

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Translation plays a significant role in facilitating communication across languages and cultures in today's globalized world. It enables knowledge, information, and cultural values to be communicated to readers from different linguistic backgrounds. Literary works, scientific knowledge, and technological information are circulated across countries, creating a greater need for translation. Translation is therefore not simply a process of replacing words in one language with words in another. It is also a form of cross-cultural communication that involves conveying meanings, values, and cultural elements from the source text to the target readers (Bassnett, 2002). Translators are expected to communicate the intended meaning accurately while preserving the cultural and contextual meanings of the original text (Baker, 1992; Husin, 2022).

In line with this view, Permana (2021) explains that translation helps people from different languages and cultures understand one another. Through translation, language and cultural barriers can be reduced, so communication between different communities can be more effective. Therefore, translation is important not only because it transfers information, but also because it supports cultural understanding between source-text readers and target-text readers.

One of the main challenges in translation studies involves cultural words, as termed by Newmark (1988). Cultural words are lexical items that are closely related to the beliefs, traditions, social practices, and daily life of a particular culture

(Newmark, 1988). These words often carry meanings that cannot be fully understood without knowledge of the source community's culture. Because direct equivalents are not always available in the target language, translating cultural words requires careful attention to avoid misunderstanding or loss of meaning (Aixelá, 1996; Amenador & Wang, 2022).

To deal with this issue, Newmark (1988) proposes a classification of cultural words into five categories, namely ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs, activities, and concepts, as well as gestures and habits. This classification provides a clear framework for identifying and categorizing cultural words in a text. In addition, Newmark introduces several translation procedures, such as transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, paraphrase, modulation, and couplets. These procedures can be used to analyze how cultural meanings are transferred into the target text, thereby offering practical tools for examining translation choices at the lexical level (Putri et al., 2023; Halim et al., 2024).

The translation of cultural words becomes more challenging in fantasy literature, especially in texts written for young readers. Fantasy novels often combine imaginative narratives with cultural elements drawn from mythology, history, or modern social life. As a result, these texts often contain cultural words that require careful translation to preserve both narrative flow and cultural meaning while remaining accessible to the intended audience (Sabermahani & Ghazizade, 2017; Zhang & Amirdabbaghian, 2025).

This condition can be seen in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*, a fantasy novel written for middle-grade readers.

The novel blends elements of ancient Greek mythology, such as gods, mythical creatures, and ritual concepts, with a modern American setting that includes references to school life, food, money, leisure activities, and everyday social practices. This combination creates a culturally rich narrative containing terms from various cultural domains. For this reason, the Indonesian translation of the novel provides an interesting case for examining how cultural words are translated and which translation procedures are used.

In addition to presenting cultural references, *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* contains universal values that are relevant to young readers, such as courage, friendship, loyalty, identity, responsibility, and self-acceptance. These values make the novel meaningful not only as a fantasy story but also as a literary work that can support readers' understanding of character development and cultural awareness. Therefore, the translation of cultural words in the novel is important because cultural references help construct the story world and convey meanings and values to target readers.

Given the complexity of the novel's cultural references, the choice of translation procedures plays an important role in transferring cultural meaning from the source text to the target text. Different procedures may be applied depending on the type of cultural word and its role in the narrative. Analyzing these choices allows the researcher to identify patterns in translation practice and examine how cultural meaning is represented in literary translation.

Previous studies have examined the Indonesian translation of *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* from several linguistic and translation perspectives. Febriani (2017) analyzed the translation of noun phrases by focusing

on equivalence, translation strategies, and translation shifts. Isdhianty (2021) examined address terms in the novel, including their types, translation techniques, and translation quality. More recently, Qanita (2025) investigated the addition of Indonesian phatic particles, such as *dong*, *deh*, and *kan*, and explained how these particles supported a more natural conversational tone in the target text. These studies show that the Indonesian translation of *The Lightning Thief* has received academic attention. However, their main focus was on particular linguistic elements rather than on cultural words and their cultural classifications.

A closely related study was conducted by Nurrohmah (2015), who analyzed cultural words and their translation procedures in another novel from the same series, *Percy Jackson: The Battle of the Labyrinth*. The study applied Newmark's framework and identified several cultural categories and translation procedures. Although Nurrohmah's study is closely related to the present research in terms of topic and theoretical framework, it examined a different novel. Therefore, its data and cultural references were also different from those found in *The Lightning Thief*.

Based on the studies reviewed, limited attention has been given to cultural words in the English-Indonesian translation of *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* through the combined application of Newmark's cultural categories and translation procedures. Therefore, this study examines the types of cultural words found in the novel and analyzes how they are translated into Indonesian. By focusing on both ancient Greek mythological references and elements of contemporary American culture, this study is expected to contribute to the discussion of cultural word translation in middle-grade fantasy literature. It may also support broader discussions in English Language Education, particularly in

understanding the relationship between language and culture in translated literary works (Council of Europe, 2020; Fenner, 2016; Paran, 2008).

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the preceding discussion and guided by Newmark's framework of cultural categories and translation procedures, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of cultural words appear in *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*?

This question aims to identify and categorize the cultural words in the source text according to Newmark's five cultural categories.

2. What translation techniques, based on Newmark's translation procedures, are used to translate these cultural words into Indonesian?

This question examines how the translator applies specific procedures to transfer cultural meanings from English into Indonesian.

3. Which translation technique is most frequently used in translating cultural words based on Newmark's framework?

This question aims to identify the most frequently used translation procedure in translating cultural words based on Newmark's framework.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In relation to the research questions presented above, this study has three main purposes.

First, this study aims to identify and categorize the cultural words found in *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* based on Newmark's (1988) cultural categories. This objective provides a systematic description of the cultural

words in the source text and establishes a foundation for further analysis of these elements within the narrative.

Second, this study seeks to analyze the translation techniques used in translating cultural words from English into Indonesian. The techniques are classified according to Newmark's translation procedures, which provide the framework for examining how cultural meaning is transferred from the source text to the target text. Through this analysis, the study describes how different types of cultural words are rendered in the Indonesian translation.

Third, this study aims to identify the most frequently used translation technique in translating cultural words. Identifying the most frequently used procedure allows the study to describe general patterns and highlight tendencies in the translation of cultural words found in the novel.

Taken together, these objectives are intended to provide a clear and systematic explanation of how cultural words are translated in a middle-grade fantasy novel and how translation procedures are used to render both mythological and contemporary cultural references in the Indonesian version of *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the analysis of cultural words found in the English source text and the Indonesian translation of *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*. The scope of the analysis is limited to identifying and classifying cultural words based on Newmark's (1988) cultural categories and examining the translation techniques used to render these terms according to Newmark's translation procedures. As a result, this research does not address aspects such as

plot development, narrative structure, writing style, linguistic features, characterization, multimodal elements, or reader response. Although the novel contains universal values that are relevant to young readers, this study does not analyze those values as the main object of research. The discussion of universal values is used only as contextual background to explain the relevance of the selected novel. In addition, the study does not include other novels in the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series or adaptations in other media, such as films, audiobooks, or graphic novels. The analysis is therefore concentrated solely on cultural words in the selected novel.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to translation studies and English Language Education, particularly in relation to translation pedagogy and cultural awareness. The significance of this study is discussed from theoretical, practical, and academic perspectives.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to discussions on cultural translation, especially in relation to the application of Newmark's cultural categories and translation procedures in literary texts. By examining how cultural words are identified, classified, and translated, this study supports the understanding that translation is related not only to linguistic forms but also to cultural meanings. This is relevant to English Language Education because language learning is also connected to cultural awareness, mediation, and plurilingual and pluricultural competence (Council of Europe, 2020; Fenner, 2016). Therefore, this study may provide a theoretical reference for understanding how

cultural words in translated literary texts can be analyzed through translation procedures.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

From a practical perspective, the results of this study may serve as a useful reference for translators, especially those working with texts that contain culturally rich content. By analyzing how cultural words are translated in *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*, this study offers insight into the selection of translation procedures for culturally complex material.

In the context of English Language Education, the findings may also be useful for students and educators in translation courses. The data and analysis in this study can provide concrete examples for learning how to identify cultural words, classify them based on cultural categories, compare the source text and the target text, and discuss the reasons behind particular translation procedures. Through this process, students can develop their linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and translation decision-making skills. Since literary texts can be used as meaningful materials in foreign language learning, the analysis of translated literary texts can also help students understand how language and culture are connected in translation practice (Paran, 2008).

1.5.3 Academic Significance

From an academic perspective, this study supports the development of translation research within English Language Education programs. The findings may be used as a reference for future studies that focus on cultural words, translation procedures, cultural transfer, literary translation, and translation pedagogy. In

addition, this study may encourage further research on the use of translated literary texts as materials for understanding cultural meaning in English Language Education.

1.6 Novelty of the Study

The novelty of this study lies in the combination of its research object and analytical focus. Previous studies on the Indonesian translation of *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* have examined particular linguistic elements, including noun phrases, address terms, and Indonesian phatic particles (Febriani, 2017; Isdhianty, 2021; Qanita, 2025). Although these studies used the same novel as their object, they did not specifically classify and analyze its cultural words by using Newmark's cultural categories and translation procedures.

Meanwhile, Nurrohmah (2015) examined cultural words and translation procedures by applying Newmark's framework to *Percy Jackson: The Battle of the Labyrinth*. This study is closely related to the present research in terms of topic and theory, but it analyzed a different novel from the same series.

Therefore, based on the studies reviewed, the present study offers a specific contribution by examining cultural words in the English-Indonesian translation of *The Lightning Thief* through Newmark's framework. It analyzes cultural words related to both ancient Greek mythology and contemporary American culture in a middle-grade fantasy narrative. Through this focus, the study provides a more specific explanation of how cultural meanings from different cultural domains are classified and rendered for Indonesian readers.