CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The district of the Karo highlands with a population of no more than two million people—has unique kinship characteristics. Their kinship system occurs through parentage, sibling relationships and marriage. A man may not marry a woman from his own clan, so Karonese men have to search for wives from other clans. If a Karo marries someone from another ethnic group, the future spouse is adopted into an appropriate Karo clan. Marriage among ethnic groups has influenced the Karonese culture. These factors have caused the participants of rebu in Karonese society to decrease, especially with young couples.

Rebu refers to something that must be avoided in social interactions among Karonese. This includes restrictions on communication and physical interaction, for example, touching, sitting near each other or face to face without being separated by another person, as well as not talking directly to each other.

Special cultural terms are used to negotiate communications under the custom of rebu, which is practiced when someone gets married. Rebu applies to three relationships among six people: between mami (mother-in-law) and kela (son-in-law), between bengkila (father-in-law) and permen (daughter-in-law), and between turangku and turangku (people connected by being in different ‘in-law’ relationships, for example, a man’s wife’s brothers’ wives are turangku). The special words, nina and ningen, are used in communications between rebu.

Karonese family members, who were born outside the Karo highlands seldom see rebu practiced. Many of them do not know the Karonese language and
they lack an understanding of *rebu* in Karonese society. The Karonese are not being exposed to the cultural terms, practices and kinship systems of Karonese society and they do not understand, and therefore cannot be proud of, the norms that define their cultural identity. There is also a lack of older generation Karonese to promote the practice of *rebu* for the younger generations to follow.

Karonese society is hard working, firm, honest, and respectful, in line with their principles of *Mehamat man Kalimbubu, Metenget man Senina, ras Metami man Anakberu*. This can be translated literally as *Honor the wife givers, respect the elders of the clan, and understand and encourage the wife takers*, using the specific cultural bond terms of Karonese society.

There has been a rapid increase in the Karonese younger generation being educated in other provinces. Many young Karonese have a good education, and they work outside the *Karo* highlands. These factors influence the marriage of the younger generation of Karonese society and there has been an increase in Karonese marrying with other ethnic groups. On the other hand, many young Karonese people do not know their customs. They do not understand Karonese culture, especially the existence of *rebu* practices.

The development of religion has also influenced Karonese culture, and we can see that many participants of *rebu* shake hands at certain celebrations, such as Idul Fitri Day and Christmas, by saying *labo ceda sisalamen*, which means that it is not a problem to shake hands and give these greetings to one another.

Problems also happen in regard to transportation, when sometimes there is no space between the participants of *rebu* in the same car or in the same aircraft. So the customary norms of *rebu* are breached and practiced imperfectly. Those who have a strict interpretation of *rebu* are frustrated to see how some participants
of rebu behave in their daily life. And Karonese people who want to have a good future due to the development of technology think rebu violates their human rights.

The researcher is of the opinion that rebu will not be practiced perfectly by future Karonese generations, especially by those participants who live in cities. The researcher and his family still practice rebu even though they live in the city, but he is worried about his grandchildren’s practice of rebu because his children have a good education and they have little interaction with their relatives who live in villages. The existence of rebu in Karonese society is familiar to them as the researcher practices rebu, but he would appreciate it if his children also practiced rebu in their daily life.

The researcher, as translator, would like to see the documentation of rebu texts in English as the product of his translation, so that English speaking people understand this culture, before the participants of rebu decrease to a point where this culture disappears. Translation plays an important role in bridging two different languages and cultures. Without translation, the two different circumstances of languages and cultures are never transferred. A text which is translated from one language into another language changes linguistically and culturally. The process of translation has a relationship with linguistics, syntax, semantics, culture and sociolinguistics. The linguistic, syntactical and cultural differences between the source and target languages make the process of translation difficult.

To solve these difficulties in the translation process, from the source text into the target text translation strategies were applied. In this study the process of translation only focused on translation strategies, which consist of global
translation and local translation. ‘Global translation’ refers to the method of translation and ‘local translation’ refers to the translation procedures. When practicing translation both the source and target texts should be known linguistically and culturally by a translator, who should also be familiar with the subject matter.

The subject matter in this dissertation is the cultural text of *rebu* in Karonese society translated into English. *Rebu* exists especially between *mami*\(^1\) (mother in law, wife’s mother) and *kela* (daughter’s husband), between *turangku* (husband’s sister’s husband) and *turangku* (wife’s brother’s wife), and between *bengkila* (husband’s father) and *permen* (son’s wife). Such relatives may not speak face-to-face with each other. They are not supposed to stay in the same house without the presence of a third person. It is also forbidden to sit on the same floor board with one’s wife’s mother or wife’s brother’s wife.

*Rebu* starts when Karonese get married. After the wedding ceremony there is a ceremony called the *mukul* marriage rite, held in the groom’s parents’ house. This is when the bride and groom have dinner from the same plate and the menu has been determined by the groom’s parents. *Belo pengkapuri* (betel leaf which has been filled with areca nut, lime, tobacco and *gambar* (ingredient used in betel chewing) is given to the bride’s *rebu* and cigarettes are given by the groom to his *rebu*. He shakes hands with his mother-in-law and his sisters-in-law as they are introduced to their *rebu* and it is explained that they cannot speak directly to their *rebu* from that time. We know that a mat is the main seat used by the *Karo* people in everyday life and at a party or traditional ceremonies, the participants of *rebu* avoid sitting on the same mat without a third person between them. The Karonese

\(1\) *Mami* means literally mother’s brother’s wife, mother-in-law, mother-in-law’s brothers’ wives
custom of *rebu* is considered when *mami* and *kela* sit together on a mat, unless there are other people who sit between them, who function as the third person in communication between them.

The researcher is a native speaker of Karonese and he practices the dialog of *rebu* in his communication with his *mami*, *turangku*, and *permain*, although he lives in a big city. He can comprehend the texts of *rebu* in Karonese society and he understands the connections among family members in Karonese society.

A chapter of the book entitled “*Rebu Pada Masyarakat Karo*” in *Percikan Budaya Karo* written by Tarigan (1988) has been translated into English by the researcher. Yunus (1995) also did research on the same text, which focused on *Makna Pemakaian Rebu Dalam Kehidupan Kekerabatan Orang Batak Karo*. In this study, the researcher described the cultural and syntactic frames dealing with those who use *rebu* in Karonese society. The *Karo* are one of the so-called *Batak*, a collective name for several linguistically and culturally related peoples – the *Toba, Karo, Simalungun, Pakpak, Angkola* and *Mandailing* – of North Sumatera (Singarimbun, 1975).

There are two areas of *Karo*; they are the *Karo* highlands and the *Karo* lowlands. The *Karo* lowlands lie at an altitude of approximately 20 to 700 meters and the highland villages are at an altitude of 700 to 1,700 meters. The seven highest peaks in the *Karo* highlands range from 1,815 to 2,417 meters. Two of these, Sibayak (2,070m) and Sinabung (2,417m) are active volcanoes. Karolands stretch from the northern shore of Lake Toba through the Bukit Barisan Mountains and to the southern border of Aceh, to east *Pakpak*.

The main town of the *Karo* district is Kabanjahe. It has 17 subdistricts and 258 villages. The total population is about 276,763. Most of the Karonese use
Karonese language and practice *rebu* in their daily communication. A few Karonese families still live in traditional houses, with as many as eight families living in such houses. Today there are only a few Karonese traditional houses. Those houses can be found in *Lingga, Dokan, and Juhar* villages. This type of house is unique, and requires social regulations to determine who lives in each part of the house and how they interact. They were *Kalimbubu*, *sembuyak* and *anak beru*. There were so many rules accompanying the house, and all the families who lived in a traditional house practiced *rebu* in their communication.

Translating Karonese society kinships and culture is unique and these types of texts are difficult to translate. The names for relatives in Karonese society do not exist in English. The form and content of the cultural texts of *rebu* in Karonese society are very different from English. The difference between Karonese language as a source language (SL) and English as a target language (TL), and the variation in their cultures, make the process of translating themes of *rebu* texts in Karonese society into English a real challenge. There are some pronoun politeness and cultural terms in Karonese language that do not exist in English. Equivalence was needed in the process of translating them into English. Finding equivalents of form and meaning is a problematic stage of translating specific culture-bound terms of *rebu texts* in Karonese society into English.

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2 *Kalimbubu* means wife givers  
3 *Sembuyak* means agnate which relates to members of the same lineage or subclan  
4 *Anak beru* means wife taker
1.2 The Problems of the Study

In the process of translating *rebu* texts in Karonese society into English, the form and content of the texts are very hard to transfer into English. Therefore, the research questions underlying this study are:

(1) What themes occur in *rebu* texts in Karonese society?

(2) What methods and procedures are available to resolve the problems that arise in translating themes used in the *rebu* texts of Karonese society into English?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

(1) describe the unmarked and marked themes in the *rebu* texts of Karonese language and English

(2) explore the problems that arise in translating themes used in the *rebu* texts of Karonese society into English

(3) examine the translation methods and procedures that can be applied in order to solve the problems in translating themes of *rebu* texts into English

(4) analyze the similarities and differences of linguistic politeness and cultural politeness in the cultural texts of *rebu* in Karonese society and English.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on:
themes of *rebu* clauses in Karonese society from the book entitled *Percikan Budaya Karo* written by Tarigan (1988), the text of a *mukul* written by Ginting (2008) and the text of participant observation on the dialog of *rebu*.

(2) the culture-bound terms and politeness of *rebu* clauses in Karonese society.

(3) translation problems in translating themes of *rebu* texts in Karonese society into English.

(4) translation methods and procedures used in translating *rebu* clauses in Karonese society.

(5) the text which deals with kinds of *rebu* between *mami* and *kela*, between *bengkila* and *permain*, and between *turangku* and *turangku*.

### 1.5 The Significances of the Study

This research has significance, theoretically and practically, for translators, researchers, students, lecturers, and English-speaking people who are interested in Karonese culture and society.

a. Theoretically the findings can be used as:

(1) documentation of Karonese society and culture globally

(2) enrichment of research on methods and procedures in the process of translating.

b. Practically the findings can be used as:

(2) a tool for translators to find out the appropriate equivalents and thus be able to produce a correct translation of cultural terms into English

(3) useful information for English-speaking people about strategies for translating *rebu* in Karonese society

(4) a basis to conduct further research on Karonese culture.
1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid the ambiguous terminology and to understand some terminologies easily which are found in translating *rebu* texts in Karonese society, they are needed to be explained as follows:

*Anakberu* ‘literally means wife takers’, they are the relatives occur from the relationship of grandmother, mother, or wives lineages.

*Daliken si telu* is a culture-bound term as a standard of kinship in Karonese society. *Daliken si telu* is translated literally with three furnaces. It is also known as ‘rakut si telu or sangkep si telu’. It is a system of relationship which preserve the honor of one group to another in Karonese society which consists of *kalimbubu, sembuyak, and anak beru*.

*Kalimbubu* is a group of wife givers to grandfathers, fathers and sons. Their kinship system occurs through parentage, sibling relationships and marriage.

*Karonese society* is a group of people who are characterized by patterns of the same social way of living, culture, custom, attitudes and behaviors.

*Marked themes* are the terms of prepositional phrase and adverbs used at the front position of a clause.

*Mukul* is the forth phase of wedding ceremony to start *rebu* for a new family and their relatives.

*Rebu* literally meant avoidances in social interactions among participants of *rebu* in Karonese society. In this context family members practice *rebu* as to honor each other. This includes restrictions on touching, sitting near one another or face to face without being separated by another person, as well as not talking directly to one another.
**Sangkep si telu** etymologically means a complete kinship in Karonese culture. It is also known as *sangkep nggeluh, daliken si telu,* or *rakut sitelu.* Karonese society believes that their ceremonies do not run well without the presence of *rakut sitelu.*

**Sembuyak** is brothers who have the same parents, men who have the same clan but they have different sub-clan. *Sembuyak* are people whose mothers, grandmothers or wives are sisters.

**Translation method** is the process of translating used to emphasize the oriented direction of whole ST into TT. There are two opposites alternatives, they are source text oriented and target texts oriented.

**Translation procedures** are the process of translating ST into TT which focus on the elements of the clause.

**Translation strategies** cover a global and a local process of translating ST into TT. The global translation point outs the oriented direction in transferring the source text messages into target text. While local translation strategy covers the elements analysis of a clause in transferring the SL message into TL.

**Unmarked themes** refer to the words order and their position in a clause. Theme indicates the focus of the message in a clause. The unmarked themes are used in the front position of a clause, they are nominal group, noun, and nominalization. The unmarked themes are usual arrangements applied syntactically and semantically.