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Translation Strategies In Rendering Emotional Expressions From Indonesian Into English In Broken Strings

Amanda Agni Oktavia Ramadhani[1], Defi Ela Safitri[2], Kiki Melisa[3], Salmah[4], Abdul Syahid[5]
[1,2,3,4,5] Universitas Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Indonesia
Corresponding Author: Kiki Melisa, e-mail: kikimls2212@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the translation strategies in translating the emotional expressions from Indonesian into English used in the novel Broken Strings. This research applied qualitative descriptive design with comparative approach to analyse the emotional expression in Indonesian version and its counterpart in English version. The data consisted of 28 emotional expressions, which were classified into five categories: sadness, fear, love, anger, and mixed emotions. The results show that sadness is the most prevalent emotion expressed in the novel. The findings identified some translation strategies, such as literal translation, paraphrase, reduction, and modulation. The most common strategy was a literal translation, especially in the case of emotional expressions which had direct equivalents in English. But also paraphrasing and reduction were used to keep the naturalness and emotional correspondence in the target language. The study ends with the conclusion that the translation of emotional expressions involves not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity in order to preserve the emotional meaning and narrative effect in literary translation.

Keywords: *translation strategies, emotional expressions, literary translation, Indonesian-English translation, Broken Strings*

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INTRODUCTION

In literary contexts, in which meaning goes beyond lexical units to include tone, style and emotional depth, translation is an important element in facilitating communication across languages and cultures. Generally, translation means transferring meaning from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL) in such a way that the intended message and the intended effect are preserved (Newmark, 1988). However, the present approaches underline that translation is not only a linguistic task but also a cultural and interpretative process which should be sensitive to the contextual and socio-cultural differences (Baker, 2018; House, 2021). In this regard, translators are called upon to mediate not only between linguistic structures but also between cultural values and communicative norms contained in the source text.

One of the most difficult aspects of translation is the translation of emotional expressions. Emotional expressions are linguistic units – words, phrases or sentences – that express feelings such as sadness, anger, happiness or affection. Such expressions are often culture- and context-dependent, and it is difficult to translate them directly without losing their original nuance or intensity (Wierzbicka, 1999; Pavlenko, 2021). The problem is even greater when one is translating between languages that are products of different cultural orientations. For example, collectivist cultural values that emphasise harmony, indirectness, and emotional restraint are frequently evident in Indonesian communication, while more individualistic values that emphasise directness and personal expression are often evident in English, especially in Western settings. As a result, Indonesian may express emotions indirectly through the use of subtle wording, contextual cues or politeness strategies, whereas English often requires more direct expressions of emotions. Also, emotional meaning is often conveyed through tone, figurative language, and situational context rather than through explicit lexical choices alone (Dewaele, 2022). These differences pose challenges for translators to capture emotional nuance and cultural appropriateness in the target language.

A major problem arises in instances where emotional expressions in the source language are not directly equivalent to those in the target language. This restriction involves the employment of suitable translation strategies, i.e., approaches systematically applied to solve translation problems and attain equivalence (Baker, 2018). Common strategies include the use of literal translation, paraphrasing, reduction and cultural substitution. Previous studies have examined translation strategies in general or cultural terms, but little attention has been paid to the translation of emotional expressions in literary texts, especially from Indonesian to English. In addition, current research often focuses on linguistic equivalence without sufficiently taking into account how cultural differences shape emotional meaning and impact translation decisions. This highlights a hidden gap in the literature, especially concerning the ways in which translators deal with emotional nuance and cultural values simultaneously.

The novel Broken Strings offers a sufficient framework to address this gap, providing an elaborate depiction of emotional experiences and interpersonal conflicts. The novel is rich in emotional expressions, but they are situated within cultural and situational contexts, making their translation difficult. This study therefore aims to investigate the translation strategies used in translating the emotional expressions from Indonesian into English in Broken Strings. The study aims in particular to identify the types of emotional expressions present in the source text, to analyse the strategies used in their translation and to assess the extent to which these strategies preserve the original meaning and emotional impact. It is said that while literal translation is often used, strategies such as paraphrasing and reduction are needed to achieve naturalness and emotional equivalence of the target text.

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Translation

The general definition of translation is the transfer of meaning from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) preserving the intended message. According to Baker (2018), translation is not only concerned with linguistic equivalence but also with the transfer of meaning at different levels: lexical, grammatical and pragmatic. This demonstrates that translation is a complex process where linguistic competence and cultural knowledge are needed. Further complexities are highlighted by Munday (2016) and Nida and Taber (1982) who argue that translation is not just the transfer of linguistic forms, but also the achievement of functional equivalence between languages.

Furthermore, Newmark (1988) notes that translation has a scientific and artistic component. It is considered a science as it requires accuracy and systematic procedures, but it is also an art as it needs creativity in the natural expression of meaning in the target language. This duality is more marked in the case of literary translation, where the translator has to take care to preserve not only the meaning but also stylistic and emotive qualities of the original text. Moreover, Venuti (1995) points out that ideological and cultural factors influence the act of literary translation, and the translator can opt for the strategies of domestication and foreignization.

In addition, translation is increasingly viewed as a cultural and interpretative activity. House (2015) argues that translation involves a process of re-contextualization, where the meaning of the source text is adapted to fit the cultural norms and expectations of the target audience. This perspective highlights the importance of considering cultural differences in the translation process, particularly when dealing with texts that contain culturally bound elements. Similarly, Kramsch (1998) states that language and culture are inseparable, reinforcing the idea that translation requires cultural interpretation rather than mere linguistic transfer.

b. Translation Strategies

The importance of translation strategies as tools that translators use to solve problems encountered in the process of translation. Baker (2018) explains translation strategies as systematic ways to be used when there is no direct match between the source and the target language. Such strategies enable the translator to reformulate the text keeping its sense and communicative function. Translation strategies are problem-solving techniques that guide the translator in making decisions in the process of translation (Chesterman, 1997).

Some of the popular strategies include literal translation, paraphrasing, reduction and cultural substitution (Newmark, 1988; Baker, 2018). Literal translation means the transfer of the source text structure and meaning to the target language. This strategy is particularly useful when the linguistic

structures and the meanings are similar between the two languages, so that translators can maintain accuracy and stylistic elements. However, literal translation may sometimes result in unnatural expressions or failure to transmit implied meanings in literary texts.

In such cases, however, paraphrasing is often more successful, especially when it is a matter of culturally bound expressions, figurative language or implicit meanings so common in literary works. Literal translation emphasises formal equivalence, whereas paraphrasing aims to express the intended meaning in a natural and contextually appropriate way. For example, emotional expressions or idiomatic phrases in literary texts may lose their emotional nuance if translated literally, while paraphrasing allows the translator to recreate the emotional tone in the target language. When the source text is not explicit, when there are metaphorical expressions or culturally specific elements, paraphrasing is often preferred to literal translation.

When necessary, reduction and cultural substitution are also employed. Reduction is the process of simplifying or leaving out some elements of the source text in order to make the text more readable, whereas cultural substitution is the process of replacing a cultural element of the source language with a cultural element of the target language which has more familiarity to the target culture. The choice of strategy depends on various factors, including the context of the text, the cultural background of the audience and the purpose of the translation. House (2015) argues that translators frequently weigh the accuracy and acceptability, adapting their strategies to attain a translation that is both faithful to the original and natural for the target readers. This balance is especially important in literary texts, where meaning is often implicit. Pym (2010) also proposes that translators choose strategies based on risk management and the need to balance accuracy with acceptability. Nord (1997) stresses that translation is a purposeful activity and that strategies are selected in accordance with the intended function of the target text.

c. Emotional Expressions

Emotional expressions are linguistic forms that express feelings such as happiness, sadness, anger, and love. Such expressions are important for communication in general and for literary texts in particular where they are used in character development and narrative engagement. As Wierzbicka (1999) argued, emotions are founded in cultural and linguistic systems and hence, different languages will conceptualise and express emotions differently. She contends that emotional expressions are not universal but are culturally constructed, since each language reflects its own cultural norms, values, and communicative styles. Thus, some emotional expressions in one language may not have their direct equivalents in another language, making the process of translation more complicated. Wierzbicka (1999) supports this view, claiming that emotional concepts are culturally specific and not always directly translatable across languages.

This argument is especially applicable in the context of Indonesian and English. Emotional expressions in Indonesian are often implied and centred on politeness, harmony, and indirectness. For instance, speakers may communicate feelings through subtle expressions, contextual cues, or culture-specific metaphors instead of stating them directly. Emotional states are expressed with metaphorical or indirect language (e.g., "hati terasa berat," "tidak enak hati," or "menahan perasaan") that may not have a straightforward equivalent in English. These culturally embedded expressions should be carefully interpreted so that their emotional nuance is preserved in translation.

Pavlenko (2021) goes on to explain that cultural context and personal experiences shape emotional expressions. The same idea of feeling, therefore, may be expressed in different languages, which makes translation more difficult. Translators must therefore think beyond the literal meaning of the words, but also the emotional and cultural implications behind them. To quote Dewaele (2022), multilingual speakers experience and express emotions differently in different languages, which adds another layer of complexity to the translation process.

In addition, Dewaele (2022) observes that tone, context, and figurative language often implicitly convey emotional meaning. This implies that emotional expressions are not always explicitly stated but have to be interpreted in the context in which they occur. Translating emotional expressions is a complex process that requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages, as well as the ability to interpret subtle nuances.

In literary translation, emotional expressions are of special importance since they affect the way the readers perceive the characters and the events. If these expressions are badly translated the emotional effect of the text may be lost or changed. Hence, the use of appropriate translation strategies is vital to preserve the emotional sense and narrative impact in the target text. Holmes (1988) also states that to preserve the aesthetic value of the text, sensitivity to stylistic and emotional aspects is required in literary translation.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study was a qualitative descriptive design with a comparative approach. The qualitative design was chosen because the study is about the analysis of emotional expressions and translation strategies that are used in translating, not about numerical data or statistical data. This approach enables to deeply analyse the meaning, context and cultural nuances within the text. The comparative approach was applied by comparing the emotional expressions found in the Indonesian version of the novel with their corresponding translations in the English version. This design is appropriate as the purpose of the study is to find the emotional expressions and analyse the translation from Indonesian to English in Broken Strings. Qualitative approaches are especially useful in translation studies, since they allow for in-depth examination of linguistic and contextual phenomena (Williams and Chesterman, 2002).

The main data used in this study is the memoir 'Broken Strings' by Aurelie Moeremans. This novel was chosen because it contains a wide range of emotions like sadness, fear, love, anger and mixed emotions which are relevant to the study's focus. The story has complex relationships and emotional conflicts, so it is suitable to be used in analysing how emotional expressions are translated from Indonesian to English. Furthermore, the narrative style facilitates explicit and implicit expression of feelings, which provides rich material for translation analysis. It was first made available as a free ebook on the author's Instagram page in January 2026 before being released in print. It is published in English and in Indonesian, with no translator credited separately, and the translation may therefore have been done by the author herself.

Data for this study were taken from the novel Broken Strings. The data sources are two versions of the novel, namely the Indonesian version is the source text (ST) and the English version is the target text (TT). Qualitative analysis of the data was performed. The analysis started by identifying the expressions of emotions in the chosen sentences of the Indonesian version of the novel. After this, each identified expression in the source text (ST) was matched with its equivalent translation in the target text (TT). Then each pair of data was presented in a separate table, with a detailed explanation on the emotional meaning and the translation strategy adopted.

The subsequent step was to classify the translation strategies applied in translating the emotional expressions. The translation strategies classification of the present study is based on the framework proposed by Baker (2018) and Newmark (1988) and includes literal translation, paraphrasing, reduction, and cultural substitution. The researcher then analysed how each of the strategies impacted emotional meaning in the target text. Finally, conclusions were made on the basis of the analysis results.

FINDINGS

This study identified 28 emotional expressions in total in the novel Broken Strings. These expressions were categorised into five groups: sadness, fear, love, anger, and mixed emotions. The analysis also identified a number of translation strategies, such as literal translation, paraphrasing, reduction and modulation. The most frequently used strategy was found to be the literal translation of these.

1. Sadness

Sadness is the most dominant emotional expression found in the data. Many expressions reflect emotional suffering, helplessness, disappointment, and psychological distress experienced by the main character.

Example 1

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Malam itu aku menangis sampai tertidur	That night I cried myself to sleep

This example shows deep emotional exhaustion. The phrase menangis sampai tertidur means crying until falling asleep. The translation does justice to both the import and emotional charge. The strategy employed here can be classified as literal translation.

Example 2

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Aku merindukannya, tapi aku tahu aku telah mengecewakannya	And I already missed him terribly

This sentence expresses sadness with a tinge of regret. The phrase aku tahu aku telah mengecewakannya was omitted by the translator, but the emotional tone was strengthened by adding terribly. This points to reduction and modulation strategies. Some information is cut but the emotional meaning of the translation is strong.

Example 3

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Ia telah menghancurkanku juga, bukan sekaligus, tapi sedikit demi sedikit	He had broken me too, not all at once, but piece by piece

This sentence expresses deep emotional suffering. The translator maintained the metaphorical meaning and emotional intensity. The translation strategy used is literal translation.

2. Fear

Fear expressions reflect anxiety, tension, and psychological pressure experienced by the character.

Example 1

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Aku benar-benar gemetar	I was literally shaking

This example is a clear expression of anxiety and fear . The translator has used a literal translation. Both the meaning and the emotional intensity have been maintained. Literally is used to emphasise the emotional emphasis.

Example 2

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Tubuhku gemetar, pahaku menegang	My body shook as I squeezed my thighs together

This sentence shows the physical reactions of fear. The translator has used a literal translation to retain the emotional meaning. The target text is still emotionally nuanced. The findings also reveal that the fear expressions are often rendered literally in order to preserve clarity and emotional intensity. But the emotional nuances still require delicate handling.

Example 3

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Rasa takut dari film bercampur dengan gelisah di dadaku	The fear from the movie blended with the unease in my chest

This expression reflects fear combined with anxiety. The translation uses a literal strategy that preserves both meaning and emotional intensity. The emotional complexity is preserved in the target text.

3. Love

Love expressions show emotional attachment, affection, and emotional connection between characters.

Example 1

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Aku cinta kamu, apa pun yang terjadi	I love you, no matter what, no matter how you are

This sentence is on love and commitment. The translator adds no matter how you are, which adds to the emotional meaning. Sometimes, love expressions are paraphrased to give them more emotional meaning. This implies an approach of paraphrasing. The translation increases the emotional meaning.

Example 2

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Aku merindukannya	I already missed him terribly

This expression conveys affection and longing. The translator strengthened the emotional tone by adding *terribly*, which intensifies emotional meaning.

4. Anger

Anger expressions appear in several data and are usually expressed indirectly.

Example

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Wajahnya tegang, matanya penuh kemarahan dan jijik	She looked sick of seeing me like that

This sentence expresses anger and frustration. The translator used paraphrasing strategy to convey emotional meaning. The emotional tone is preserved although the wording is different.

5. Mixed Emotions

Some expressions contain more than one emotional meaning.

Example

Source Text (ST)	Target Text (TT)
Aku melihat diriku sendiri dari luar	I watched myself from above

This expression reflects emotional detachment combined with fear. The translator successfully preserves the emotional nuance in the target text. The strategy used in this case is literal translation, as both the meaning and structure are maintained.

DISCUSSION

These findings point to several key patterns of the translation of emotional expressions. This study points out the importance of emotional expressions in literary translation. Expressions of emotion are not only used to convey the feelings of characters but also to affect the way in which readers interpret the narrative. According to Wanodya et al. (2024), translation is not only a matter of words, but also of feelings and intentions. The prominence of sadness in the data indicates that the narrative is strongly weighted towards emotional suffering and internal conflict. This means that emotional depth is an inherent part of the text that must be painstakingly preserved in translation.

The most frequent approach of translation is the literal translation. Many of the emotional expressions are translated literally, preserving the meaning and intensity. This finding is consistent with Wanodya et al. (2024) who mentioned that the literal method is commonly used in translating of emotional expressions. But the presence of reduction and modulation indicates that not all the emotional elements are fully preserved in the target text. Sometimes pieces of the original message are left out or changed, which can change the emotional nuance. This is similar to the problem raised by Effendi (2024) that emotional authenticity needs to balance between linguistic accuracy and cultural relevance.

Paraphrasing is also found in a number of data, especially in anger-related expressions. This means that translators sometimes modify the structure or wording so the expression sounds more natural in the target language. These adaptations show that translation is not always a matter of direct transfer but is a

matter of interpretation and adaptation. Mixed feelings also seem to be more complex in that they have multiple layers of meaning. Translators need to understand these expressions well to preserve clarity and emotional depth. This is in line with Kristanto's (2020) suggestion that the translation should try to produce the closest natural equivalent of the source message, giving meaning priority over form.

In addition, translation choices are often guided by conventions in the target language. According to Toury (1995), cultural and contextual expectations on the target audience shape translation practices. This is why naturalness requires some expressions to be modified or simplified. Finally, the results are in line with Zheng (2018) who stresses that translation should aim for functional equivalence rather than strict literal accuracy. Overall, the results show that translators favour emotional equivalence and readability even if it means altering some aspects of the source text.

CONCLUSION

This study is concerned with the translation strategies of translating emotional expressions from Indonesian into English in the novel Broken Strings . Results suggest that emotional expressions are complex linguistic units and are influenced by culture and context. There were five categories of emotion, sadness, fear, love, anger and mixed emotions with twenty-eight expressions of emotion. Sadness was the most common emotion among all categories.

The analysis showed that several translation strategies were employed such as literal translation, paraphrasing, reduction and modulation. The commonest strategy was literal translation, where there were direct equivalents of emotional expressions. Paraphrasing and reduction were also applied to guarantee naturalness and emotional equivalence. Some examples used modulation to adapt the meaning to the context of the target language.

Overall, the results point to the importance of retaining emotional meaning over structural similarity. Literary translators normally stress emotional equivalence and readability. The study also supports the importance of cultural sensitivity in the translation of emotional expressions. Future research might focus on other literary works or different theoretical frameworks. These findings contribute to our understanding of the treatment of emotional expressions in literary translation, especially with regard to emotional authenticity across languages.

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