conditions that are set by the princess. In terms of fidelity, Ninot Aziz's poem has stayed mostly true to the ST in terms of plot structure. The distinct invariance in Ninot Aziz's poem is introduced through the character of the king. The ST depicts a king who is compassionate and rules according to reason as he does not have the heart to kill his son to fulfil the princess's conditions. However, in Ninot Aziz's version, the king succumbs to his desire as when the king is told what the seven conditions are, he proceeds to wield his power to fulfil the conditions, no matter the cost or lives risked. There is also the otherworldly mood of mysticism that surrounds the princess which permeates throughout Ninot Aziz's poem, adding a supernatural tone which can be linked to Tomé Pires' Suma Oriental (1512-1515) and Godinho de Eredia's

writings (1613) in regard to the mystical nature of the princess. In the ST, it is the mystical atmosphere of the mountain the princess resides on that is felt as the king's men ascend Mount Ledang.

In comparison, Zurinah Hassan has produced an entirely new version of the original narrative by using only one aspect of the ST which is the meeting of the messenger with the princess and creates a monologue between the princess and the messenger, Tun Mamat. The princess's aversion regarding the Sultan's proposal dominates the poem entirely. This is a stark difference from the ST where the princess remains mostly voiceless and is unable to directly refuse the king's proposal as was the custom of that time. During that era, to refuse a king's request was akin to treason. Yahaya (1991) states that the "ruler enjoyed the almost unquestionable loyalty of his
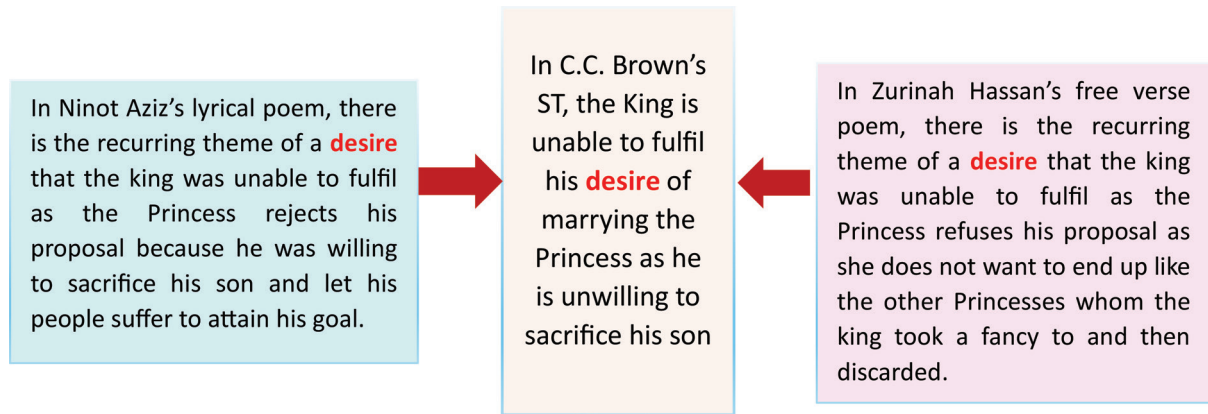
In Ninot Aziz's lyrical poem, there is the recurring theme of a **desire** that the king was unable to fulfil as the Princess rejects his proposal because he was willing to sacrifice his son and let his people suffer to attain his goal.	In C.C. Brown's ST, the King is unable to fulfil his **desire** of marrying the Princess as he is unwilling to sacrifice his son	In Zurinah Hassan's free verse poem, there is the recurring theme of a **desire** that the king was unable to fulfil as the Princess refuses his proposal as she does not want to end up like the other Princesses whom the king took a fancy to and then discarded.

Figure 3. *Link between the ST and Selected Intersemiotic Translations*

subjects" (p.5) which basically means that the ruler had absolute power and authority over everyone. Written from a feminine perspective which are strongly evoked by the poet's personal experiences, Zurinah Hassan's princess markedly differs from the traditional Malay woman as the princess is depicted as a strong, powerful woman who knows her mind and is fearless as she defiantly refuses to fulfil a king's desires, an idea which is not evident in the ST.

The invariant core and variant features in terms of additions, deletions, and amplifications in the intersemiotic translations indicate that the translators had a specific purpose to achieve via their works. This can be related to the idea of the functionality of a text as opposed to equivalence. According to Kelly (1979), all translation theories are underpinned by a theory of language, based either on the instrumental or hermeneutic model. The former stresses on equivalence, word to word translation of a text to keep meaning intact while the latter focuses on functionality of a text. The current findings show that intersemiotic translations are distinctly functional in nature rather than literal as translation is seen as "an interpretation of the source text whose form, meaning, and effect are seen as variable, subject to inevitable transformations [rewritings] during the translating process" (Venuti, 2012, p. 483). It is dependent not only on the nature of the ST but also on the aim or purpose of the translation work. Thus, with regard to both the poetic renditions, it is the hermeneutic approach that predominantly operates with its creators.

When scrutinized further, a consistent core that links the ST and the two intersemiotic poetic renderings was revealed as depicted by Figure 3 above. The link is desire, i.e., of possessing the princess which remains a futile goal for the one who desires her. There is also the notion of how desires when unchecked can lead to detrimental consequences, from losing a nation to losing oneself. By interconnecting the idea of desire with gender, both poets evidently subscribe to a feminist translation perspective.

Simon (1996) and Flotow (2011) state that feminist translators tend to make themselves visible in their works as their gender, ideological beliefs and culture shape their translations. This is clearly depicted in both the poetic translations as the voice of the princess is at the forefront, explicitly highlighting feminist themes as opposed to the ST where the princess is rendered voiceless.

As mentioned earlier, Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) approach was used to analyse the interview responses to identify the skopos of the translators, i.e., research question 2. 5 major themes and 2 minor themes were identified (Table 4). There were 2 major themes (C1 and C2) that emerged from the interview responses which were related directly to the translators' skopos (Table 4) while C3-C5 were indirectly related to some of the aspects that influenced the poets' skopoi and decision-making in recreating PGL.

The summary of the poets' interview responses in Table 4 shows that both translators had recast PGL into poetic narratives with the main purpose of preserving a national heritage and promoting its cultural richness to an international audience. Both translators also view PGL as exemplary in critiquing the social system, the political power wielded by leaders, their reckless desires and the consequences that come with it, not only in the past, but also in current times. Thus, their intersemiotic poetic translations are very much reflective of these issues. The coding of the major and minor themes was also crucial in understanding the decision-making process in relation to the fundamentals of Skopos theory. To this end, some utterances have been extracted from Ninot Aziz and Zurinah Hassan's interview transcripts to highlight their adherence to two main elements of Skopos theory, namely, aim and fidelity.

Utterance NA C1 (3) summarises the main purpose of Ninot Aziz's work: a translational action that started with a personal aim and then developed to include a wider audience and ultimately, the aim was to put it "out there on the international platform" as these tales are

Table 4. *Coding of Major and Minor Themes*

Codes	Translators	
	Ninot Aziz (NA)	**Zurinah Hassan (ZH)**
Coding for Major Themes	• *SKOPOS* FOR THE WORK (C1): recognizes the richness of heritage and importance of preserving culture/heritage, proud of the heritage and wants to introduce it to a wider audience	• *SKOPOS* FOR THE WORK (C1): recognizes the richness of heritage and importance of preserving culture/heritage, wants to introduce it to an international audience
	• REASONS AS TO WHY THE FOLKTALE WAS TRANSLATED IN THIS WAY (C2): wanted to show that the real PGL is a strong character, reason for the choice of language level used	• REASONS AS TO WHY THE FOLKTALE WAS TRANSLATED IN THIS WAY (C2): wants the message of the princess to be interpreted according to current times/to give voice to women
	• THE TRANSLATION PROCESS (C3): own initiative, explains her reinterpretation of folktale (similar to ST, the king can never have her), gives reason for choice of mode (poem), sees it as intersemiotic translation, long process	• THE TRANSLATION PROCESS (C3): own initiative for original work but translated work commissioned by ITBM/DBP, no restrictions, long process, conscious of the changes of meaning/message in translated texts i.e., different intentions in Malay & English
	• INFLUENCES ON THE WORK (C4): PGL movie (1961), research, based on personal experience i.e., family background, comes from a lineage of storytellers	• INFLUENCES ON THE WORK (C4): based on personal experience and own research
	• INTERPRETATION OF THE FOLKTALE (C5): idea of loyalty/patriotism to the king/ the psyche of the people at that time/political issues, focus is on the feminine (the princess)	• INTERPRETATION OF THE FOLKTALE (C5): idea of loyalty/patriotism to the king/ the psyche of the people at that time/political issues, focus is on the feminine (the princess), similar to NA
Coding for Minor Themes	• THE TRANSLATOR'S PROFESSION (C6): good response/passionate about her work, reference to *skopos* of ST author, satisfaction as a translator as her translations are used in real-life situations i.e., staging a play	• THE TRANSLATOR'S PROFESSION (C6): good response/passionate about her work, people's opinions do not matter, does not write for an audience, satisfaction as a translator as she also translates her own work
	• FUTURE PLANS FOR PGL (C7): • has plans to do another translation of this folktale	• FUTURE PLANS FOR PGL (C7): May or may not do another translation of this folktale in a different form
		• OPINIONS ON OTHER TRANSLATIONS OF PGL C8): translations like Tiara's musical deviate from the original ST in terms of message (cons of translations)

Source: Author, 2025

"really, really old" and "our legends are so rich, it deserves to be on the world stage". She reiterates that she writes in English with the hope that people will know these "beautiful legends" and write about them and make them into plays and movies. She has taken a further step in fulfilling this purpose as she now uses her translations in real-life situations; she has storytelling events where children re-enact the stories in her book and talks that she gives to corporate people, international schools, and book clubs regarding these tales. These steps showcase the main purpose of her translations which is to preserve the culture and heritage embedded within these tales and understand the importance of tales such as PGL as a national heritage.

In utterance ZH C3 (8), Zurinah Hassan states that when she first wrote the Malay version, her thoughts were centred on how the ST writer used this folktale as a way of critiquing the Sultan. However, when she wrote the English version, she began to think about it in terms of a feminist viewpoint and used it to create a different persona of the princess. In the later part of the interview, she attributes this development to the fact that the Malay version was written a long time ago and by the time she translated it into English, her mindset had changed, there was depth and maturity in her thinking. Through her work, she aims to reach out to society, especially politicians to highlight social and political issues that are plaguing the nation.

When the *skopoi* of both the translators are compared, it is evident that the poetic retellings have been largely shaped by a personal desire or experience of the translator although their collective aim is to preserve the cultural heritage and historical knowledge that is embedded within this story. Also, by linking it back to the ST, even by a small degree, both translators remind their audience of the political play and consequences that

Table 5: *Selected Utterances from Interview Transcripts*

NA C1 (3)
For the book, it' s really this, it's just that our, our…**our Hikayat is so rich**, **why is it that it is not out there on the international platform** as it should be and eh, it is so old actually, really, really old … so my take is, our legends are so rich, it deserves to be on the world stage and **I am writing in English** so that hopefully, it can be one day, that said, I am not saying that you know my work will be out there taking it further, but people need to know, oh, these are beautiful legends, maybe we should write them, maybe we should ehm, **make them into movies, we should make them into plays**
ZH C3 (8)
…bila semasa I mula-mula tulis, pemikiran I macam mana orang tu kritik Sultan, I berfikir hal itu. Tapi masa I tulis aah, the English version, I duk fikir tentang feminist, feminism… so dia akan jadi different
(when I first wrote it, **I thought about how the original writer critiques the Sultan,** but **in the English version, I was thinking about feminism,** so **the character of the princess became different**)

Source: Author, 2025

can incapacitate a nation if a leader acts according to his whims and fancies and is unable to control his desires.

This study has revealed that the first rule of Skopos theory where a translational action is determined by its skopos or purpose is true in the case of both Ninot Aziz and Zurinah Hassan. Secondly, their poetic retellings are functional in their respective linguistic and cultural settings. As per the third rule, none of these works are reversible which means that their poetic transformations may have different functions in the target culture as opposed to the ST in the source culture. Finally, while Vermeer's Skopos rule which pertains to fidelity, offers no quantitative way of measuring the degree of adherence, the mapping of Chatman's narrative theory onto the ST and target recreations is deemed a relatively effective method in determining the degree of fidelity present in these intersemiotic poetic translations. In terms of fidelity, it is Ninot Aziz's poem that keeps close to the original in terms of the story line, with the ending being the variant element while Zurinah Hassan's poem deviates from the ST plot by using the character of the princess as the mouthpiece to champion women's rights.

Overall, the findings show that both the translators have created their version of the narrative based on the seven conditions set by the princess in the tale of PGL. In terms of variance, both the translators have chosen to change major and minor aspects i.e., kernels and satellites (Table 3) of the ST in accordance with their personal life experiences and belief systems. It is the events and situations that the translators have encountered in their own lives which has propelled them to look at this folktale with a new perspective. In a sense, both translators have resurrected the ST, which fits Walter Benjamin's (1923) notion of how the original text is given an 'afterlife' (Venuti, 2012, p. 76) through translation. Therefore, intersemiotic translations can be conceptualized as being the 'multi-lives' of a ST as aesthetically, there can be countless variations of a ST using different modes existing simultaneously as rightly emphasized by Sütiste and Torop (2007, p. 203).

A study such as this shows that intersemiotic translation which was once an obscure part of Jakobson's (1959) triadic translation theory is now emerging as an important subsection in TS. It goes beyond the language domain to include cultural and social domains thus making subject matters such as purpose, functionality and the role of the translator as key issues to be studied and included in translation theories. Today, research in TS has increasingly become interdisciplinary through the combination of translation in multiple areas like music and dance as exemplified by scholars such as Bennett (2024), Campbell & Vidal (2024) and Vidal Claramonte (2024). Therefore, there needs to be one theory or approach that can be used to analyse intersemiotic translations. Skopos theory is a viable functional approach for intersemiotic research as its versatility allows it to be adapted or merged with various frameworks and strategies from different fields.

Consequently, as seen in this study, Skopos theory allows for a wide research scope. It aids in understanding the role of the translator by analysing his/her decision-making process which is guided by the purpose of the translation, identifying the audience the intersemiotic translations were intended for, and investigating the operation of the concept of fidelity through the invariant and variant features that appear in the works of the translator that are closely related to his/her translational skopos. Furthermore, the consideration of culture and culture specificity which is at the core of Vermeer's *Skopostheorie* also makes it a beneficial theory when studying texts with much cultural value.

5. CONCLUSION

Folktales like 'Puteri Gunung Ledang' are priceless stories which when presented in various semiotic forms over time encapsulate the cultural, ideologies and socio-political aspects of a particular individual and/or era. In some ways, they are documents that record the variations in society. The messages embedded within the translations of folktales carry the power to influence and change

the belief systems of individuals. Within these contexts, translators take on the role of social commentators, guardians and promoters of a nation's literary and cultural heritage. Thus, the translator is the crucial link between the original and the new *translatum*. As Toressi (2008) aptly states, "translators are not just "word-mongers," but text-and meaning-makers" (p.71); they help to make sense of the world around us. In their role as translators, both Ninot Aziz and Zurinah Hassan have embodied this through their intersemiotic poetic retellings. The two poets have opened several vistas to make sense of an old tale in a relevant way for the present times; they have enhanced the life of '*Puteri Gunung Ledang*' by making a tale which has been passed down for generations, not only a literary hypertext with greater cultural value but one that has a valuable lesson for life. In their poems, the princess of the mountain has evolved from being a mystical or legendary figure in Malay literature to being a metaphor for the foolishness of unbridled desire and specifically, the metaphor for the female voice that defies the subjugation of her individuality and identity.

6. LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The scope of this particular paper is limited as it analyses this folktale only in the poetic form when multiple versions of it exist in various forms such as art, sculpture and movies. Thus, modern abstract paintings of PGL by Zulkifli Yusoff, the movie *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004) directed by Saw Teong Hin and a musical produced in 2006 based on the movie can be examined using the methodology used in this research. However, as there is no one specific model that can be used to analyse works of intersemiotic translations, frameworks from other areas of study such as film-making can be combined with translation theories for analysis purpose resulting in multidisciplinary research which will broaden the field of TS. Furthermore, since the Malay literary heritage has a treasure trove of folktales which have been 'retold' over the years in various forms, there is immense potential for future research, and it is recommended to conduct comparative studies on local folktales which have been translated intersemiotically. Similar to this study, multiple analysis methods can be devised by combining translation theories with analytical frameworks related to the semiotic mode that a translated form exists in, for example, music or dance. Alternatively, the designing of a specific, conceptual model that can be used to examine all types of intersemiotic translations will enrich this area in TS.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declares that they have no competing interests.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) did not employ any of the Generative AI and/or AI-Assisted technologies for Language refinement, drafting background section and did not perform any Task of the technology.

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Biographical Statement of Author(s)

J. Yasodhara Menon is a language lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia. She is an experienced English language teacher and has recently completed her PhD in Translation Studies.

Her main area of interest is English Language Teaching and Literary Translation.

Dr. J. Yasodhara Menon
English Language Department
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics
Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: jaymenon@um.edu.my

Dr. Krishnavanie Shunmugam is a retired Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia. Currently, she actively supervises PhD students and lectures part-time at the university.

Her area of expertise is in Translation Studies and English Language & Literature Studies.

Dr. Krishnavanie Shunmugam
(retired, part-time lecturer)
English Language Department
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics
Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: krishnav@um.edu.my

Dr. Selvajothi Ramalingam is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia. His main fields of interest are sociolinguistics, mother tongue education, indigenous study, and language use in job interviews.

His passion for the Tamil language has led him to write textbooks for the Malaysian Ministry of Education. He is also actively involved in the Curriculum Review of Malaysian Institute of Teacher Education for the Tamil Language Degree Program.

Dr. Selvajothi Ramalingam
English Language Department
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics
Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: selvajothi@um.edu.my