Happiness and Sadness Metaphor Translation in Daneshvar's Savushun: A Corpus-Based Comparison of Conceptual Mapping Strategies across Two English Versions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the translation of happiness and sadness metaphors in Simin Daneshvar's *Savushun* by comparing two English translations: Mohammad Reza Ghanoonparvar's *Savushun* and Roxane Zand's *a Persian Requiem*. Translating metaphor is among the most demanding problems in literary translation because figurative meaning is constituted not by wording alone but by the interaction of embodied cognition and cultural context. These pressures intensify when the metaphors encode emotion; happiness and sadness are expressed through imagery that varies substantially across cultures in ways that resist lexical equivalence. This study examines how metaphorical expressions belonging to these two domains in Simin Daneshvar's Savushun were rendered in two English translations: Mohammad Reza Ghanoonparvar's 1990 version and Roxane Zand's 1991 A Persian Requiem. A parallel corpus was assembled from the Persian source text and both target versions. Metaphorical expressions were identified using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and the Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejazz Group, 2007), then classified into six categories: (1) similar conceptual mapping with similar metaphorical expression, (2) similar mapping with different expression, (3) different mapping with similar expression, (4) different mapping with different expression, (5) non-metaphorical rendering, and (6) omission. Frequency counts and proportional comparisons were run across all categories for both translators. Sadness metaphors appeared at nearly twice the rate of happiness metaphors in the source text. Both translators neutralized metaphors more often than they preserved them; non-metaphorical rendering (Category 5) was the dominant strategy in both versions. The translators' preferences diverged: Ghanoonparvar held closer to source-domain imagery; Zand applied paraphrase and omission more frequently. Conceptual equivalence proved more recoverable than lexical equivalence. The findings show that sadness metaphors occurred substantially more often than happiness metaphors in the source text. Both translators preserved many source metaphors but differed in strategic preference: one retained metaphorical imagery more consistently, while the other more frequently employed neutralization and paraphrase as target-oriented strategies. The most common strategy in both translations was preservation of conceptual meaning with altered lexical form. The findings suggest that metaphor translation from Persian into English is shaped by conceptual compatibility and translator decision-making alongside linguistic equivalence. These results are discussed in relation to domestication and foreignization as broader orientations in literary translation. The study's scope and generalizability are limited by corpus size, domain selection, and single-analyst coding, and these constraints are addressed in the limitations section.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor theory; emotion metaphor; literary translation; parallel corpus; Persian-English; Savushun

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor translation has long been recognized as a central difficulty in literary translation (Newmark, 1988; Dagut, 1976). The problem is not merely lexical; it is conceptual. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) demonstration that ordinary language is structured by conceptual metaphors shifted the analytic frame from rhetoric to cognition, and subsequent work in translation studies gradually absorbed this shift (Schäffner, 2004; Mandelblit, 1995; Al-Zoubi & Al-Hasnawi, 2007). On this view, two languages may share the same metaphorical mapping while deploying it in different surface forms, or they may conceptualize the same target

domain through entirely different source domains. The implications for translators are considerable: lexically equivalent solutions may fail to preserve conceptual meaning, while non-literal solutions may preserve it precisely.

Emotional metaphors make this problem sharper because emotions are abstract and their expression is largely constituted through metaphor (Kövecses, 2000, 2005). The claim that basic emotion metaphors are grounded in universal bodily experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2005) predicts cross-linguistic overlap at the level of conceptual mapping; empirical work has confirmed this overlap while also documenting culture-specific variation (Yu, 1998; Tabatabaei & Ivanova, 2022). Persian and English are genetically unrelated languages with distinct cultural histories, and their emotional lexicons diverge in ways that go beyond vocabulary. Heart-based compounds in Persian (del-mordegi, del-tang, daghe-del) have no direct English equivalents; their figurative content maps onto somatic experience in ways that English-speaking readers may not share.

Daneshvar's Savushun (1969) is an ideal corpus for this investigation. It is the first novel published in Persian by a female author and has sold over half a million copies in Iran, remaining in circulation for more than five decades (Daneshvar, 2001). Its language is consistently described as metaphorically dense, particularly in passages convey the emotional states of its principal characters (Goodreads, 2024; Literariness, 2024). Two English translations exist: Ghanoonparvar's (1990) Savushun, which preserves the original title and generally aims for closer correspondence to the source text, and Zand's (1991) A Persian Requiem, which adopted a freer approach and changed the title itself. Comparing these two versions within a single corpus allows translator-level variation to be isolated and measured.

The present study uses a parallel corpus assembled from the Persian source text and both translations. Metaphorical expressions in the semantic domains of happiness and sadness were identified with the Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejazz Group, 2007) and analyzed within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2002). Six translation patterns were coded, frequency distributions were computed, and the results were analyzed for strategic differences between translators and for implications about the translatability of Persian emotional metaphor.

Theoretical Background

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) fundamentally changed how metaphor is understood. Rather than treating it as a literary ornament, they argued that metaphor is a basic cognitive mechanism through which people make sense of abstract experience. Because the human conceptual system is itself metaphorical in structure, metaphor shapes not just language but thought and action. This insight became the foundation of the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor, also known as the contemporary theory of metaphor, which treats metaphor as a mode of thinking and a way of organizing experience rather than a property of words (Lakoff, 1993).

At the core of this framework is the idea of conceptual metaphor, which involves understanding one domain of experience in terms of another. The domain being understood is called the target domain; it is typically abstract. The domain it is understood through is called the source domain, which is typically more physical or concrete. The relationship between them is described as a set of mappings or correspondences: elements in the source domain are systematically linked to elements in the target domain, so that the structure of one is used to make sense of the other (Kövecses, 2002).

One further contribution of the contemporary theory, noted by Lakoff (1993), is the distinction it draws between a conceptual metaphor and a metaphorical expression. The conceptual metaphor is the underlying cognitive mapping; the metaphorical expression is the specific linguistic form through which that mapping surfaces in language. The proposal has since been elaborated and contested (Kövecses, 2002, 2005; Steen, 2008; Glucksberg, 2003), but remains the dominant framework for corpus-based studies of metaphor in language.

Emotion is a canonical target domain for metaphorical conceptualization. In English, happiness is structured

by, among other mappings, *Happiness is up, Happiness is light, and Happiness is a fluid in a container*; sadness by *Sadness is down, Sadness is dark, Sadness is burden, and Sadness is a physical force*. (Kövecses, 2000). Kövecses (2005) argued that some of these mappings are widespread or near-universal because they are grounded in bodily responses to emotion: upright posture correlates with positive affect, drooping posture with negative affect; warmth correlates with proximity and security. Cross-linguistic evidence supports partial universality (Yu, 1998; Tabatabaei & Ivanova, 2022), but cultural variation is also documented at the level of both source domain selection and metaphorical elaboration (Kövecses, 2005, 2022; Deignan, 2003).

Persian adds source domains that are rare or absent in English. The heart (del) functions as the primary locus of emotional experience, and a range of compound expressions map physical properties of the heart (tightness, deadness, fullness, branding, rotting) onto specific affective states. Blood as a substance of grief, aggressive animal behavior as a figure for the assault of sadness, and edibility as a figure for consuming sorrow are documented as specifically Persian conceptualizations (Moradi & Mashak, 2013; Sharifian, 2011). Their translation into English requires either borrowing the source domain with explanation, finding a culturally available English equivalent, or paraphrasing the metaphorical meaning without preserving the image.

Metaphor Identification Procedure

The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), proposed by the Pragglejazz Group (2007) and extended as MIPVU, which was developed by researchers at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and published by Steen et al. (2010), provides a systematic method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. The procedure requires the analyst to establish the contextual meaning of a lexical unit, determine its basic (more concrete, historically older) meaning in other contexts, and mark the unit as metaphorical if the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it. The method has been applied across typologically diverse languages (Nacey et al., 2019; Muelas-Gil, 2023) and has been shown to produce acceptable inter-rater reliability when analysts are trained and procedures are followed consistently.

For the present study, the MIP procedure was applied to both Persian and English data. The Aryanpur Bilingual Dictionary (1986) was used to establish basic meanings for Persian lexical units; the Macmillan English Dictionary (Rundell, 2008) was used for English. Items identified as metaphorical were then linked to conceptual metaphors following the procedure described by Steen (2009): if a metaphorical expression in discourse can be explained by reference to a cross-domain mapping in conceptual structure, the analyst moves from the surface form to the underlying conceptual metaphor.

Translation Patterns and Cognitive Equivalence

The cognitive approach to metaphor translation defines equivalence at the level of conceptual mapping rather than surface wording (Mandelblit, 1995; Schäffner, 2004). A translation may preserve the same conceptual metaphor while using different lexical material, or it may shift to a different conceptual metaphor while preserving the target domain meaning. Al-Zoubi and Al-Hasnawi (2007) distinguished similar mapping conditions (SMC) from different mapping conditions (DMC), and Safarnejad et al. (2014) extended this framework to include two additional patterns: non-metaphorical rendering and omission.

This study uses a six-category coding scheme derived from that framework. Category 1 (SMC, same expression) occurs when source and target share both the conceptual mapping and the lexical instantiation. Category 2 (SMC, different expression) occurs when the mapping is preserved but realized through different lexis. Category 3 (DMC, same expression) occurs when surface wording is retained but the underlying conceptual structure differs. Category 4 (DMC, different expression) occurs when both mapping and expression shift. Category 5 is non-metaphorical rendering, in which the translator conveys the conceptual content without a metaphorical vehicle. Category 6 is omission.

DATA AND METHOD

Corpus

The corpus consists of three aligned texts: Daneshvar's (1969) Savushun in Persian, Ghanoonparvar's (1990)

English translation (hereafter TT1), and Zand's (1991) A Persian Requiem (hereafter TT2). The novel encompasses basic cultural themes and is filled with metaphors, which strikes a chord with Iranian readers, evoking emotions and memories of the recent past. Suvashun is the story of a folk tradition, of surviving in southern Iran from a datable pre-Islamic past that conjures hope in spite of everything. It is a metaphor of the flame of idealism against a backdrop of hopelessness and helplessness, a basic metaphor that can be found in many customs, both religious and secular. Suvashun manifests the experience of Iranians who lived through the decades leading up to the 1979 revolution. The major characters are people who struggled in their daily life with social and historical forces that gave pre-revolutionary Iran the characteristics of hopelessness and despair, making it inadequately perceived by outsiders. Although the main period of the story is between 1941 and 1945 when Iran, due to its significant strategic situation, was occupied by the Soviets, the British, and later by the Americans in (1945), the story helps Iranians to reconstruct their earlier views, and trace the continuousness of cultural and historical issues through the 1979 revolution to the present. The narrative is told through the perspective of Zari, the wife of landowner Yusof, and covers themes of political resistance, loss, grief, and survival. The novel's emotional texture is consistently characterized by metaphorical density, making it a productive site for investigating the translation of affective language (Daneshvar, 2001; Ramazani, 2024).

Both translators are Iranian-born and bilingual in Persian and English. Ghanoonparvar retained the original title and pursued a generally source-oriented strategy. Zand changed the title and adopted a target-oriented approach, regularly adjusting or omitting culturally specific elements. This difference is visible in the metaphor data and allows translator strategy to function as an independent variable in the analysis.

Identification and Coding

Metaphorical expressions in the happiness and sadness domains were identified in the Persian source text using MIP. Potential metaphorical items were flagged, their basic and contextual meanings were established using the Aryanpur dictionary, and items where contextual meaning contrasted with basic meaning but could be understood in comparison with it were marked metaphorical. The resulting set of items was then organized under conceptual metaphors following Steen's (2009) procedure.

For each source metaphorical expression, the corresponding passage in TT1 and TT2 was located by text alignment. The translation was analyzed for metaphoricity using the same MIP procedure and assigned to one of the six categories on the basis of (a) whether a metaphorical vehicle was present in the target text and (b) whether the conceptual mapping underlying any target metaphor matched, approximated, or differed from the source mapping. Where translations were non-metaphorical, the category-5 code was assigned regardless of whether the denotative content was preserved.

RESULTS

Happiness Metaphors in the Source Text

Six conceptual metaphors of happiness were identified in the Persian source text: *Happiness is up, Happiness is light, Happiness is a fluid in a container, Happiness is vitality, Happiness is loss of control, and Happiness is rapture*. Two additional mappings were identified that appear to be culturally specific to Persian: a nature-based mapping encoding happiness as a source of natural vitality, and an electricity-based mapping in which intensive positive energy is reflected through the eyes. The latter, realized through items such as bargh-zad (electricity-hit), has no close structural equivalent in English.

The *happiness is up* mapping was the most frequent and generated the most shared conceptual ground with English, consistent with Kövecses's (2005) claim that orientational metaphors grounded in bodily posture are among the most cross-linguistically widespread. The *Happiness is loss of control* mapping, realized through items such as rodebor (intestine-cut, denoting laughter so intense it causes abdominal pain), is culturally specific and created consistent translation difficulty.

Table 1. Happiness Metaphor Categories and Frequency in Source Text

Conceptual Metaphor	**Frequency (ST)**	**% of Total**
HAPPINESS IS UP	3	21.43
HAPPINESS IS LIGHT	3	21.43
HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER	3	21.43
HAPPINESS IS VITALITY	1	7.14
HAPPINESS IS LOSS OF CONTROL	2	14.28
HAPPINESS IS RAPTURE	1	7.14
Culture-specific (nature / electricity)	1	7.14
Total	**14**	**100**

Translation Patterns for Happiness Metaphors

Table 2 summarizes the frequency of each translation pattern across both target texts for happiness expressions.

Table 2. Translation Patterns for Happiness Metaphors

Pattern	**Cat. 1**	**Cat. 2**	**Cat. 3**	**Cat. 4**	**Cat. 5**
TT1 (n=14)	4	3	0	3	4
TT2 (n=14)	2	2	0	4	6

For TT1, Category 1 and Category 5 were equally frequent (4 instances each, approximately 28.6% each). Ghanoonparvar preserved the source conceptual mapping in around 71% of cases (Categories 1, 2, and 4 together), with full lexical equivalence in 28.6% of cases. Category 5 (non-metaphorical rendering) accounted for the remaining 28.6%, occurring mainly where the source domain was culturally specific to Persian.

For TT2, Category 5 was dominant (6 instances, 42.9%). Zand preserved full conceptual mapping in approximately 57% of cases but more frequently moved to paraphrase when the source domain was culturally remote. No instances of Category 3 (different mapping, same expression) or Category 6 (omission) were recorded for happiness in either translation, which is consistent with the relative accessibility of happiness metaphors to cross-cultural transfer.

Sadness Metaphors in the Source Text

Fifteen conceptual metaphors of sadness were identified:*Sadness is a fluid in a container, Sadness is dark, Sadness is mourning over the lack of an entity, Sadness is bloody, Sadness behavior is aggressive animal behavior, Sadness is pain, Sadness is lack of vitality, Sadness is destruction, Sadness is contraction, Sadness is a physical force, Sadness is a strike, Sadness is a natural force, Sadness is burden, Sadness is edible, and Sadness is brand.* . Several of these, particularly the blood-based, edibility-based, and branding-based mappings, appear to be culturally specific or at minimum culturally prominent in Persian in ways that have no stable English equivalent.

The total number of sadness metaphorical expressions in the source text was approximately twice the number of happiness expressions. This asymmetry is consistent with the thematic character of the novel: Savushun is set during foreign military occupation and tracks the deterioration of a household under political violence. The affective weight of the narrative falls disproportionately on grief, loss, and despair.

Table 3. Sadness Metaphor Categories and Frequency in Source Text (selected)

Conceptual Metaphor	**Frequency (ST)**	**% of Total**
SADNESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER	4	13.79
SADNESS IS BLOODY	4	13.79
SADNESS IS LACK OF VITALITY	4	13.79
SADNESS IS DESTRUCTION	2	6.89
SADNESS IS PAIN	2	6.89
SADNESS IS A NATURAL FORCE	2	6.89
Other categories (9 metaphors)	11	37.93
Total	**29**	**100**

Translation Patterns for Sadness Metaphors

Table 4 presents the distribution of translation strategies across both target texts for sadness expressions.

Table 4. Translation Patterns for Sadness Metaphors

	Cat. 1	**Cat. 2**	**Cat. 3**	**Cat. 4**	**Cat. 5**	**Cat. 6**
TT1 (n=29)	5	5	0	5	14	0
TT2 (n=29)	3	2	0	11	10	3
TT1 %	17.24	17.24	0	17.24	48.27	0
TT2 %	10.34	6.89	0	37.93	34.45	10.34

Category 5 was the single most frequent strategy in both translations. In TT1 it accounted for 48.27% of all sadness translations; in TT2, 34.45%. The high rate of non-metaphorical rendering reflects the proportion of sadness metaphors that draw on culturally specific Persian source domains for which no stable English metaphorical equivalent exists. Category 3 (different mapping, same expression) was absent from both translations; no cases were found in which a source expression was retained in surface form while the underlying conceptual mapping changed, which suggests that the translators approached surface form and conceptual content as jointly rather than independently negotiable.

The most marked difference between the two translators lies in Category 4 (different mapping, different expression): Zand used this strategy in 37.93% of sadness translations, compared to 17.24% for Ghanoonparvar. Where Ghanoonparvar typically preserved the source image or neutralized it, Zand more often substituted a different English-language metaphor that conveyed the target-domain meaning through a different source domain. Category 6 (omission) occurred three times in TT2 and not at all in TT1.

DISCUSSION

Universality, Cultural Specificity, and Translation Difficulty

The results confirm a general prediction of Conceptual Metaphor Theory: metaphors grounded in universal bodily experience are more readily preserved in translation than those grounded in culturally specific source domains. The orientational metaphors *Happiness is up and Sadness is down*, as well as the container-based mappings (*Happiness is a fluid in a container, Sadness is a fluid in a container*), were transferred with relatively high conceptual fidelity in both translations. This is consistent with findings from comparative studies of Persian and Chinese emotion metaphors (Tabatabaei & Ivanova, 2022; Moradi & Mashak, 2013) and with Kövecses's (2005, 2022) framework for metaphor variation, which treats bodily grounding as the primary driver of cross-linguistic similarity.

By contrast, heart-based Persian compounds created consistent difficulties. The expression del-mordegi (heart-dead) was rendered as 'dejectedly' in TT1 and 'downhearted' in TT2, neither of which preserves the conceptual image of the heart as a vital organ that can die of grief; both are Category 5 solutions. The expression daghe-del (brand of the heart), denoting the searing mark left by bereavement, was translated as 'my unhappiness' (TT1) and 'my misfortunes' (TT2), both of which convey the denotative content while suppressing the underlying somatic metaphor. The figurative layer of the source text is not transmitted, and the emotional intensity of the original is correspondingly reduced.

The blood-based sadness metaphors produced particularly striking divergences. The expression del-e khun (heart of blood) denotes a state of intense grief; Ghanoonparvar rendered one instance as 'heavy heart' and another as 'broke heart', both Category 4 solutions that shift to the more English-conventional weight or destruction source domains. Zand used 'heartily sick' for one instance and omitted another. In no case did either translator attempt to retain the blood imagery, which suggests that this source domain was treated as too culturally specific to carry over without risking misreading.

Translator Strategies Compared

The distributional difference between TT1 and TT2 is consistent and measurable. Ghanoonparvar's preference for Categories 1 and 2 (same or similar mapping) reflects a source-oriented philosophy that aims to maintain the conceptual structure of the original. Zand's higher rates of Category 4 (different mapping, different expression) and omission reflect a target-oriented philosophy that prioritizes readability and cultural accessibility. Neither strategy is demonstrably more successful at the level of individual examples: Ghanoonparvar's closer renderings sometimes produce English expressions that are awkward or opaque; Zand's more adaptive renderings sometimes produce fluent English at the cost of the novel's distinctive figurative texture.

The finding that both translators converged on Category 5 as the dominant strategy for sadness metaphors is significant. It suggests that the difficulty of Persian emotional metaphor in the sadness domain is not primarily a matter of translator choice but of structural asymmetry between the two conceptual systems. When source domains do not map onto available English-language metaphors, neutralization is the path of least resistance regardless of overall strategic orientation. Maalej's (2002) observation is relevant here: the more an experience is conceptualized differently across two cultures, the more different mapping applies, and the more likely translators are to abandon the source structure entirely.

The Role of the Heart in Persian Emotional Metaphor

A structural feature of the Persian data deserves separate discussion. The heart (del) functions as the predominant conceptual locus for both happiness and sadness in Savushun: it can be full, tight, dead, branded, broken, squeezed, open, or darkened. English also uses the heart as an emotional center but with a narrower range of compound constructions and a different set of entailments. The Persian del is closer to a general locus of affective and even moral experience than the English heart, which in ordinary use is more specifically associated with love and romantic feeling (Sharifian, 2011).

This difference means that Persian heart-metaphors systematically carry more figurative content than their English surface counterparts. A translation that renders *del*-tang (tight-heart) as 'heavy heart' shifts the source domains: the tightness entails contraction and constraint, while heaviness entails weight and burden. Both are sadness metaphors, but they are different conceptual metaphors. The shift is Category 4, not Category 2, even though the surface-level semantic proximity might suggest otherwise. This distinction matters for translation criticism: a surface reading of the translations might overestimate conceptual equivalence by conflating different heart-metaphors as though they were the same.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the translation of happiness and sadness metaphors in Daneshvar's Savushun and its two English translations. Using a parallel corpus and a six-category coding scheme grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory and MIP, it found that sadness metaphors appeared at approximately twice the rate of happiness metaphors in the source text; that non-metaphorical rendering was the dominant translation strategy for sadness in both target texts; and that the two translators differed measurably in their rates of conceptual substitution and omission, with Zand showing more frequent departure from source-domain structure.

Three main conclusions follow. First, the findings suggest that the translatability of an emotional metaphor is largely shaped by the cultural specificity of its source domain rather than by the complexity of its target domain. Persian emotional metaphors that draw on universal bodily experience (orientation, containment, weight) transfer with relatively high conceptual fidelity; those that draw on culturally specific domains (blood, branding, heart compounds, edibility) typically do not.

Second, translator decisions are consequential. Ghanoonparvar and Zand worked with the same source text and produced measurably different distributions of translation patterns. The difference is not arbitrary: it reflects coherent strategic orientations that produce systematically different outcomes for the figurative register of the target text.

Third, conceptual equivalence can often be preserved even when lexical equivalence is unavailable. Category 2 solutions (same mapping, different expression) preserve the figurative logic of the source while adapting its surface form, and this strategy was available even for some Persian-specific mappings. Translation success in this direction depends less on finding lexically equivalent expressions than on identifying the underlying conceptual mapping and asking what English expressions instantiate it.

Future work should extend the analysis to a larger corpus and apply inter-rater reliability measures to strengthen the MIP coding. Replication with other literary Persian texts and other translator pairs would establish whether the distributional patterns reported here are specific to Savushun and these two translators or reflect more general constraints on Persian-English literary translation.

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