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# THE CULTURAL EQUIVALENCE OF TOBA BATAK FOLKLORE “BORU SARODING” TRANSLATION INTO INDONESIAN

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## ABSTRACT

*This study used translation techniques to translate the source language into the target language and analysed cultural terms in translating the Indonesian folklore. Folklore is a form of oral tradition. One of the folk tales found in the Toba Batak community is entitled “Boru Saroding”. These folk tales have been translated into Indonesian from the Toba Batak language. Folklore thrives as an oral tradition passed down through generations, and the Toba Batak tale “Boru Saroding” is a prime example, rich with cultural nuances from its original Batak language. This study dives into its Indonesian translation, examining how cultural terms which the categories of culture as proposed by Newmark are ecology, material culture, social culture, social organization, customs, and other cultures. Using a descriptive-qualitative approach, we identified and categorized the terms, analysed their translation strategies based on Newmark's cultural categories especially greetings and kinship references – are handled to preserve meaning across languages (with social organization dominating). Analysing the equivalence was using Bell's framework: full, partial, or non-equivalence. The findings reveal that while core meanings often carry over, deeper cultural layers like Batak social hierarchies and relational subtleties frequently simplify in Indonesian, highlighting the real-world challenges translators face in bridging cultural gaps. The research aimed to categorize and identify the cultural words from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL), as well as to identify and describe the equivalence of the cultural terms was the research approached employed. Data collection techniques include collecting, recording, and analyzing data for meaningful equivalence, then providing a synthesis or conclusion.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Cultural Terms, Bataknesse Folklore, Translation, Equivalence of Meaning.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the concept of equivalence in translated texts. When translating a text from one language to another, it is essential to maintain equivalence (Amir, 2022). However, challenges often arise during the translation process due to differences in the cultures represented in the source and target languages. These differences can lead to translations that lack equivalence, even though a high-quality translation should be accurate, easy to read, and acceptable (Suryawinata & Hariyanto, 2023).

Translation has two main parts: the Source Text or Source Language (ST / SL) and the Target Text or Target Language (TT / TL). The goal of this is to show that the first step in translation is to transfer the meaning and message from the Source Language to the Target Language. At the same time, the second step is to move the meaning and message from one time period to another time frame.

Translation helps people experience new things and learn about different cultures (W & Asmarani, 2016). The main purpose of translation is to create a clear link between two languages and the cultures they represent. Some words or phrases that have cultural meanings are difficult to translate directly. Translation works as a system and is influenced by other systems and how the target language operates (Naseer Ahmad & Tayyaba Zainab, 2024). To deal with words that are hard to translate, Sembiring, Milisi, and Panggabean (2018) created a new approach. This method uses widely known cultural terms and includes techniques like descriptive equivalent, cultural equivalent, transference, paraphrase, and shifts, as suggested by Newmark. Translation is about moving the meaning from one language to another without changing its original message, even if the form changes. The form refers to the surface-level grammar structures, while the meaning refers to the deeper, more important parts of language. When translating, we also take into account the communication situation, which includes the historical and cultural background, the translator's purpose, and the different types of meaning found in both the obvious and hidden parts of the text. In addition to meanings related to reference and structure, situational meaning is also important because it helps understand the culture or cultural information in the text. Using this understanding, the authors will translate a piece of children's literature that belongs to the folklore genre.

Equivalence in translation is the way a translator

conveys information from one language to another while keeping it as similar as possible. Basically, the translator tries to make the message in the target language as close as it can be to the original message. The better the match between the two languages, the better the translation is. According to Bell (1991) and Maharani (2014), as cited in Rahmah (2022), equivalence in translated texts refers to how well the message from the source language is passed on to the target language, either fully, partially, or not at all.

First, full equivalence happens when the translator completely transfers both the form and meaning of the message from the source to the target language. Second, partial equivalence occurs when not all of the message from the source language is translated. This can happen because the translator adds more information to avoid confusion or leaves out some meaning on purpose. Third, non-equivalence means there is a big change in the translation. This could be when the whole message is removed or when parts of the original message are replaced with elements from the target language, making the new message different from the original. Susanti (2022) explains this. In other words, a translator has to find the most suitable match to the source language to be translated into the target language. The better the quality, the more like the original should be translated.

According to Peter Newmark, the way of life of expressions that are unique to a community using a specific language as its means of communication (Newmark, 1988, pp. 94-103). He also introduces the idea of cultural terms in his book. These elements can be understood in different ways depending on their role in the text and the purpose of the translation. These elements are grouped into categories and subcategories. This research

During the translation process, translators often encounter several difficulties. Newmark (1988) states that the dynamics of translation cause the source language and target language texts to be positioned at opposite poles. This arises from aspects that influence the source language text, one of which is cultural factors. Larson (1998) argues that one of the challenging issues in cultural translation is the cultural differences between the source and target languages. Therefore, it is not uncommon for translators to encounter difficulties when translating culturally charged terms, including the use of greetings.

The study found ten important words related to greetings and family relationships in the Batak Toba version of "Boru Saroding" and their corresponding words in Indonesian. These expressions include

ways to address royalty, in-laws, parents, spouses, and siblings, which together show how social structure and emotional connections work in Batak Toba society. Most of these terms were translated into Indonesian with direct or almost direct word-for-word meanings, and the translations kept some level of cultural meaning depending on the situation.

Greetings in different languages, like Bataknese, can't be easily translated without explaining what they mean or finding a good match in the language you're translating to. This happens because people have different opinions about their own language culture and another language culture, which makes it difficult to translate things accurately (Sumardiono, 2009). To deal with the issues that come from cultural differences in translation, we should use various approaches to correctly translate greetings between languages. So, this researcher wanted to study the different ways meanings stay the same, whether through the actual words used or how they are used in real-life situations, and also looked at the methods used to translate greetings from Bataknese folktales into Indonesian.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. *Folklore, Mythology and Cultural Identity*

Cultural translation involves rearticulating cultural symbols, behaviours, and narratives for other audiences in addition to language transfer (Kasperaviciene, R., & Horbacauskiene, 2020). Cultural specificity, cultural translation in general output ensures that domestic cultural components, like myths, rituals, or folklore, are presented in ways that audiences around the society may enjoy. According to Nida and Taber (1982:18) "translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning, and the secondly in terms of style.

### 2.2. *Translation*

Translation is usually described as the act of moving the meaning, thought, or message from a text written in one language to another language. When ideas or messages are shared, there are several important things to think about, especially when making sure they stay true and accurate in the translated version. It's also important to think about if the information that the readers get in the target language is the same as the information that the readers get in the source language. You can see these points in the different ways experts have described what translation is.

A translator must first pay attention to the meaning to be conveyed. The form or style of the language is the next element. The meaning must be conveyed as is, while the form or style can change. In certain literary works, the form or style also needs to be considered and maintained so that the translation does not diminish the aesthetic function of the work.

Translating is the process of ensuring that the original text matches the translated text in the most natural and closest way possible, which has a similar meaning to these definitions. The sharing of ideas or messages involves several crucial considerations, with a particular emphasis on maintaining the translation's accuracy and correctness. When the translator is responsible for transmitting the text, they interpret it as a collection of meanings that consist of words and sentences. Machali (2007) and Baker (1992) stress the importance of "meaningful equivalence" because during translation, the definition from the original language is moved to the target language. In this case, the translator, who is sending the message, comes across the text as a group of meanings made up of words and sentences. Therefore, the language used forms a "meaningful unit" in the form of a conversation that both sides (like the writer and the reader) can understand together (Machali, 2007).

### 2.3. *Cultural Terms*

According to Peter Newmark the way of life of manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression (Newmark, 1988, pp. 94 -103). He also offers a concept of cultural terms in his book. These aspects can be interpreted in a variety of ways according to this role in the text and the purpose of the translation. These aspects are divided into categories and subcategories.

**Ecology.** In cultural terms, ecology is a word related to a living organism and all the various aspects of the environment inside. There are some types of ecology terms, such as Flora, Fauna, Weather, and Area.

**Material culture.** Material culture is the externalization or physical manifestation of the interaction of human beings. It includes all the artifacts or material objects. They are food, clothes, houses and towns, and transport. The artifact reflects cultural ideas.

**Social culture.** Social culture is the product of social interaction. Social interaction is thus reciprocal and each member governs his/her behavior in terms of the expectations of others. In considering social

culture one has to distinguish between denotative and connotative problems for translation. There are two types of social culture, work, and leisure.

Organization, custom, activities, procedures, and concepts. It is about social, legal, religious, and artistic.

The political and social life of a country is reflected in its institutional terms. When a public body has a transparent name, the translation depends on the setting. In official documents and serious publications such as textbooks, the title is transferred and where appropriate, literally translated. Informally, it could be translated by a cultural equivalent. The linguistic manifestation of this concept cannot be translated into a language that the audience is unfamiliar with.

Gestures and habits. It is often described in non-cultural language, in which are activities or actions carried out from generation to generation. There is a distinction between description and function which can be made where necessary in ambiguous cases.

Language is part of a culture. Larson defines translation as "understanding the vocabulary, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language to determine the meaning, and then reconstructing the meaning by using appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures in language and context SL culture." (Larson, 1997, p. 3). That is why; the cultural factors must also be addressed in translation. If the present material being translated is about culture, a translator must be familiar with the cultures of the two languages, namely SL and TL, to create an effective translation. In other words, a translator must be fluent in many languages. Vocabulary in a language represents the cultural characteristics of the language user, which may not be present in other languages.

| No | SL   | TL   |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | " <i>Boru ni rajanami, ai boasa hamu humibuhibu mulak?</i> " | " <i>Tuan putri, kenapa kamu terburu-buru pulang?</i> "<br>(Princess, why do you in a rush to get home?) |

In Batak society, it is customary to call a daughter "*boru ni rajanami*" because the Batak people are descended from kings. When

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The research method played a significant role in analysing and collecting data. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The data source was the Indonesian folklore "*Boru Saroding*," which included cultural terms from the Batak Toba language as the source language (SL) and was translated into Indonesian as the target language (TL).

The authors followed specific techniques to gather data: first, they bought a storybook to a bookstore. Next, they read all the stories in the book. Then, they re-read the parts of the story that were in Indonesian. They selected one story from several available stories in Indonesian. After choosing the story, they read it repeatedly. Finally, they identified and wrote down the words related to cultural terms within the story.

In terms of data analysis, the authors took the following steps: they read the story as a whole and tried to understand its overall meaning. Once they grasped the story's meaning, they selected words related to cultural terms and attempted to understand their significance. They translated these cultural terms into the target language using their own sentences. The authors then categorized these cultural terms based on the translation methods used. They conducted an analysis of the data and finally concluded their findings using percentages derived from the translation analysis.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data that the author used is in the form of cultural terms found in the folklore entitled "*Boru Saroding*". The findings from the discussion and analysis about meaning equivalence in this study are as follows:

translated, "*boru ni rajanami*" means "princess" because the title "princess" is given to the daughter of a king.

| No | SL   | TL  |
|----|--|---|
| 2  | <i>..., jala dipangido ibana ma asa dipatandahon tu natuatua ni Boru Saroding.</i> | <i>... kemudian dia meminta untuk diperkenalkan kepada orang tua dari Boru Saroding.</i><br>(... then she asked to be introduced to <i>Boru Saroding's</i> parents) |

The word *natuatua* translates to parent. This word refers to the person who is the father or mother

of a girl or boy.

| No | SL  | TL   |
|----|---|--|
| 3  | borhat ma Boru Saroding mangihuthon baa naung gabe <b>tunggane dolina i</b> , marluga solu tu Ransang Bosi. | Boru Saroding ikut bersama lelaki yang sudah menjadi <b>suaminya</b> itu, menaiki perahu ke kampung Ransang Bosi. (Boru Saroding followed the man that has already been her husband, get into the boat to Ransang Bosi village.) |

The translation of "*Tunggane dolina i*" is translated as "her husband." In this case, the word "*Tunggane*" actually means a man's term for his wife's brother and also a man's term for his wife's

younger brother's son. However, because of the addition of the word "Dolina," meaning "young man," the translation of "*Tunggane dolina i*" is translated as "her husband."

| No | SL  | TL   |
|----|---|--|
| 4  | Dibereng ibana ma tu pudi nang tu jolo, dang disi <b>amantana i</b> . | Dia melihat ke belakang dan juga ke depan, namun <b>suaminya</b> tidak ada. (She looked around, at the back and front, but she didn't her husband) |

The word *amantana* means husband. According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), a husband

is a man who is the official life partner of a married woman (wife).

| No | SL  | TL  |
|----|---|---|
| 5  | Ai masihol do ninna halahi marnida <b>ibotona</b> hasian ni halahi. | Mereka begitu rindu dengan <b>adik perempuan</b> kesayangan mereka (They really missed their lovely sister) |

The word *ibotona*, when translated, means younger sister or older sister, which can be used for

both younger and older siblings as long as they are female.

| No | SL   | TL   |
|----|--|--|
| 6  | Las hian ma roha ni Boru Saroding didalani angka <b>hulahulana</b> hutana di dolok na timbo. | Boru Saroding begitu bahagia karena <b>saudara laki-lakinya</b> datang berkunjung ke kampung mereka di bukit yang tinggi (Boru Saroding is so happy because her brothers visit her to the village above the hill.) |

The word "*hulahula*" means in-laws. According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), it refers to the parents of a son-in-law (either son-in-law or

daughter-in-law); a family relationship between two parents that occurs when their child marries.

| No | SL   | TL  |
|----|--|---|
| 7  | Ai aha do lehononmuna <b>lae</b> tu hami songon boanboanami tanda ni naung niebatan hamu tu hutamuna, borunami?" | "Apalah yang akan <b>ipar</b> berikan kepada kami sebagai tanda bahwa kami telah datang menjumpai kalian ke kampung kalian ini, boru "pihak penerima istri" kami? (What can you give me as a sign that we already met you in your village, daughter of our "the accepted wife?) |

If translated, *lae* means brother-in-law, a greeting from a man to his wife's brother, a greeting between men of different surnames, a greeting from a man to men who don't know each other, a greeting from a man to his mother's brother's son, a greeting from a man to his father's sister's son, a greeting between men-in-law, a greeting from a man to his brother's husband or his sister's husband, a greeting from a

brother's husband or sister's husband to his wife's brother, sister's husband, wife's brother, brother of his sister's husband or sister's brother, son of an uncle (mother's brother or sister's brother) from a grandfather, someone with the same surname as our mother's (here they must be the same age as us), a greeting to someone with a different surname (but not to someone older than us).

| No | SL   | TL  |
|----|--|---|
| 8  | "Nauli ma <b>rajanami</b> ," ninna baa i mangalusi | "Baiklah, <b>raja kami</b> ," jawab lelaki tersebut, ("Alright, your highness" the man replied) |

The word "*rajanami*" is translated as "*raja kami*." According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), a king is the highest ruler in a kingdom (usually inherited); the person who heads and governs a

nation or state. Because the Batak people are descended from kings, the word "*rajanami*," meaning "*our king*," is used to denote respect for men, especially older ones.

| No | SL  | TL   |
|----|---|--|
| 9  | Dung sahat halahi di huta nasida, dipatorang ma rupani tu <b>inantana</b> be pardalanan ni nasida | Setelah mereka sampai ke kampung mereka, mereka menceritakan perjalanan mereka kepada <b>istri</b> mereka masing-masing (After they arrived at their village, they told their wife about their journey.) |

The word "inantana" translates to "wife." According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), a

woman who is legally married to a man (husband) is a woman.

| No | SL  | TL  |
|----|---|---|
| 10 | Alai molo <b>anggina siampudan</b> , sabar do paimahon pitu ari | Namun <b>adiknya</b> bertahan untuk tidak membukanya sampai hari ketujuh (But, their youngest brother doesn't want to open it until the 7 <sup>th</sup> day.) |

The word "*anggina siampudan*" consists of two words: "*anggina*" and "*siampudan*." "*Anggina*" means "younger sibling," and can be either male or female. This greeting is used from female to female or male to male. "*Siampudan*" means "youngest child." According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), "youngest" means "last" or "youngest." Therefore, "*anggina siampudan*" means "younger sibling."

Equivalence analysis in translation is done according to Bell's theory from 1991, which breaks down into. In three forms, namely full equivalence, incomplete equivalence, and in-commensurability. Results of analysing how well the meaning of greetings is kept when translating them from the source language to the target language. In the two target languages, you can see the following chart.

The findings can be presented as a Bell-based equivalence section that classifies each greeting/kinship term into full, partial, or non-equivalence and briefly explains why.

### Findings: Equivalence Based on Bell's Theory

Bell (1991, in Rahmah 2022) classifies equivalence into three types: full equivalence, partial equivalence, and non-equivalence. Full equivalence occurs when both form and meaning are fully transferred to the TL; partial equivalence appears when only part of the message is conveyed or some meaning is added/omitted; non-equivalence refers to substantial changes where the original message is lost, removed, or replaced. Using this framework, the greeting and kinship terms in "Boru Saroding" can be described as follows.

#### 1. Full equivalence

Only a small number of greeting/kinship terms reach full equivalence, where the TL item preserves both the referential meaning and the communicative function.

##### 1. *ibotona* → *adik Perempuan*

The Batak Toba term *ibotona* refers to a younger sister, and the translation *adik perempuan* also denotes

a female younger sibling in Indonesian. The kinship relation (younger sister), gender (female), and interpersonal closeness are maintained, so the TL reproduces both the semantic content and the social function of the SL term.

##### 2. *rajanami* → *raja kami*

The vocative *rajanami* is an address term to a king, showing respect and acknowledging his superior status. The TL *raja kami* keeps the same referent (king) and still functions as a respectful address, so the hierarchy and politeness level of the original expression are preserved. In both items, there is no significant loss or distortion of meaning, which justifies their categorization as full equivalence.

#### 2. Partial equivalence

Most greeting and kinship terms in the data fall into partial equivalence. In these cases, the basic referential meaning is transferred, but specific cultural or relational nuances are reduced, generalized, or slightly modified.

##### 1. *Boru ni rajanami* → *Tuan putri*

*Boru ni rajanami* literally means "the daughter of our king," highlighting both genealogical relation and royal status. The TL *Tuan putri* focuses on the royal status ("princess") but does not explicitly express the possessive nuance "our king's daughter," so part of the original relational information is simplified.

##### 2. *natuatua* → *orang tua*

The SL *natuatua* denotes "parents/elders," embedded in Batak Toba social structure, where age and seniority carry strong authority and respect. The TL *orang tua* is a general Indonesian term for "parents," which conveys the parental role but does not explicitly reflect the broader cultural authority or communal role of elders in Batak society. Thus, the core meaning is transferred, but some socio-cultural nuance is attenuated.

### 3. *tunggane dolina i* → *suaminya*

The phrase *tunggane dolina i* refers to "the man who has become her husband," implying the process of becoming part of the family. The TL *suaminya* captures the marital relationship but compresses the process and the extended kinship implications of marriage in Batak culture. The essential kinship role is retained, but the richer cultural perspective on marriage is not fully represented.

### 4. *amantana i* → *suaminya*

Similar to the previous item, *amantana i* refers to "her husband," but within the storyline it also carries emotional and narrative weight when the husband is absent. Translating it as *suaminya* preserves the referent but does not explicitly convey any additional affective or cultural nuances beyond standard Indonesian usage.

### 5. *hulahulana* → *saudara laki-lakinya*

In Batak Toba culture, *hulahulana* can indicate specific male relatives with particular obligations and roles within the kinship system. The TL *saudara laki-lakinya* generalizes this into "her brothers/male siblings," which communicates the male kin relation but omits the more specific cultural obligations encoded in the SL term. Therefore, the translation achieves only partial equivalence.

### 6. *inantana* → *istri mereka masing-masing*

The term *inantana* denotes "their wives," but in Batak culture the term also implies the woman's position in the patrilineal system. The TL *istri mereka masing-masing* accurately expresses that each man has a wife, but it does not convey the cultural dimension of lineage and clan affiliation. The referential meaning is correct, yet the deeper cultural layer remains under-translated.

### 7. *anggina siampudan* → *adiknya*

*Anggina siampudan* refers to a younger sibling with a specific position (often the youngest or a particular "appointed" sibling) in the family. The TL *adiknya* simply signals "his/her younger sibling," losing the specificity of position and any special connotations attached to *siampudan* in the Batak context. This again shows that the main relation is preserved, but finer cultural distinctions are not.

In all these cases, the TL retains the central message and allows readers to follow the story, but

not all cultural or social nuances are carried over, which matches Bell's notion of partial equivalence.

### 3. *Non-equivalence (near non-equivalence)*

Non-equivalence arises when the SL meaning is significantly altered, removed, or replaced with a TL element that does not carry the same message. In the present data, total non-equivalence is rare, but some items tend toward non-equivalence because important cultural components are lost.

#### 1. *lae* → *ipar*

In Batak Toba, *lae* is a culturally rich reciprocal in-law term, used in specific relations (e.g., the relationship between a man and his wife's brother) and carrying expectations of solidarity, joking, and mutual support. The TL *ipar* is a general Indonesian term for in-law that does not encode reciprocal relations or the same cultural expectations. Although both terms refer to in-law relations, the Batak Toba meaning is much more specific and functionally rich, so the TL loses a substantial part of the original message, bordering on non-equivalence in Bell's sense.

Overall, the dataset confirms Bell's claim that full equivalence is limited, while partial and near non-equivalence dominate when culture-specific greeting and kinship terms are translated into a language with a different kinship and address system.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The cultural categories presented by Peter Newmark include ecology, material culture, social culture, social organization, customs, and other cultures. The most frequently encountered cultural category in the translated book is social organization. This study examined the cultural equivalence of greeting and kinship terms in the Batak Toba folktale "Boru Saroding" and its Indonesian translation, focusing on how these culture-specific items are transferred from SL to TL. The analysis of ten key terms revealed that most items belong to the categories of social organization and kinship, functioning as address forms that encode hierarchy, intimacy, and reciprocal obligations. While a few items achieved full equivalence, the majority displayed partial equivalence, indicating that semantic content is often preserved but cultural nuances are simplified, generalized, or adapted in the TL.

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