

Reinterpreting *Calon Arang*: A Translation Analysis of Balinese Folklore Across Language and Culture

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ABSTRACT

Translation is recognized as both an art and a science, involving the transfer of meaning from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL). It extends beyond linguistic substitution and constitutes an interpretative act that requires sensitivity to cultural, contextual, and semantic nuances. The Oxford English Dictionary defines folklore as the traditional beliefs, customs, legends, and narratives of a community, transmitted orally from generation to generation. Folklore thus serves as a crucial medium for expressing and preserving collective identity and cultural heritage. This study examines translation shifts in the Balinese folklore *Calon Arang*, translated from Indonesian (SL) into English (TL). Using a qualitative research design, the study analyzes the linguistic and structural transformations that occur during translation. The analysis focuses on types of translation shifts, including formal correspondence, grammatical addition, and modulation, as outlined in Catford's theory of translation shifts. The findings indicate that specific linguistic adjustments are necessary to maintain the grammatical and stylistic naturalness of the target language, without compromising the semantic integrity of the original text. The translation of *Calon Arang* achieves an appropriate degree of equivalence, effectively preserving both the narrative essence and the cultural significance of the original folklore. This study contributes to a broader understanding of translation studies, particularly regarding cultural texts and interlingual transfer in Indonesian literature.

Keywords: Translation Shift, Folklore, Cultural Equivalence

INTRODUCTION

Translation plays a crucial role in facilitating understanding between languages. According to Barzegar (2008), "translation is defined as an attempt to replace a written message and or statement in one language by the same message and or statement in another." When translating a document, it is essential to convey meaning accurately so that readers can clearly comprehend the intended message. Each language possesses unique grammatical patterns; therefore, translation differs fundamentally from interpretation.

Each country possesses its own literary forms, including novels, short stories, poems, and folklore. Folklore consists of traditional beliefs and narratives transmitted from generation to generation. Indonesia is renowned for its diverse regional folklores, among which “Calon Arang” from Bali remains prominent. Studies such as Bassnett (2002) and Baker (2018) have highlighted that translating folklore requires sensitivity to idioms, metaphors, and traditional expressions, which often lack direct equivalents in other languages.

In the Indonesian context, studies by Suryasa (2017) and Dewi & Sudipa (2019) examined translation shifts in Balinese and Javanese folklore. Their research identified frequent use of *grammatical shifts*, *modulation*, and *adaptation* to preserve cultural resonance while ensuring readability in English. These findings confirm that translating Indonesian folklore, including *Calon Arang*, serves as both a linguistic and cultural bridge, promoting intercultural understanding and preserving local heritage within global discourse. Researchers typically examine translation shifts from the source language (Indonesian) to the target language (English).

To guide this study, the following research questions are proposed:

1. What translation shifts occur in the translation of Calon Arang folklore?
2. What strategies and procedures are employed in translating Calon Arang folklore?
3. Do the results of the translation of Calon Arang folklore achieve equivalence in meaning?

This study holds significant pedagogical and scholarly value. For students and children, translating Balinese folklore such as *Calon Arang* into English serves as a valuable tool to enhance reading comprehension and cultural awareness. Exposure to translated folklore enables learners to improve their English language proficiency while gaining insight into Indonesia’s rich cultural heritage. This process fosters intercultural understanding and appreciation of traditional narratives. The translated version offers an accessible medium for younger audiences to engage with local wisdom in a global linguistic context, bridging traditional oral storytelling and modern literacy education.

Additionally, this study contributes to the expanding body of knowledge in translation studies, particularly regarding *translation shifts* and *equivalence theory*. It deepens understanding of the interaction between linguistic structures and cultural elements during the transfer of meaning from Indonesian to English. The findings serve as valuable references for future research on similar translation phenomena, particularly in the context of folklore translation. By documenting and analyzing shifts such as formal correspondence, grammatical addition, and modulation, this research provides empirical evidence to inform translation pedagogy and comparative linguistic studies. Ultimately, it establishes a foundation for further exploration of translation as both a linguistic practice and a means of cultural preservation in multilingual contexts.

Collectively, the studies by Dewi and Sudipa (2019), Suryasa (2017), and Putra (2020) reveal that translating Balinese folklore, particularly *Calon Arang*, is a complex linguistic and cultural process that extends beyond literal equivalence.

Dewi and Sudipa emphasize the inevitability of *grammatical shifts*, including structural, class, unit, and intra-system changes, as necessary adaptations to accommodate the distinct syntactic and morphological systems of Indonesian and English. Their findings affirm that these shifts contribute to achieving *naturalness* and *functional equivalence* in the target text. Complementing this perspective, Suryasa underscores that translation shifts are not solely grammatical phenomena but also involve cultural negotiation. His research highlights how shifts in word order, phrase structure, and semantic patterns help sustain the cultural and mythical essence of the source text. He cautions that an overly literal translation risks distorting the symbolic layers embedded in folklore narratives, such as *Calon Arang*.

Putra extends the discussion by examining *cultural transfer strategies*, including modulation, adaptation, and transposition. His findings demonstrate that translators often employ flexible methods to reproduce the moral and mythical nuances of the original text. This work reinforces the view that translation functions as an act of *cultural mediation* rather than mechanical transposition.

Together, these studies converge on the understanding that successful translation of Balinese folklore depends on balancing linguistic precision with cultural sensitivity. The strategic use of shifts and adaptations ensures that the translated version conveys meaning accurately while preserving the spiritual, ethical, and narrative integrity of *Calon Arang* within an English-speaking context.

METHOD

This case study focuses on the translation of the Balinese-Indonesian folklore *Calon Arang* from its original Indonesian version into English. *Calon Arang* is a well-known traditional legend from Bali that narrates the story of a powerful widow associated with witchcraft, morality, and spiritual conflict. The text is rich in cultural, mythical, and linguistic elements, making it an ideal subject for examining translation shifts between Indonesian and English.

The study applies a qualitative descriptive approach, analyzing specific excerpts from the source text (Indonesian) and their corresponding translated forms (English). It aims to identify and categorize types of translation shifts, such as structural, grammatical, and semantic shifts, based on Catford's (1965) translation theory. By comparing the two versions, the researchers aim to uncover how differences in grammatical structure, cultural references, and stylistic choices influence meaning transfer and textual equivalence.

Through this case study, the researchers investigate not only the linguistic transformations that occur during translation but also the strategies employed to preserve the cultural and moral values embedded in *Calon Arang*. Ultimately, the study provides insights into how Indonesian folklore can be effectively rendered into English while maintaining both linguistic accuracy and cultural authenticity.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings and results above, the data are displayed in the explanation below:

1. Formal Correspondent

Formal correspondence, which is also called a Direct Translation, can be defined as 'a word-for-word' translation (Ordudari, 2009:3). The examples of formal correspondence or direct translation found in the data are as follows:

SLT: “pesta yang berlangsung selama tujuh hari tujuh malam”

TLT: “party that lasted seven days and seven nights.”

Each word from the Source Language is suitable for the Target Language and shows the direct translation process.

The example provided, “*pesta yang berlangsung selama tujuh hari tujuh malam*” translated as “*party that lasted seven days and seven nights*,” demonstrates a precise instance of formal correspondence. In this translation, each lexical item from the source language (SL) is matched with its closest equivalent in the target language (TL), maintaining both syntactic order and denotative meaning. Such correspondence reflects what Catford (1965) describes as the *linguistic level of equivalence*, wherein the translator seeks to reproduce the grammatical and lexical features of the source text with minimal alteration.

From a linguistic perspective, formal correspondence is often employed when the syntactic and semantic structures of both languages are parallel and culturally neutral. In this case, both Indonesian and English share compatible grammatical patterns for expressing duration and repetition, allowing a literal rendering without loss of meaning or stylistic naturalness. The translation thus maintains grammatical equivalence and semantic fidelity, which are crucial in preserving the temporal and descriptive clarity of the original expression.

However, while this strategy effectively retains surface meaning, scholars such as Nida and Taber (1982) caution that exclusive reliance on formal correspondence may limit cultural or contextual nuance, especially in literary and folklore texts. Therefore, while this example represents a successful direct translation, it also highlights the importance of discerning when formal equivalence suffices and when dynamic equivalence or modulation is required to preserve idiomatic and cultural resonance in the target language.

In essence, this instance of formal correspondence demonstrates linguistic precision and structural balance across the two languages, illustrating how direct translation can be effective when contextual and grammatical compatibility exists between the SL and TL.

2. Grammatical Addition

Grammatical Addition is to add the grammatical element in the TLT because the structure in the TL requires the addition to make the correct sentence construction in the TLT. The example is as follows:

SLT: “Calon Arang yang mengetahui kitabnya dicuri, murka dan menantang Empu Baradah untuk bertarung.”

TLT: “When Calon Arang found out that her book *had been* stolen, she became angry and decided *to fight* Empu Baradah.”

From that example, the addition of “*had been*” and “*to fight*”. The source language doesn't use ‘*had been*’ or ‘*to*’, but the target language does. The addition was put to state that some

event occurred in the past, and *to infinity* (to fight) was set after the verb ‘decided’ to help emphasize the purpose of the verb.

This type of grammatical addition reflects the translator's attempt to achieve tense accuracy and syntactic naturalness in the target language (TL). In English, auxiliary verbs such as *had been* are essential for expressing the perfect aspect, which indicates that an action was completed before another event in the past. Since Indonesian does not mark tense morphologically but relies on contextual or temporal adverbs, the translator must often insert such grammatical elements to conform to English grammatical conventions. Similarly, the infinitive marker *to* in *to fight* is required to express purpose or intention following certain verbs like *decided*, ensuring grammatical correctness and semantic clarity. According to Catford (1965), this process constitutes a class shift, wherein grammatical structures are adjusted to maintain functional equivalence between the two languages. Thus, while the additions alter the surface structure of the translation, they serve an essential communicative function, preserving both the temporal relationship and the intended meaning of the original expression. This demonstrates how grammatical additions can enhance the overall readability and cohesion of the translated text while maintaining fidelity to the source message.

3. Modulation

Modulation is a way the translator uses to view the message of the source language from a different angle. The examples of modulation found in the data are as follows:

SLT: “Pemuda-pemuda saat itu tidak punya keberanian untuk melamar Ratna Manggali yang cantik disebabkan oleh Calon Arang yang dikenal suka menggunakan ilmu hitam”

TLT: “She had a daughter named Ratna Manggali, who, although beautiful, could not get a husband because people were afraid of her mother.”

The sentence shows that there is a modulation in the target language, which, from the source language, first emphasizes the subject “*Pemuda-pemuda*” rather than the translator emphasizing Calon Arang's daughter first. The translator replaces “*Calon Arang*” with the form of a possessive pronoun “*her mother*” to refer to Ratna Manggali's mother. The translator adopted Calon Arang's point of view, while the source language uses the youth's point of view.

This instance of modulation illustrates how the translator reconfigures the message's perspective and focus to ensure greater coherence and naturalness in the target language (TL). According to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), modulation occurs when the translator changes the semantic viewpoint or conceptual emphasis of a sentence without altering its overall meaning. In the example, the source text (SL) foregrounds the young men (*pemuda-pemuda*) as the grammatical subject, emphasizing their fear and inaction toward Ratna Manggali. However, the target version shifts this focus toward Ratna Manggali herself, presenting the situation from her perspective and thereby aligning with English narrative conventions, which often center on the primary character's experience rather than external observers. The transformation of *Calon Arang* into the possessive phrase *her mother* demonstrates a semantic modulation that enhances textual cohesion and readability for the English audience. As Newmark (1988) notes, such shifts are not mere stylistic variations but strategic adaptations that promote natural equivalence and preserve the communicative intent of the original text. Therefore, this modulation reflects the translator's interpretive decision to prioritize clarity, narrative flow, and target-language acceptability while maintaining the underlying meaning of fear and social stigma present in the source version.

CONCLUSION

After examining the reseach data, the researchers found there are several strategies use by the translator during the translation processes. Those strategies have helped in revealing translation shifts occur in the translation product and make the final translation is appropriate enough to be read by everyone. Formal Correspondents or direct translation, Grammatical Addition, and Modulation are the strategies and procedures in the translation process. Maintaining the cultural meaning of the story is the essential why translation must be carefull enough so the readers can understand the story perfectly.

The translation analysis of *Calon Arang*, a Balinese-Indonesian folklore, reveals that the process of transferring meaning from Indonesian to English involves a complex interplay between linguistic accuracy and cultural representation. The findings indicate that translation shifts specifically formal correspondence, grammatical addition, and modulation are not merely mechanical adjustments but essential strategies that enable the translator to convey both the linguistic form and the cultural essence of the original text. Formal correspondence demonstrates the translator's effort to maintain lexical and syntactic equivalence when the grammatical systems of both languages are compatible, ensuring clarity and precision. Meanwhile, grammatical addition reflects the translator's adaptation to English grammatical conventions, where auxiliary and infinitive constructions are required to achieve tense accuracy and syntactic completeness. Modulation, on the other hand, highlights a higher level of interpretative flexibility, allowing shifts in perspective and emphasis to align the translated narrative with target language norms and cultural expectations.

These translation shifts collectively affirm Catford's (1965) theory that structural and class changes are inevitable in achieving functional equivalence across languages with differing grammatical systems. Moreover, the analysis aligns with Newmark's (1988) and Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) frameworks, which emphasize the translator's agency in mediating meaning through dynamic equivalence and perspective shifts. The case study of *Calon Arang* thus illustrates that successful folklore translation requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity, as folklore embodies moral values, collective beliefs, and local wisdom.

In broader terms, this study contributes to the understanding of translation as both a linguistic and cultural practice. It underscores how translation shifts serve as a bridge between two distinct linguistic systems and two cultural worlds, allowing Indonesian heritage to be appreciated within an English-speaking context. For educators, the translated text offers valuable material for enhancing students' cross-cultural literacy and linguistic awareness. For , it provides empirical evidence of how translation strategies preserve textual meaning while adapting to structural and cultural demands. Ultimately, this research reinforces that translating folklore like *Calon Arang* is not a simple act of linguistic substitution but an act of cultural preservation, ensuring that traditional narratives continue to resonate across languages, generations, and cultural boundaries.

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