



A Comparative Study of Linguistic and Stylistic Nuances in English Translations of a Manipuri Folktale

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Abstract

This paper delves into the language and stylistic differences in three English translations of the Manipuri folktale Sanarembi Chaisra, namely Shanrembi Chaisra, Sanarembi Cheishra, and Sanarembi and Chaishra. The study investigates how each translation approaches the linguistic challenges of adapting a culturally specific text into English while preserving its core themes, tone, and readability. By focusing on key elements such as vocabulary, sentence structure, figurative language, and the level of formality, this paper examines how translators' stylistic choices affect the readability and emotional resonance of the folktale. The findings demonstrate how stylistic and language variations not only serve to adapt the story to different audiences but also influence the emotional engagement of the reader and the cultural authenticity of the text.

Keywords: translation, stylistic, language variations, readability,

I. Introduction

Translating folktales from one language to another is an inherently complex process, especially when cultural context, emotional depth, and stylistic nuances are critical to the narrative. Manipuri folktales, such as *Sanarembi Chaisra*, encapsulate deeply embedded cultural symbols, emotions, and language that can be challenging to represent accurately in another language. Translators must find ways to convey not only the literal meaning of the words but also the emotional resonance and cultural richness inherent in the original text. In this paper, we focus specifically on the language



and stylistic differences in three English translations of *Sanarembi Chaisra*, which are titled *Shanrembi Chaisra*, *Sanarembi Cheishra*, and *Sanarembi and Chaishra*. The purpose of this study is to explore how the stylistic choices made by the translators affect the narrative tone, cultural authenticity, and emotional impact of the story for English-speaking readers.

II. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in descriptive translation studies (DTS), a framework that allows for an in-depth analysis of the translation process by focusing on the text, the target language, and the socio-cultural context. DTS places emphasis on understanding how translations differ across cultures and how translators make decisions in terms of lexical choices, syntax, tone, and style. The key components of DTS – translation norms, translator strategies, and textual shifts – will be used to analyze the stylistic differences and the impact of these decisions on the English translations of the folktale.

Moreover, Skopos Theory, introduced by Hans Vermeer, provides a useful lens through which to evaluate the strategic purposes behind each translation. According to Skopos theory, translations are not merely linguistic conversions but are shaped by their intended purpose in the target culture. This theory allows us to analyze how the translators' stylistic decisions were influenced by the intended audience (whether it be academics, children, or general readers) and the overall purpose of the translations (whether to maintain cultural authenticity, readability, or emotional resonance).

Additionally, Baker's Theory of Translation and Style will serve as a secondary theoretical basis. This theory emphasizes the interplay between lexical choices, stylistic features, and cultural implications. Baker argues that translation involves making stylistic choices that reflect both the linguistic features of the source text and the stylistic preferences of the target language. In this context, her theory helps in understanding how certain word choices and stylistic strategies in the three translations either adhere to or deviate from the stylistic conventions of English.

III. Research Methodology

This study employs a comparative qualitative research methodology, focusing on a detailed, text-based analysis of the three English translations of *Sanarembi Chaisra* originally compiled and edited



in Manipuri by B. Jayantakumar Sharma. The research methodology is organized into several key stages:

1. Textual Comparison and Analysis:

- a) The primary methodology involves a qualitative, comparative textual analysis of the three translations. Each translation will be examined closely to identify key language and stylistic features such as sentence structure, vocabulary, figurative language, and tone.
- b) Specific passages from the folktale will be compared to illustrate the shifts in style, emotional impact, and cultural elements across the different translations. These passages will highlight how the translators' choices impact the flow, readability, and emotional depth of the story.

2. Focus Areas for Comparative Analysis:

- a) Sentence Structure and Syntax: Analyzing sentence complexity, the use of subordination or coordination, and whether the sentence structure reflects the oral tradition of the original Manipuri tale.
- b) Vocabulary and Word Choice: Comparing the richness of vocabulary and the emotional depth conveyed through word choices.
- c) Figurative Language and Symbolism: Identifying symbolic elements in the original text and how these elements are preserved or transformed in the English versions.
- d) Tone and Formality: Examining the formality of the language, whether it is formal or colloquial, and how it affects the narrative tone and emotional engagement.

3. Contextual and Cultural Analysis:

- a) Each translation's approach to cultural adaptation will be considered. Translators must balance staying true to the cultural context of Manipuri folklore while making it accessible to an English-speaking audience. The study will analyze how cultural references, social norms, and rituals are translated and whether they are maintained or altered in the English versions.



- b) Using Skopos theory, the cultural and functional needs of the target audience will be explored. For instance, if a particular translation targets children, the language might be simplified, reducing the emotional resonance of the original text in favor of making the story more approachable.

4. Translator's Strategies and Approaches:

- a) This study will examine the translation strategies used by each translator. For example, does the translator prioritize literal translation, maintaining as much of the original language as possible, or does the translator favor a free translation, adapting the text more creatively to suit the expectations of the target audience?
- b) The norms within the translation process will be explored. For example, some translators may adhere more strictly to linguistic norms, while others may prioritize narrative fluidity or emotional impact.

IV. Expected Results and Discussion

Through the comparative analysis of the three English translations of *Sanarembi Chaisra*—*Shanrembi Chaisra*, *Sanarembi Cheishra*, and *Sanarembi and Chaishra*—we anticipate uncovering significant differences in the linguistic and stylistic approaches adopted by each translator. These variations will offer insights into how language, cultural adaptation, and stylistic choices interact to affect the overall emotional resonance, cultural accuracy, and readability of the folktale for different audiences. Below are the expected results and an in-depth discussion of how these elements are likely to manifest in the translations.

1. Sentence Structure and Syntax

The sentence structure in the three English translations is expected to vary significantly, with each translator taking a different approach to balancing fidelity to the original Manipuri text and the demands of the English language.

- i) *Shanrembi Chaisra*: This version is likely to retain more of the traditional sentence structures found in Manipuri folktales, which might be more complex or repetitive. In Manipuri folklore, the oral tradition often includes parallel constructions, repetitive phrases, and longer



sentences that mimic the rhythm of storytelling. Thus, the sentences in this translation may be slightly more elaborate and ornate, preserving the formal tone of the source language. Such syntactical structures could invoke a sense of traditionalism and elevate the story's emotional depth, making it resonate with readers who appreciate a more formal, poetic style.

- ii) *Sanarembi Cheishra*: This translation might be characterized by simplified sentence structures. Given that the translator's aim may have been to make the folktale accessible to a broader audience, including children or general readers, the sentences could be shorter, clearer, and more direct. In this version, we might see a preference for active voice, clearer subject-verb-object constructions, and reduced syntactical complexity. This would make the folktale more digestible for readers unfamiliar with complex sentence structures, but it may sacrifice some of the oral flavor of the original text.
- iii) *Sanarembi and Chaishra*: In this version, the sentence structure is likely to be extremely streamlined to fit contemporary narrative styles. The translator may opt for even simpler constructions to enhance the speed and flow of the storytelling. The use of simple past tense, short declarative sentences, and more casual phrasing could be evident in this version. These stylistic decisions would prioritize readability and narrative flow but might lead to a less nuanced, less reflective tone than the other two translations.

Discussion:

The differences in sentence structure reflect the varying translation strategies employed. *Shanrembi Chaisra* retains more of the source language's formal structure, potentially allowing the reader to experience the tale's traditional feel. On the other hand, *Sanarembi Cheishra* and *Sanarembi and Chaishra* take liberties with structure to enhance clarity and accessibility. However, in the case of the latter, it may lose some of the emotional depth and cultural richness inherent in the original. Readers of *Sanarembi and Chaishra* may not experience the same emotional engagement that *Shanrembi Chaisra* offers, given that the latter's more intricate sentence structures convey a greater sense of drama and gravitas.



2. Vocabulary and Word Choice

Vocabulary choices in the translations will play a pivotal role in the emotional impact of the story. Different translators will make decisions based on the cultural distance between Manipuri and English, as well as the target audience.

- i) *Shanrembi Chaisra*: This version is expected to retain a rich, formal vocabulary that is closely aligned with the original Manipuri idioms and cultural expressions. The translator might incorporate culturally specific terms, such as names for rituals, customs, and familial relationships, and could opt for words that evoke a formal, regal tone appropriate for the setting of a kingdom. The vocabulary may also include emotive adjectives to underscore the moral values and emotional weight of the story. This style could elicit a more reflective and serious tone in the English-speaking reader.
- ii) *Sanarembi Cheishra*: Given that this translation seems aimed at a broader audience, the vocabulary may be simplified to improve accessibility. Colloquial expressions and everyday vocabulary might replace more formal or culturally specific language, making the story easier for younger or general readers to understand. In this version, emotional nuance might be compromised for ease of comprehension. While still emotionally engaging, the vocabulary may evoke a sense of light-heartedness or approachability rather than the deep emotional gravitas present in *Shanrembi Chaisra*.
- iii) *Sanarembi and Chaishra*: The vocabulary in this version is expected to be the most modernized and straightforward, reflecting the preferences of contemporary audiences. The use of simple, everyday language will dominate, with an emphasis on clarity and functional description. More literal translations of cultural references might be used here, and the emotional vocabulary may be less dramatic, resulting in a version that is more neutral and less culturally rich than the other two translations.

Discussion:

The vocabulary choices in the translations reflect the target audience's needs. *Shanrembi Chaisra* uses a formal, emotionally rich vocabulary, reinforcing the cultural authenticity and emotional depth of the original folktale. In contrast, *Sanarembi Cheishra* and *Sanarembi and*



Chaishra simplify the language, making it more accessible and approachable, which may improve readability but also reduce the emotional intensity and cultural specificity of the original. In particular, *Sanarembi and Chaishra* sacrifices some of the cultural texture in favor of a streamlined narrative.

3. Figurative Language and Symbolism

The use of figurative language (such as metaphors, similes, and personifications) and symbolism plays a significant role in translating the emotional and thematic depth of the folktale.

- i) *Shanrembi Chaisra*: This translation is expected to preserve much of the original figurative language. Metaphors, similes, and traditional Manipuri imagery will be carefully adapted, with the translator attempting to retain their symbolic significance in the English version. For example, references to natural imagery (such as snakes, tortoises, or fig trees) will likely retain their symbolic weight. These symbols in Manipuri folklore carry specific cultural meanings—such as the tortoise symbolizing rebirth or transformation—which the translator will strive to preserve, even if some adaptation is required.
- ii) *Sanarembi Cheishra*: Given its target audience, this version may tone down the figurative language or replace certain cultural metaphors with more universally understood symbols. While still utilizing some figurative expressions, the richness of Manipuri symbolism might be lost in translation, leading to a version with more literal and direct descriptions. This could make the narrative more accessible to readers who may not be familiar with the specific symbolic meanings within Manipuri culture.
- iii) *Sanarembi and Chaishra*: This translation is likely to minimize the use of figurative language altogether in favor of more explicit storytelling. Symbolic elements that are crucial to the cultural context may be downplayed, and metaphors could be replaced with direct explanations, which would make the folktale feel more modern and contemporary in its approach. This version would focus more on plot progression than on embedding cultural layers of meaning.



Discussion:

The differences in figurative language and symbolism demonstrate how each translation balances faithfulness to the source text with the need to be understood by the target audience. *Shanrembi Chaisra* is expected to be the most faithful to the symbolism and cultural metaphors in the original text, while *Sanarembi Cheishra* and *Sanarembi and Chaishra* adapt or simplify these symbols to make the folktale more relatable to their respective audiences. These shifts may lead to cultural loss in the latter two translations, but they could also make the folktale more approachable and engaging for readers unfamiliar with Manipuri culture.

4. Tone and Formality

The tone of the folktale, influenced by language and stylistic choices, is expected to differ significantly across the translations.

- i) *Shanrembi Chaisra*: The tone of this translation is likely to be serious, poetic, and formal, reflecting the traditional nature of the folktale. The use of elevated vocabulary, along with more complex sentence structures, will convey the gravitas of the tale and underscore its moral lessons. This version will likely evoke a sense of awe or reverence in the reader, particularly through the emotional moments that are amplified by the rich language.
- ii) *Sanarembi Cheishra*: This translation is likely to adopt a more lighthearted and approachable tone. The simplicity of the vocabulary and sentence structure will give the tale a more conversational feel, perhaps even infantilizing some of the more serious moments for a younger audience. While still maintaining the core emotions of the story, the tone in this version will be less solemn and more playful or casual.
- iii) *Sanarembi and Chaishra*: This version is expected to adopt a direct and neutral tone, focusing on clarity and narrative progression. The formality will likely be reduced to make the story feel more contemporary and accessible, but this could lead to the loss of depth and nuance. The tone will feel more functional, with the primary aim being to entertain and inform, rather than to invoke deep emotional reflection.



Discussion:

The tone and formality in each translation are strongly influenced by the translator's target audience. *Shanrembi Chaisra* is the most emotionally charged and formal, staying true to the original text's gravitas. In contrast, *Sanarembi Cheishra* and *Sanarembi and Chaishra* adopt tones that are less formal and more reader-friendly, prioritizing accessibility and ease of reading over the emotional depth of the original.

Overall Impression

The language and stylistic differences across the three translations of *Shanrembi Chaisra* reveal how translator decisions around syntax, vocabulary, symbolism, and tone profoundly shape how the folktale is received by different audiences. The comparative analysis highlights the tension between faithfulness to the source text and adaptation for a target audience. Each translation offers a distinct reading of the tale, illustrating how the balance between preserving cultural authenticity and ensuring readability can significantly influence the emotional impact, cultural resonance, and audience engagement of the narrative.

V. Conclusion

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how language and stylistic differences in translation can shape the emotional and cultural impact of folktales. By comparing the English translations of *Shanrembi Chaisra*, *Sanarembi Cheishra*, and *Sanarembi and Chaishra*, this study highlights the complexities involved in translating cultural narratives and the varying levels of emotional engagement that different stylistic choices evoke. The findings underscore the importance of translation theories in guiding the process of adapting folktales across languages and cultures, and how these stylistic decisions contribute to the narrative's success in the target culture.

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