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MOOD AS CONCEPTUAL FIELD: TRANSLATING MOOD-BASED ATMOSPHERE FROM THE BABURNAMA AND UZBEK EFL LEARNERS' MOOD-SENSITIVE STRATEGIES

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Abstract
This exploratory mixed-method study examines how mood (Uzbek kayfiyat) is conceptualized and linguistically encoded in the Baburnama and how Uzbek EFL learners attempt to preserve mood when translating between Uzbek and English. Drawing on a small set of ko'ngil-based phraseological items and their renderings in three major English translations (Leyden & Erskine, 1826; Beveridge, 1921; Thackston, 1996), the study identifies recurring translation shifts: (1) locus relocation (ko'ngil/heart to mind), (2) metaphor restructuring (motion/impact to weather imagery or dispositional predication), and (3) explicitation (affective settling to cognitive adequacy).

Keywords: Mood in translation; ko'ngil; Baburnama; Uzbek EFL learners.

Introduction

The Baburnama (Bābur-nāma), the autobiographical chronicle attributed to Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, occupies a distinctive position in Central Asian literary history. It is at once historical record, travel narrative, and introspective memoir. Because Babur's writing frequently shifts between event reporting and richly sensory description, it offers a particularly revealing environment for studying how "mood" is constructed in text—not only through named emotions, but through atmosphere, stance, and rhythm.

Mood is a complex object for translation and for language teaching. In literary and historical prose, mood is rarely "contained" in a single adjective. Instead, it emerges from the alignment of lexical choices (e.g., words of silence, heaviness, or brightness), figurative language (metaphor and metonymy), and contextual framing. Translators thus face a double challenge: they must preserve propositional meaning while also reconstructing the affective world that shapes how readers interpret that meaning.

In Uzbek and related Turkic traditions, one of the most productive nodes for inner life is ko'ngil. Depending on context, ko'ngil can refer to heart, mind, disposition, or a kind of inner space where moods arrive, settle, and change. Ko'ngil-based constructions are therefore central to how Babur encodes atmosphere and self-relation. Translating them involves decisions that go beyond lexical equivalence: the translator must decide where the affective locus is placed (heart vs mind), which metaphors are retained or replaced, and how explicitly mood is stated.

This paper connects two lines of inquiry. First, it offers a focused comparison of how ko‘ngil-based mood constructions are rebuilt in three major English translations of the Baburnama (Leyden & Erskine, 1826; Beveridge, 1921; Thackston, 1996). These translations differ in historical period, readership assumptions, and stylistic preferences, which makes them useful for examining how “mood policies” shape translation outcomes. Second, the paper reports a small pilot study (N = 9) exploring how Uzbek EFL learners recognize mood in English and how they attempt to preserve mood when translating from Uzbek into English.

The overall goal is pedagogical as well as descriptive. In EFL and translation classrooms, students are often assessed on lexical accuracy and grammatical correctness, while the preservation of atmosphere is treated as subjective. By modeling mood as a conceptual field—built from multiple cues and conceptual mappings—this paper aims to provide practical tools for teaching and assessing mood-sensitive translation in the Uzbek EFL context.

Literature review

Mood and affect have increasingly been treated as central objects of literary translation research, not only as “emotions” named in text, but as emergent atmospheres created by recurring stylistic cues. Research on affect in literary translation highlights that translation choices can redistribute what is at stake for the author, the translator, and the target reader, especially when the target language encourages different affective packaging (Kaldjärv, 2024). Related work proposes that affective signals can function as proxies for literary mood, reinforcing the view that mood is multi-cue and not reducible to a single lexical item (Öhman & Rossi, 2023). Studies of emotional coloring in translation similarly emphasize the negotiation between preserving expressive force and meeting target-language norms of clarity and naturalness (Petrova & Rodionova, 2016).

Within translation theory, equivalence remains a key but contested concept. Contemporary overviews underline that “equivalence” has been defined in multiple ways—formal, functional, dynamic, pragmatic—often leading to mismatches between theoretical ideals and what translators do in practice (Alrymayh, 2024). Interdisciplinary accounts view equivalence as a moving target shaped by text type, communicative purpose, and reader expectations (Oneț & Ciocoi-Pop, 2023). In contexts where conceptual systems diverge, non-equivalence is not necessarily failure; it can be a deliberate strategy for producing a more effective target text for the intended readership (Kashgary, 2011).

Emotion and mood also intersect with translator cognition and professional practice. A broad view of translation studies emphasizes that emotion is present in both translation products and translation processes, influencing decision-making, evaluation, and professional identity (Lehr, 2022). From a pedagogical perspective, this implies that translation training may benefit from explicit attention to mood cues and affective justification, not only to lexical accuracy.

Recent work on translating emotion and subtext in literary texts further suggests that translators often have to render meanings that are only indirectly encoded (e.g., through implication, tone, or silence), which makes mood-sensitive choices a routine part of real translation practice (Hanafi, 2025). Such observations support the idea that mood preservation is not a “luxury” for advanced students but a necessary competence in literary and narrative translation.

In the Uzbek EFL environment, translation is frequently used as a bridge between language learning and textual interpretation. This makes mood-sensitive translation particularly relevant: it encourages close reading, develops awareness of connotation and metaphor, and fosters argumentative writing through translation commentary. The present paper therefore frames the learner study as an exploratory step toward designing teachable "decision points" for mood preservation—especially for ko'ngil-based constructions that do not map neatly onto English.

Theoretical framework

The study treats mood as a conceptual field: a network of related meanings and textual cues that together create a stable atmosphere for readers. In this view, mood is not identical to any single lexical item. It is distributed across affective concepts, metaphorical framing, and stylistic patterning (e.g., sensory imagery, personification, rhythm, and evaluative stance).

Method

The research design is exploratory and combines (a) qualitative comparison of translation choices across published English versions of the Baburnama and (b) a small pilot learner study focusing on mood recognition and mood-sensitive translation.

Textual data (Baburnama translations). Three English translations were selected because they represent different historical moments and translation orientations: Leyden & Erskine (1826), Beveridge (1921), and Thackston (1996). The analysis focused on representative ko'ngil-based constructions that explicitly encode mood events (e.g., suspicion "crossing" an inner locus) and mood regulation (e.g., quieting the heart).

Analytic procedure. Each selected item was analyzed across four dimensions: (1) valence (positive/negative/mixed), (2) intensity (low/medium/high), (3) conceptual locus (ko'ngil/heart-centered, mind-centered, or hybrid), and (4) translation strategy (e.g., literal mapping, modulation, metaphor shift, explicitation, reduction). These dimensions were used to identify recurring shift patterns summarized in Table 1.

Learner study participants. The participants were nine Uzbek EFL learners (upper-intermediate to advanced), studying English and/or translation. Participation was voluntary and anonymized.

Instruments and tasks. Data were collected via (1) a short questionnaire with three-point response options (e.g., never/seldom/very often; yes/seldom/no) probing translation frequency, mood recognition, and attention to imagery, connotation, and cultural references; (2) an Uzbek-to-English translation task using a short descriptive passage designed to evoke a calm, sensory mood; and (3) an English mood-identification task based on a short narrative paragraph. In the mood-identification task, learners selected a dominant mood label, listed textual cues that supported the label, and rated confidence (1–5).

Results

Results are reported in two parts: (a) translation-comparison findings on how ko'ngil-based mood constructions are rebuilt in English and (b) pilot learner findings on mood recognition and mood-sensitive translation.

Translation-comparison findings

A central observation from the Baburnama material is that mood is frequently encoded as an event in ko‘ngil: something enters, passes through, presses on, or is lifted from the inner locus. This eventive framing allows the text to represent mood as dynamic and embodied. When translated into English, however, affective meaning is often redistributed across different resources—mind-oriented predicates, weather/visibility metaphors, or dispositional statements. Table 1 summarizes the recurrent shift patterns used in the present analysis.

Case study I: suspicion as a mood event (Ko‘nglumg‘a shubha kechti)

In one narrative episode, Babur describes a sudden bodily disturbance after eating fruit and notes an abrupt change in his inner state. The key phrase Ko‘nglumg‘a shubha kechti frames suspicion as a mood event that “passes through” an inner locus: suspicion is not a static property of the speaker, but an arriving movement within ko‘ngil. This eventive framing contributes to atmosphere by portraying a quick, involuntary shift from everyday normality into alertness and distrust.

The three English translations instantiate noticeably different mood profiles. Leyden and Erskine’s rendering (“Some suspicion crossed my mind”) preserves the sense of motion (“crossed”) but relocates the locus to mind. The movement is retained, yet the embodied inner-space framing is reduced; readers may interpret the shift as primarily cognitive. Beveridge’s solution (“I became suspicious”) removes motion and metaphor and turns the mood into a disposition. This normalization increases clarity but reduces imagery density and the sense of sudden onset. Thackston’s rendering (“A cloud of suspicion came over my mind”) retains the mind locus but introduces a weather/visibility metaphor (“cloud”). The result is more atmospherically vivid: suspicion becomes something that covers or darkens perception, which can intensify the felt mood even while remaining mind-centered.

Conceptually, these choices are not neutral. In ko‘ngil-based framing, suspicion is an event that happens to the inner self; it can be fleeting, intrusive, and embodied. A dispositional rendering (“became suspicious”) shifts responsibility and stance: the reader may infer a more controlled, character-trait interpretation. Weather metaphors (“cloud”) create a different mood logic: atmosphere is represented as altered visibility. These distinctions illustrate why mood translation should be evaluated at the conceptual level—by tracking locus, event dynamics, and imagery—rather than by checking whether an emotion word is present.

Case study II: sadness vs. regret (hazin/mahzun ko‘ngul)

A second recurring cluster involves adjectives such as hazin and mahzun modifying ko‘ngil. In Babur’s prose, this cluster often signals a softened, reflective sadness that can accompany separation, loss, fatigue, or the weight of circumstance. The mood is frequently “colored” rather than explicitly analyzed: it may be melancholy, heavy, and inward, but not necessarily self-accusatory.

English translations commonly render this cluster with words such as regret, troubled, or saddened. Each option highlights a different conceptual layer. Regret introduces counterfactual evaluation and an implicit moral-cognitive stance (“I wish I had done otherwise”), which can

make the mood more agent-centered. Troubled suggests agitation or unease and can shift the mood toward tension. Saddened foregrounds a more general affect label and may flatten the reflective dimension. In other words, the English system often forces a sharper categorical choice than the source encourages, increasing emotion granularity while also increasing interpretive commitment.

For classroom translation, the pedagogical point is that hazin/mahzun do not always demand the strongest English label available. Mood-sensitive translation benefits from considering co-text: if Babur's passage is contemplative and low-intensity, a softer option (e.g., downcast, heavy-hearted, or subdued) may preserve atmosphere better than regret. When stronger evaluative cues are present, regret may be appropriate. The key is to justify the choice through textual evidence rather than relying on a default dictionary match.

Case study III: calming the heart → "clear/satisfactory answer" (Ko'ngul ting'udek shofiy javob)

Another ko'ngil-based pattern encodes mood management rather than mood labeling. The phrase Ko'ngul ting'udek shofiy javob topmadim can be glossed as "I found no answer clear enough to quiet the heart / settle the inner self." Here mood is conceptualized as restless inner noise that needs calming, and the "answer" is evaluated not only for truth but for its capacity to restore affective equilibrium.

In English, such phrases are often rendered through explicit cognitive adequacy (e.g., "I could find no clear/satisfactory answer"). This is a classic explicitation and normalization shift: the target text communicates the practical outcome (no clear answer) but may underrepresent the affective goal (quieting of the inner self). The difference matters because, in the source framing, what is at stake is not merely knowledge but emotional settling and the restoration of inner order.

A mood-preserving English option may therefore explicitly encode "rest" or "settling" (e.g., "I could find no answer that set my mind at rest" or "that could quiet my heart"), depending on the surrounding register and the translator's policy. Pedagogically, this construction provides a useful teaching example: students can compare how much "mood work" is carried by clarity vs by calming, and can test whether target readers experience the same inner-state trajectory.

Case study IV: giving heart/courage (ko'ngul bermoq; ko'nglini ko'tarmoq)

Finally, ko'ngil-based idioms frequently encode interpersonal mood regulation: raising someone's spirits, giving courage, or restoring readiness for action. Expressions such as ko'nglini ko'tarmoq ("to raise the heart/inner self") can function as pragmatic acts—encouragement, reassurance, consolation, or even strategic emotional management in social interaction.In English, translators often prefer idiomatic solutions such as cheer up, encourage, give courage, or hearten. These choices typically communicate the pragmatic function but can lose the embodied "raising" metaphor. A literal solution ("raise his heart") may preserve the metaphor but risks sounding unnatural or being misread as romantic or archaic, depending on context. Mood-sensitive translation therefore involves balancing idiomaticity against metaphorical embodiment, and the best solution may vary across genres and target audiences.

For learners, these constructions are valuable because they demonstrate that mood is not only descriptive (how one feels) but also performative (how mood is managed). Translation commentary can ask students to state (a) the mood operation in the source (lifting, calming, darkening), (b) the social function (comfort, persuasion), and (c) the target-language resource used (idiom, metaphor, explicitation).

Pilot learner findings

This section summarizes the pilot learner component (N = 9). The goal was not to generalize statistically, but to explore whether learners notice mood cues and how they respond when asked to preserve or describe mood.As shown, the group reported regular translation practice between Uzbek and English, and most participants indicated that they can identify mood in a short English text. All participants reported that imagery and sensory detail help them "feel" the mood, and the majority reported attending to connotations and implied meanings. Cultural references were also perceived as important for mood, although students reported adapting idioms and culture-bound items only sometimes, suggesting uncertainty about when adaptation is justified. When asked what they do first if mood conflicts with literal meaning, none of the participants selected strict literal wording. Most preferred changing wording to preserve mood, while the remainder preferred consulting parallel examples or corpora. This pattern supports the pedagogical usefulness of making mood an explicit assessment dimension: students already treat mood preservation as a legitimate translation goal, but they benefit from structured decision criteria and exemplar-based practice.

Uzbek-to-English translation task. In the descriptive passage, learners generally preserved the calm, sensory, and slightly hopeful atmosphere of the source. The most successful translations tended to keep temporal framing (early morning), retain blended sensory imagery (smell of damp soil and tea), maintain a quiet soundscape (distant bell), and preserve the final shift toward renewal (a quiet lightness). Where mood was weakened, the main causes were not vocabulary errors but loss of imagery density (omitting sensory cues) or changes in rhythm (over-segmentation into short sentences).

English mood-identification task. Learners showed partial convergence in the cues they noticed but divergence in the mood labels they assigned. Commonly cited cues included expressions of silence, personification of wind, and weather-related olfactory imagery (smell of rain). Mood labels ranged from calm and melancholic to tense, and some learners used combined labels (e.g., "melancholic and tense"). Confidence ratings varied. This suggests that sensitivity to mood cues does not automatically yield a stable categorization, possibly because learners have limited metalanguage for discussing mood or because they use different genre expectations to interpret the same cues.

Pedagogical implications for Uzbek EFL translation training

Mood-sensitive translation can be integrated into EFL/translation curricula through three practical steps: (1) mood cue mapping (students underline lexical, sensory, rhythmic, and figurative cues and describe their function), (2) controlled re-metaphorization (students propose two alternative English metaphors and justify which better preserves the mood trajectory), and

(3) reflective commentary (students write short rationales explaining haow their choices preserve atmosphere rather than only meaning).

For ko‘ngil-based constructions, the shift options in Table 1 can be presented as explicit decision points. For example: Should the locus be mind, heart, spirit, or inner self? Should the translation preserve eventiveness (something crosses, comes, covers) or normalize into a state (I became X)? If the source encodes calming/settling, should English express clarity (“a clear answer”) or rest (“set my mind at rest”)? Practicing these decisions with feedback can help learners avoid unexamined literalism while maintaining accountability to the source text.

Conclusion

This paper proposed that mood in the Baburnama can be modeled as a conceptual field organized around ko‘ngil, and that English translations rebuild this field through systematic shift patterns such as locus relocation, metaphor restructuring, explicitation, and partitioning. A pilot learner study indicated that Uzbek EFL learners are sensitive to mood cues and willing to prioritize atmosphere over strict literalism, but they benefit from explicit analytic vocabulary and structured decision criteria. Making mood translation visible in this way can support both literary translation research and practical EFL translation training in Uzbekistan.

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