

TRANSLATIONAL EXPERIENCE WITH POEMS

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DOI

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14238827>

Abstract: *This thesis examines the art of translating poetry, focusing on both Emily Dickinson's "A Word is Dead" and an original Uzbek poem. Drawing on theories by Nida, Bassnett, Steiner, Venuti, and Berman, the study highlights the translator's role in preserving both the emotional depth and cultural essence of poetry. Through analysis of translation choices, it shows how poetic translation re-creates the original's impact, giving new life to poems in the target language.*

Keywords: *Poetry translation, linguistic fidelity, emotional resonance, cultural adaptation, dynamic equivalence, translator's invisibility, deformation in translation.*

The translation of poetry is an intricate process that involves more than mere linguistic substitution; it requires the recreation of emotions, cultural nuances, and rhythmic flow in a new language. According to Eugene Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence, translation should aim to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original does on its readers, emphasizing the spirit over a literal, word-for-word translation. This idea aligns with the challenges I face in translating poems, where capturing emotional impact often outweighs strict fidelity to each word. Susan Bassnett also underscores the unique challenges of translating poetry, suggesting that "poetry itself is not translatable without losing something essential," which highlights the translator's creative role in bridging linguistic gaps while preserving the essence of the original work.

Emily Dickinson's "A Word is Dead" presents a fascinating case for translation, as it expresses a powerful paradox about the life of words in a minimalistic style. The simplicity of her language contrasts with the depth of meaning, as she posits that words do not "die" when spoken but rather gain life. According to George Steiner, translation is "the pursuit of meaning," in which the translator actively interprets and adapts each layer of a text. In translating Dickinson's poem into Uzbek, I aimed to convey both her message and the nuanced simplicity of her style, ensuring that each word resonated within the cultural context of my language.

Original Poem by Emily Dickinson:

A word is dead

When it is said,

Some say.

I say it just

Begins to live

That day.

Uzbek Translation:

Ba'zilar aytguvchi

So'z aytilsa - o'lik.

Men esa deguvchi

So'z aytilsa - tirik.

The translation of "A word is dead" to "So'z aytilsa - o'lik" reflects an attempt to retain Dickinson's metaphor. Lawrence Venuti's idea of the translator's invisibility—where the translator's voice should be subtle yet evident in adapting the text—guided my choices, especially in preserving Dickinson's minimalism. I had to navigate the cultural differences in how "dead" and "alive" are used metaphorically in Uzbek, aiming for terms that would resonate similarly with an Uzbek audience.

Writing poetry in Uzbek allows me to explore expressions and emotions rooted deeply in my own cultural and linguistic heritage. Below, I present an original poem that deals with the challenge of translating feelings into words, expressing the theme of doubt in language's ability to convey true emotion. Translating this piece into English posed the challenge of preserving rhythm and capturing the subtle meanings embedded in the original.

Original Uzbek Poem:

Tuyg'ular qalbarda bo'lurmish har on,

So'z bilan ifoda etilmoq mushkul.

Gar bo'lsa ifoda so'zlarda takror,

Shubhala qararmiz ishonchsiz butkul.

English Translation:

Emotions dwell in hearts at every moment,

Expressing them in words is hard, maybe, indeed.

If words repeat without true depth and aim,

We look upon them with doubt, no trust, no creed.

Following Antoine Berman's notion of deformation, which discusses how elements of a text can be "deformed" during translation, I sought to mitigate any loss of meaning due to linguistic differences. For instance, "So'z bilan ifoda etilmoq mushkul" suggests that words struggle to fully capture emotions. By rendering this as

"Expressing them in words is hard," I retained the tone of resignation and complexity. The phrase "If words repeat without true depth and aim" reflects Berman's idea of compensating for potential loss by adjusting the expression to retain depth.

The translation process demonstrated in this thesis illustrates the complex balancing act between linguistic fidelity and emotional resonance. Translating poetry requires a creative approach that respects both the original and target languages, a principle advocated by Nida's dynamic equivalence and Berman's focus on compensating for "deformations." By integrating these concepts, translation becomes more than a technical process; it's a re-creation, granting poetry a new life in a different language and culture, as each reader encounters it anew.

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