



## A Comparative Analysis of Communicative and Semantic Equivalence: Translating Saleem’s “*Viswarahasyam*” from Telugu to English as ‘*Secret of the Universe*’

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### Abstract

This study examines the linguistic, idiomatic, and cultural challenges encountered in translating the Telugu short story *Viswarahasyam* (Secret of the Universe) into English. Utilising Peter Newmark’s theory of equivalence, the research analyses specific text samples to determine the efficacy of communicative versus semantic translation. The findings suggest a preference for communicative equivalence to ensure the target language (TL) reader captures the emotional and cultural nuances of the source text (SL).

### 1. Introduction

The Source Language (SL) story *Viswarahasyam*, written by Saleem, follows the parallel lives of Dr. Subhash Chandra and his wife, Rukminamma. While Dr. Chandra spends thirty years searching for life in distant galaxies, Rukminamma finds the essence of "life" through her altruistic actions toward their servants—Pochemma, Gouse, and others. The narrative contrasts a scientific search for existence with a humanitarian realisation of life through love and empathy.

### 2. Methodology

The researcher applied Peter Newmark’s dual concepts of Communicative and Semantic equivalence. Semantic Translation: Focuses on the thought processes of the transmitter, staying as close as possible to the SL culture and semantic structures. Communicative Translation: Attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original.

### 3. Linguistic and Cultural Challenges

The translation process revealed significant gaps in equivalence, categorised into three primary domains:

#### 3.1. Lack of Equivalent

Several SL terms possess unique cultural or situational meanings that lack a direct English counterpart. These include: *gubulugubulugaa*, *puriti*, *shareek*, *podhupukonu*, *jurrukunu*, *kaasu*, *masigudda*, *thurumukunna*, *kosarikosari*, *kearintha*, *ayyagaaru*, *nallapusalu*, *thaambhookam*.

#### 3.2. Polysemy (Multiple Equivalent)

The following table illustrates SL words with multiple potential TL interpretations:

SL Word Potential TL Equivalent  
*Vuchukatha* Enthusiasm, love, longing  
*Jeevam* Life, creature  
*Sandhi* Joining, linking, uniting, union, near  
*Munugu* Brooding, sink, plunge  
*Lagnam* Marriage, concentration, attention.



### 3.3. Culture-Specific and Idiomatic Expressions

The researcher identified several "untranslatable" cultural markers where the sense-for-sense method was vital: The SL idiom *gubulu gubulugaa* means a disturbed state of mind. The word *mantrasaani* means amid wife (midwife). The word *menarikam* means the marriage relationship between brides with her maternal cousin. The word *dhaheez* means dowry in the Urdu language.

### 4. Analysis of Representative Text Samples

The following three samples out of ten in the actual analysis of the translation demonstrate the application of Newmark's theories during the translation process.

#### Text 1

SLT: *Viswarahasyalni cheadhinchaalanna korika athanilo yukthavayasununde putti, bhalangaa perigindhi.*

TLT: He has had a great urge to disclose the secrets of the universe since his youth, and it has become very strong throughout these years.

Analysis: The SL word '*cheadhinchaalanna*' is translated as 'to disclose', the word '*yukthavayasununde*' means 'since his youth', the word '*bhalanga*' is translated as 'very strong'.

#### Text 2

SLT: *Rukminammaku navvochindhi. Poorvam rojullo manthrasaanulundevaaru. Ippudu narsule manthrasaanulaku malle illa dhaggera purullu posthunnaaremo...*

TLT: Rukminamma smiled at the reply, thought that midwives used to look after the delivery processes earlier, but now, it might be looked after by the nurses.

Analysis: The SL text is a compound sentence. It depicts the modern methods of the delivery process by the nurses in the place of midwives... The translator has given importance to the target reader and therefore used the Communicative equivalence.

#### Text 3

SLT: "*Yemiti aaloochisthunnaavu?*" *Adigaadu* Subhash Chandra.

TLT: "What are you thinking about?" asked Subhash Chandra.

Analysis: The SL text is an interrogative sentence... the translator followed the Communicative equivalence and applied the sense for sense method of translation.

### 5. Conclusion

The analysis confirms that while semantic equivalence is useful for maintaining the author's specific linguistic choices, communicative equivalence is essential for a literary work like *Viswarahasyam*. By adopting a sense-



for-sense approach, the translator successfully bridged the gap between the distinct socio-cultural environments of the Telugu-speaking world and the English-speaking target audience, ensuring the emotional weight of the story remains intact.

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