

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background on the study, the research question, the objectives of the study, the study's significance, and the scope and limitations of the study. Those subchapters are important to explain because they provide a general overview of this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In an increasingly globalized world, translation plays a crucial role in facilitating cross-cultural communication. Translation is no longer viewed merely as a linguistic transfer between languages but as a cultural practice through which values, beliefs, and worldviews embedded in texts are mediated and reinterpreted (Bassnett, 2013). Particularly in cultural texts, translation involves complex negotiations between source and target cultures, as translators inevitably make ideological and strategic choices that shape how cultures are represented (Hatim & Mason, 2005).

One of the most challenging aspects of translating cultural texts is the treatment of cultural elements. Newmark (1988) classifies cultural elements into five categories: ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations and concepts, and gestures and habits, all of which frequently carry historical, social, or spiritual meanings that extend beyond their surface lexical forms and may lack direct equivalents in the target language.

Indonesia, as a multicultural and multilingual nation, possesses a vast body of folklore deeply rooted in local traditions, belief systems, and historical experiences. Indonesian folklore is rich in symbolic meanings and culturally embedded expressions that often resist straightforward translation (Danandjaja, 1984). Translating Indonesian folklore into English is particularly complex due to the presence of indigenous terms, spiritual concepts, ritual practices, and historical references that lack direct equivalents in Western cultural frameworks (Nida, 1964). These characteristics make Indonesian folklore a productive site for examining how cultural elements are translated and how cultural meanings are preserved or transformed in translation.

One of the most prominent narratives representing Tuban's cultural and historical identity is the story of Ranggalawe, a figure closely associated with the founding of the Majapahit kingdom. The narrative of Ranggalawe embodies complex cultural meanings, including themes of loyalty, rebellion, spiritual devotion, and the tension between feudal hierarchy and individual conscience. This narrative has been documented and preserved in various literary forms, including the classical Javanese manuscript *Serat Ranggalawe* and more recently in modern Indonesian adaptations aimed at broader readership.

In 2020, the Indonesian National Library (Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia) published an adapted and expanded version of the Ranggalawe narrative titled *RANGGALAWÉ: Cerita Kepahlawanan Sang Pemberontak* by Alexander Putra Fajar and its English translation (*RANGGALAWÉ: The Heroic Story of the Rebel*) by M. Irwan P. Ratu Bangsawan in 2025. This publication represents a significant effort to preserve and disseminate Tuban's cultural heritage through accessible modern Indonesian prose. Subsequently, an English translation of this work was published on Academia.edu, making the narrative accessible to international audiences.

The English translation of this Ranggalawe narrative is a valuable case study for examining the rendering of cultural elements across languages in folklore contexts. The text contains a high density of cultural elements related to Javanese-Islamic cultural practices, historical titles and social hierarchies, sacred sites and spiritual concepts, ritual objects and religious terminology, and feudal administrative structures. These culturally loaded elements pose significant challenges for translation, requiring translators to balance cultural authenticity with comprehensibility for target readers unfamiliar with Javanese and Islamic traditions.

This folklore narrative was selected as the data source based on the following criteria: First, the cultural significance: the narrative represents Tuban's historical, religious, and cultural heritage, particularly the story of Ranggalawe and the founding of the Majapahit kingdom. Second, high density of cultural elements: the text contains numerous cultural elements related to Javanese-Islamic

syncretism, historical titles, ritual practices, and spiritual concepts. Third, Availability of complete translation: both the Indonesian source text and English target text are accessible in complete form; and fourth, Institutional publication: the text was published through Indonesia's National Library as part of an official cultural heritage preservation initiative.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the translation of cultural elements in the English version of *RANGGALawe: The Heroic Story of the Rebel* using Newmark's cultural categories and translation procedures. By examining how cultural elements are rendered in English, this research seeks to identify and analyze the translation procedures applied to cultural elements in the *Ranggalawe* folklore text.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, the research questions are:

1. What categories of cultural elements are found in Folklore "*RANGGALawe: Cerita Kepahlawanan Sang Pemberontak*"?
2. What translation procedures are applied in Folklore "*RANGGALawe: Cerita Kepahlawanan Sang Pemberontak*"?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions, the objectives of the study are:

1. To identify and classify the categories of cultural elements found in folklore "*RANGGALawe: Cerita Kepahlawanan Sang Pemberontak*".
2. To analyze the translation procedures applied to cultural elements in folklore "*RANGGALawe: Cerita Kepahlawanan Sang Pemberontak*".

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of translation studies, particularly in relation to the translation of cultural elements in folklore contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to translation studies by applying Newmark's cultural categories and translation procedures to the analysis of regional Indonesian folklore. While previous studies have focused on national literary texts, popular narratives, or audiovisual media, this study

extends the analysis to a Tuban folklore narrative published by Indonesia's National Library.

Practically, this research contributes to efforts in preserving and promoting local cultural heritage through translation. By analyzing how Indonesian folklore is translated and represented in English, this study highlights the importance of responsible translation practices in safeguarding culturally embedded meanings. The findings may support cultural documentation initiatives and raise awareness of how translation choices can either preserve or distort local cultural identities when folklore is disseminated to international audiences.

Overall, this study is expected to encourage further research on regional folklore translation and to strengthen the role of translation as a means of cultural preservation and intercultural understanding. By foregrounding Tuban's local cultural narratives within an academic framework, this research contributes to the development of locally grounded yet globally relevant translation studies.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on the analysis of cultural elements found in the English translation of *RANGGALawe: The Heroic Story of the Rebel*. The data are taken from the Indonesian source text (*RANGGALawe: Cerita Kepahlawanan Sang Pemberontak*) and its English translation, which represents a folklore narrative from Tuban.

The analysis is limited to identifying and classifying cultural elements based on Newmark's cultural categories and examining the translation procedures applied in rendering these elements into English. The study focuses only on cultural elements related to religious beliefs, ritual practices, social structures, and historical concepts.

This study does not analyze stylistic, syntactic, or discourse-level aspects of translation, nor does it evaluate translation quality or the translation process. The findings are specific to this single folklore text and are not intended to be generalized to other texts or cultural contexts.