

Theoretical Paper

Challenges and Perspectives of Translating Emotions into Albanian and English

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Abstract.

Translating emotions represents one of the most complex challenges faced by translators. This theoretical paper argues that emotional translation is not limited to the mere transfer of words but involves the faithful conveyance of feelings, affective connotations, and cultural meanings deeply rooted in each language. The paper highlights specific challenges posed by translation between Albanian and English – two languages that differ significantly in linguistic structure, cultural traditions, and ways of expressing emotions. Through qualitative analysis combining concrete examples from literary and narrative texts, the paper examines obstacles such as lack of direct equivalents for certain emotions, stylistic differences, and culture specific features. It emphasizes translation strategies including explanation, compensation, and linguistic creativity to preserve emotional authenticity. The conclusion underscores the need for translators to maintain

a sensitive, reflective approach to capture underlying emotional energy, thereby ensuring faithful intercultural transmission.

Keywords: *translation, English as a foreign language, emotions, challenges, perspectives.*

Introduction

Translating emotions is an essential and complex field of translation studies. It is not simply a matter of transferring words from one language to another but of faithfully reproducing feelings and affective nuances. The emotional dimension of language is deeply rooted in culture, making the translation of emotions particularly delicate. Each language has its own cultural and historical specificities that influence how emotions are expressed and perceived.

The cases of Albanian and English illustrate these issues particularly well. Albanian, rich in unique

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traditions and expressions, contains emotional expressions that are difficult to transpose into English, an international language with a different structure and expressive palette. This mismatch poses a real challenge for translators, who must ensure they convey not only meaning but also intensity and emotional color.

The objective of this study is to understand how best to translate emotions between these two languages, considering linguistic and cultural constraints, in order to achieve as authentic a translation as possible.

Linguistic Challenges in Translating Emotions

Emotions are universal experiences but mediated by culture, expressed through affectively rich language that varies across societies. Translating emotions involves transmitting these affective experiences from one culture to another, going beyond lexical translation to include affective, contextual, and symbolic dimensions.

Albanian has a flexible syntax allowing different word orders to express nuances of emotions, while English requires a more fixed order. Examples of difficult to translate expressions include “Kam një zemër të thyer” (I have a broken heart) and “Ma bën zemrën mal” (literally “my heart becomes a mountain,” equivalent to “my heart swells with pride”).

Analysis of Divergent Emotional Metaphors

The images used to convey emotions vary greatly. For example, “M’u ftoh zemra” (my heart cooled) corresponds to “I have grown cold” or “I lost affection.” “Kam fluturat në stomak” has a direct equivalent in English (“I have butterflies in my stomach”). “Po më zien gjaku” (my blood is boiling) also exists in English. However, some expressions like “I’m feeling blue” have no equivalent in Albanian, where one simply says “Jam i trishtuar” (I am sad).

Importance of Cultural Context in Expressing Emotions

In Albania, emotional expression is strongly influenced by values such as family, respect for elders, and hospitality. Saying “kam mall për shtëpi” (I miss home) evokes nostalgia and deep connection to the family home – a dimension less present in the English “I feel homesick,” which is perceived as more individual and temporary. In Albanian poetry, grief is expressed through nature images: “lotët rrjedhin si shi” (tears flow like rain), while English prefers simpler formulations. Socially, Albanian culture requires emotional reserve in public but values emotional expression at family gatherings. “Të dua” (I love you) is usually reserved for close relations, while in English it can be used more broadly.

Creative Approaches vs. Literal Translation

Literal translation often fails to convey authentic emotional dimension. For example, translating “zemër e thyer” as “broken heart” is lexically accurate but may lose the deeper, communal grief connotation in Albanian culture. Creative approaches – paraphrasing, adaptation – better preserve emotional meaning. For instance, “kam mall për shtëpi” can be adapted as “I feel a longing for my home.” Translating “Hold your horses” into Albanian requires abandoning the literal calque for the pragmatic equivalent “Prit një moment” (Wait a moment).

Interdisciplinary Method and Suggestions for Improving Emotional Fidelity

A purely linguistic approach is insufficient. Psychology provides tools to understand emotional impact on recipients; cross cultural and sociolinguistic studies help understand why certain feelings take specific forms depending on context. Suggestions include: prioritize paraphrasing when literal translation fails; integrate notes or explanations for untranslatable cultural nuances; collaborate with native speakers and experts; use authentic bilingual corpora; promote interdisciplinary training (linguistics, psychology, anthropology).

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Conclusion

This study highlights the main challenges of translating emotions between Albanian and English, which extend beyond lexical correspondence to cultural, pragmatic, and emotional dimensions. Syntactic flexibility and metaphorical richness of Albanian, combined with deep cultural differences, require translators to have keen intercultural sensitivity and creativity.

The importance of going beyond literal translation to prioritize contextual and emotional adaptation is paramount. Future research should focus on developing specialized bilingual tools and corpora, training translators in interdisciplinary skills, and integrating AI technologies to facilitate contextual analysis without replacing human judgment.

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