

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Choosing the Subject

In the book *A Textbook of Translation* (1988), Peter Newmark defines translation as the process of conveying the message of a text into another language in the manner intended by the author. It might be regarded as difficult, unnatural, and dishonest because someone claims to be someone they are not by utilizing another language. As a result, in many sorts of texts, the urge is to transfer as many Source Language (SL) words as possible to the Target Language (TL) (Newmark, 1988, p. 5). Even though conveying messages from SL to TL is always possible, the translated version might not have the same effect or impact as the original. That is because every community has its own language structures and cultures, and every individual has their own way of thinking and expressing themselves (Newmark, 1988, p. 6). If the source and target languages do not share a similar culture, or ‘cultural overlap’, conveying the culturally specific element and its meaning will be difficult (Newmark, 1998, p. 94). Mona Baker considers the difficulty of translating those culturally specific features as a “non-equivalence at word level” problem, which means that “the target language has no direct equivalent for a word which occurs in the source text” (Baker, 1992, p. 20). To address these problems, professional translators employ translation strategies (Baker, 1992, p. 26).

Among texts that use translation to convey messages, a novel often contains culturally specific words and poses translation problems. Oftentimes, novels reflect the social conditions of the environment where the writer lives, making them embody words, terms, expressions, or other elements exclusive to that community and hard to translate into other communities that do not share the same social conditions. One of the recently popular novels that incorporates many cultural aspects is *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala, published in 2012 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. Due to its popularity, this novel has been adapted into a Netflix Indonesia series. The novel tells the story of the development of *kretek*, a traditional cigarette, from the time Indonesia was under Dutch colonial rule to the present day. The main story of this novel, along with its settings, made the narrative rich in Indonesian culture. Despite the many culturally specific items that make it difficult to translate into other languages, this novel has been translated into English by Annie Tucker under the title *Cigarette Girl*, published in 2015 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. The difficulty of conveying culture-specific items from Indonesian to English piques the researcher's interest. Thus, the researcher analyzed the culture-specific items in *Gadis Kretek* and attempted to understand how the translator employed translation strategies to convey those items from Indonesia into English.

## 1.2 Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the categories of culture-specific items found in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala?

2. What are the translation strategies used to translate those culture-specific items from Indonesia into English?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

In accordance with the research questions above, this research aims to:

1. To identify the culture-specific items in the novel *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala
2. To understand the translation strategies used by the translator to translate those culture-specific items from Indonesia into English

### **1.4 Focus and Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on analyzing the culture-specific items in Ratih Kumala's novel *Gadis Kretek* and the strategies used to translate them into English. The research identifies the culture-specific items present in the book and classifies them using established theoretical frameworks. It further examines the translation strategies employed by the translator in rendering these cultural terms in the English version of the novel, *Cigarette Girl*.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

The novel *Gadis Kretek* has previously been examined in translation studies. Miskiyah (2020) analyzed Javanese cultural terms in the book using Nord's (2018) categorization and identified 32 items. Drawing on Davies's (2003) strategies, the study found that addition was the most frequently used strategy, while localization most accurately conveyed the cultural concepts. Other studies

on cultural terms include Angelina et al. (2020), who identified 48 cultural items in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* using Newmark's (1998) categories and found that the loan word or loan word plus explanation strategy was the most common strategy based on Baker's (2018) framework. Similarly, Fitriyah (2021) identified 74 cultural terms in *The Anastasia Syndrome and Other Stories* and found that the book employed four of Baker's (2011) eight strategies in the Indonesian translation. Yatuzzuhriyyah and Hilman (2021) also applied Newmark's (1988) cultural categorizations in their study of *The Midnight Library*, using Molina and Albir's (2002) techniques to analyze the translation of the cultural terms.

More recent research shows a shift from cultural terms to a wider range of linguistic features. Rahmah et al. (2024) examined slang in the subtitles of *Inside Out 2*, utilizing Allan and Burridge's (2006) classifications and Baker's (1992) strategies, and concluded that direct translation was the most frequently employed approach. Idiomatic expressions have also gained attention: Wibowo and Supardi (2024), using Baker's (2018) framework, found that idioms in *An Abundance of Katherines* were commonly paraphrased into non-idiomatic forms to preserve meaning and cultural nuance. Similarly, Rohmawati (2023) investigated expressions related to God and oneself in *The Alchemy of Happiness*, identifying 209 items and concluding that translation using similar meaning and form was the most appropriate strategy. Translation research has also expanded to songs, as demonstrated by Seran and Subiyanto (2023), who analyzed subtitling strategies in Taylor Swift's "All Too Well" using Gottlieb's

(1992) framework and found that paraphrasing is dominant due to the figurative nature of song lyrics.

Despite this diversification of topics and data sources in recent studies, the present study chose culture-specific items. Differ from the previous study that focuses on either cultural words or term, this study using culture-specific items as the main object which make the date of this study more divers, not only words or terms but other lexical items are identified in this study. While previous studies have extensively examined English novels or texts translated into Indonesian, this research instead focuses on Indonesian texts translated into English. Although *Gadis Kretek* has been explored previously, this study differs in several ways. Unlike Miskiyah (2020), who exclusively analyzed Javanese terms, the present study considers a broader range of Indonesian culture-specific items, including expressions that originally came from various regional languages, religiously influenced expressions, loanwords that already embedded in Indonesian culture, and other Indonesian-specific terms, thereby yielding a larger dataset. This study also employs different theoretical frameworks, which are Newmark's (1988) cultural categories and Baker's (1992) translation strategies. Although widely used in previous studies of culturally specific items, these frameworks have not been applied to *Gadis Kretek*. By applying the different frameworks to the same text and utilizing a broader range of datasets, the study aims to expand and complement existing research. This research can also help fill a gap in Indonesian–English translation studies, particularly in the translation of cultural terms.

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

### 1.6.1 Translation

Translation as a field of study has been around for quite some time. Each scholar has their own definition of translation. J. C. Catford, in *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, conceptualizes translation as the substitution of textual material in one language with equivalent textual material in another language (Catford, 1965, p. 20). He emphasizes the use of the terms source language (SL) and target language (TL), arguing that translation is inherently an unidirectional activity that proceeds from the SL to the TL (Catford, 1965, p. 20). Jeremy Munday also adopts this terminology. In the book *Introducing Translation Studies* (2008), Munday states that the term "translation" carries multiple meanings: it may denote the overall field of study, the end product (the translated text), or the act of producing a translation (the translation process). In the context of written texts, translation involves transforming an original written text, known as the source text (ST) in the source language (SL), into a new written text, referred to as the target text (TT), in the target language (TL) (Munday, 2008, p. 5).

In Addition, Peter Newmark, in *A Textbook of Translation* (1988), defines translation as the process of conveying the message of a text into another language in the manner intended by the author (Newmark, 1988, p. 5). In line with this statement, Mildred L. Larson, in *Meaning-Based Translation* (1998), emphasized that translation is an act of changing form without altering the meaning. The form of a language refers to its visible or

audible components, such as words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs, which make up the surface structure. In translation, the source-language form is replaced by the receptor (target) language form. What remains constant is the meaning, which is transferred from the source language to the target language through semantic structures. In practice, translation involves examining the vocabulary, grammar, communicative context, and cultural aspects of the source language text, analyzing its meaning, and then reconstructing that meaning with suitable linguistic and cultural forms in the receptor language (Larson, 1998, p. 3). Therefore, translation, as discussed by various scholars, can be understood as both a process and a field of study that focuses on transferring meaning from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL).

### **1.6.2 Translation Strategies**

Within translation studies, a wide range of translation strategies and methods have been proposed, with each scholar offering distinct viewpoints regarding what constitutes a translation strategy or method. However, since this study adopts Mona Baker (1992)'s translation strategies, only her framework will be discussed here. Before examining the translation strategies, it is also necessary to understand the potential problems that may arise in translation, as strategies and methods would not be required in the absence of such issues.

Baker suggested that one of the main challenges in translation stems from the absence of equivalence at the word level. This issue arises when no lexical

item in the target language adequately represents the meaning of a word in the source language, prompting translators to seek alternative solutions (Baker, 1992, p. 10). Baker refers to this phenomenon as non-equivalence at the word level (1992, p. 20). She further outlines several sources of such non-equivalence, including culture-specific concepts, the absence of lexicalized concepts in the target language, semantic complexity of source-language words, differing semantic distinctions between languages, the lack of superordinate or specific terms (hyponyms) in the target language, variations in physical or interpersonal perspective, differences in expressive meaning, differences in form, differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms, and the use of loan words in the source text (Baker, 1992, p. 21-26).

To address these challenges, Baker (1992) proposes a range of translation strategies commonly employed by professional translators to overcome different types of non-equivalence between SL and TL words. Given that this study focuses on the translation of cultural terms—where differences between the source and target languages frequently result in non-equivalence at the word level—Baker's strategies provide an appropriate theoretical framework for this research.

According to Baker (1992), translation strategies to address non-equivalency issues include:

- 1. Translation by a more general word (superordinate)**

This strategy is widely used for addressing various forms of non-equivalence, particularly in relation to propositional meaning. It is effective across most, if not all, languages because the hierarchical structure of semantic fields is generally universal. In this approach, translators select a broader term from the same semantic field to convey the essential meaning of a more specific word that lacks a direct equivalent in the target language (Baker, 1992, pp. 26-28).

## **2. Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word**

This strategy is used when direct equivalents in the TL either do not exist or are inappropriate in context. Applying this approach, the translator may want to avoid conveying the wrong expressive meaning. Sometimes, the TL has a word that is close in meaning, propositionally or expressively, but may be too blunt to be acceptable in the TL's communicative norms. In other cases, the SL item might represent a concept that does not exist in the TL, so its expressive meaning is lost in translation. Even when an equivalent does exist in the TL, the context might not align, prompting the translator to choose a less expressive but more contextually suitable word. Additionally, the translator may sometimes add a modifier to preserve the expressive meaning (Baker, 1992, pp. 29-30).

## **3. Translation by cultural substitution**

This strategy replaces a culture-specific term with a more familiar target-language expression that may not have the same meaning but

creates a similar effect for the reader. Its main benefit is making the content more relatable to the target audience, so they feel more familiar with it and are more attracted to it (Baker, 1992, p. 31).

#### **4. Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanations**

This strategy is often used for culture-specific terms, modern ideas, and buzzwords. Including an explanation after the loan word is helpful, especially if the term appears frequently in the text. After the initial explanation, the loan word can be used alone without confusing the reader or requiring repeated explanations (Baker, 1992, p. 34).

#### **5. Translation by paraphrase using a related word**

This strategy is often applied when the concept from the SL is lexicalized in the TL but in a different form, and when the ST uses a particular form more frequently than what would sound natural in the target language (Baker, 1992, p. 37).

#### **6. Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words**

If the concept from the SL is not lexicalized in the TL, paraphrasing can still be used in some instances. Instead of using a related word, the translator may modify a more general term (superordinate) or break down the meaning of the source term, especially if it is semantically complex (Baker, 1992, p. 38).

#### **7. Translation by omission**

This strategy is employed when the meaning conveyed by a term is not essential to the overall message of the text and would require a lengthy

explanation that disrupts the reader. In such cases, the translator can simply leave it out entirely (Baker, 1992, p. 40). This approach should only be used as a last resort, when the benefits of creating a smooth, readable translation outweigh the need to precisely convey a specific meaning in a particular context (Baker, 1992, p. 42).

## **8. Translation by illustration**

This approach is beneficial when a word without a direct equivalent in the target language refers to a physical object that can be visually demonstrated, especially when space is limited, and the text needs to be concise and precise (Baker, 1992, p. 42).

### **1.6.3 Culture-Specific Items**

According to Axielá (1996), providing a strict definition for a “culture-specific item” (CSI) is complex because everything in a language is culturally produced. Since language itself is a cultural construct, it is difficult to isolate a purely “cultural” component from linguistic or pragmatic aspects. Consequently, a CSI cannot be defined as an intrinsically culture-bound item in isolation. Instead, a CSI emerges in the context of translation when a linguistically encoded reference in the source text gives rise to a problem in the target language due to the absence of an equivalent referent or because the item carries a different cultural value, shaped by factors such as ideology, usage, or frequency in the target culture. For this reason, any linguistic element may function as a CSI depending on its role in the source text and how it is perceived within the cultural system of the target audience. Axielá's definition emphasizes that culture-

specific items are not limited to a particular linguistic form but are identified by their cultural embeddedness and the translation problems they generate. Using this definition of culture-specific items, this study employs “culture-specific items” to refer to lexical items that encode culture-bound meanings. The term “culture-specific item” is used as an umbrella concept encompassing single words, compound words, terms, phrases, expressions, and other lexical items that encode meanings that are culturally bound and not fully transferable through direct lexical equivalence.

#### **1.6.4 Cultural Categories**

Newmark’s category of cultural language aligns with Aixelá’s notion of a culturally specific item (CSI). For Aixelá, an item becomes a CSI not because of its linguistic form alone, but because it poses a translation problem when transferred across cultures. This notion corresponds to Newmark’s cultural language, which is defined by its reliance on a community's culture and the possibility of emerging translation problems. According to Newmark (1988), cultural language refers to the language used by a particular community and differs from that used by other communities. Moreover, Newmark (1988) also separates cultural language from universal and personal (idiolect) language. As mentioned, cultural languages are tied to a specific culture from a particular community. Thus, cultural words or other culture-specific items are challenging to translate because they may not exist or be well known in all cultures, unless there is a shared cultural background.

In contrast to culture-specific items, universal words or other universal lexical items are understood in almost all languages and cultures, so they usually do not cause translation problems. However, some universal words may convey a universal meaning, but do not capture the exact cultural details. For example, the word 'breakfast' has the same meaning in many languages, but the details of how it is served may differ across communities. Personal language, also known as idiolect, is the language used by a particular person. Personal language is even more challenging to translate because it is very individual and not shared by others.

Additionally, Newmark (1998), adapting Nida, categorizes culture into five categories. These categorizations are used in this research. The cultural categories include:

### **1. Ecology**

This category includes geographical features, landscape, plains, hills, climate, winds, flora, fauna, and other natural phenomena. These terms are often specific to a particular region and may not have equivalents in different cultures. Geographical terms differ from other cultural words because they are generally free from political and commercial values. However, the extent to which these terms spread to other languages depends on the global influence of their country of origin and the specificity of the term. The familiarity of ecology terms from one language to another is determined by the significance of the terms and the political or geographic closeness of their origins.

## **2. Material culture**

Material culture refers to man-made physical objects and products, such as food, clothing, houses, transportation, tools, and technologies. These often reflect a culture's lifestyle and values. For many countries, food is their most sensitive and vital representation of their national culture. Material culture for clothing usually includes distinctive traditional clothing that is often not translated. Clothing terms also include generic terms used in many languages, but their exact meanings can vary depending on the climate and the materials used. Like clothing terms, many language communities also have terms for specific houses that are generally untranslated. Transportations included in the material culture are names of traditional transportation usually specific to one community, such as gondolas from Venice and tuk-tuks from Thailand. Besides transportation, new words created to describe transportation systems, such as lay-by (a roadside parking area) and flyover (a road system where highways meet), are also part of material culture.

## **3. Social culture**

Social culture refers to daily practices that define a society's social behavior. This category includes work, leisure activities, and interactions between people. When understanding social culture, it is essential to differentiate between denotative and connotative translation issues. Denotative words like patisserie or chocolaterie are not difficult to translate because you can use the original words, use an approximate word like "cake shop" or

“chocolate shop”, or explain their function, like “a cake shop that also serves coffee.” However, connotative words like the working class, the proletariat, and the masses are more challenging to translate because they carry emotional and political significance.

#### **4. Social organizations**

This category includes terms related to or used in political, legal, religious, historical, educational, administrative, institutional, and artistic settings. These terms can reflect a country's political and social life. Terms related to government, parliaments, or ministries can reveal the prevailing ideology in the country. Historical terms may be names of institutions or concepts that are never translated unless a widely accepted standard translation exists. Artistic terms refer to literature, architecture, art movements, and cultural institutions.

#### **5. Gesture and habits**

This category encompasses non-verbal communication, body language, and cultural habits that hold meaning in specific cultures but may be misinterpreted or perceived as offensive by others. Thus, when translating this category, it is essential to understand what the gesture looks like (description) and what it means (function). Sometimes, the same gesture has a different meaning in different cultures. For example, smiling when someone dies may be seen as appreciation in one culture or as sarcasm in another.

#### **1.6.4 Domestication and Foreignization**

Venuti (1995) introduces the notion of the translator's invisibility and visibility. Invisibility refers to the tendency for translators to efface their own presence by producing translations that read smoothly and naturally, as if they had been written in the target language from the outset (Venuti, 1995). This practice favors fluency and suppresses linguistic or stylistic features that might reveal the text's foreign origin. In contrast, translator visibility refers to translations in which the translator's intervention becomes noticeable through unusual or marked language, reminding readers that they are engaging with a text from another culture. Drawing on Schleiermacher's distinction between "moving the author toward the reader" and "moving the reader toward the author," Venuti frames these orientations as two broad translation strategies: domestication and foreignization.

These strategies represent not only technical choices but also ethical positions toward cultural difference. Domestication seeks to assimilate the source text into the target culture by smoothing out foreign elements, resulting in a text that is easily readable by the target reader but culturally assimilated. Later on, Venuti (2008) criticizes this approach for reducing the foreign text to the values and norms of the receiving culture, thereby reinforcing ethnocentric perspectives. Foreignization, by contrast, deliberately retains traces of the source language and culture, creating a translation that may appear unfamiliar or resistant to the norms of the target language. This strategy aims to preserve cultural differences and to make the translator's role visible by allowing foreign structures, concepts, and expressions to shape the target text. Rather than forming a rigid opposition,

domestication and foreignization exist along a continuum, reflecting varying degrees of cultural and linguistic mediation in translation.

## **1.7 Methods**

Based on the characteristics of the data collected, this study can be classified as qualitative research, as the data consist of words and phrases rather than numerical figures. The data for this research consist of culturally embedded items extracted from Ratih Kumala's novel *Gadis Kretek*, along with their corresponding English translations found in the English version of the book, *Cigarette Girl*, translated by Annie Tucker. The original novel was published in 2012, and the translated version was published in 2015, both published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

### **1.7.1 Method of Collecting Data**

The data were collected in several steps:

1. The researcher read both data sources to gain an understanding of the overall context of the text.
2. The researcher read *Gadis Kretek* by Ratih Kumala, circled potential cultural terms, and documented them, along with their corresponding pages, in Google Sheets.
3. The researcher sought the English translation of those words in the novel *Cigarette Girl* and copied them, along with their corresponding pages, into Google Sheets, placing them beside the Indonesian versions of each word.

From these processes, two primary data sets were obtained: the Indonesian cultural words and their English translations. By placing both data sets side by side on Google Sheets, the comparison and analysis were easier.

### **1.7.2 Method of Analysing Data**

There were more steps involved in analyzing the data than in collecting it.

The steps were as follows:

1. The researcher divided the data according to Newmark's (1988) categorization of cultural terms. In this step, the division was focused on Indonesian culture-specific items. To justify the categorization of each culture-specific item, the researcher gathered information about their meanings, etymologies, and other details using the online KBBI and other relevant resources. To minimize researcher subjectivity in the categorization process, the judgments of informants whose native language is Indonesian were also considered in classifying of several ambiguous culture-specific items. The categorization was further based on the sentence context and the narrative background in which the culture-specific items appeared, particularly for items that, at first glance, could reasonably fall into more than one cultural category. The result of this categorization was presented in a table to facilitate analysis.
2. The researcher sought the meaning, etymology, and other details for each English version of the cultural words using online English Dictionaries, namely Merriam-Webster Dictionary, as well as other resources.
3. The researcher compared both versions of the culture-specific items and identified how the translator changed, rendered, or transferred each item and its meaning from Indonesian into English, matched each method used with the type of

translation strategy based on Baker's (1992) translation strategies. The result of this classification was presented in a table to facilitate analysis.

4. To ensure accuracy and to clarify that the researcher's selection of data and analysis was unbiased, interviews were conducted with native-speaking informants. The perspectives of three informants whose native language is Indonesian were employed to enhance the understanding of the selected Indonesian culture-specific items. The perspective of one informant whose native language is English and who is from the United States was used to strengthen the evaluation and comprehension of the selected culture-specific items in English. The insights provided by these informants contribute to a deeper understanding of how the culture-specific items selected are used by native speakers in their everyday lives.
5. To ensure clarity and efficiency in data organization, each sentence containing cultural terms was systematically ordered and assigned a specific code. The coding system was designed to indicate four components:
  - (1) the type of text (ST for Source Text, and TT for Target Text)
  - (2) the page number
  - (3) the categorization of the cultural term (EC for Ecology Culture, MC for Material Culture, SC for Social Culture, SO for Social Organizations, and GH for Gestures and Habits)
  - (4) the sequence number of the data.

The example below illustrates that the sentence was extracted from page 250 of the source text, categorized under Material Culture, and is the ninth sequence of all the data in the Material Culture category.

Paidi menyiapkan **bubur lemu** untuk kami, lengkap dengan gudek krecek sebagai pendamping. (ST/250/MC-9)

Meanwhile, the example below illustrates that the sentence was extracted from page 220 in the target text, categorized under the Material Culture category, and is the ninth sequence of all the data in the Material Culture category.

Paidi is preparing **porridge** for us, with *gudek krecek*, stewed jackfruit, as a side dish. (TT/220/MC-9)

## 1.8 Presentation

This paper is organized into three chapters. The first chapter presents the background of the study, as well as research questions, objectives, focus, literature review, theoretical framework, research methods, and presentation. The second chapter contains the findings and analysis that address the two research questions. The final chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the research.