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TRANSLATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE IN ELIF SHAFAK'S THE FORTY RULES OF LOVE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HUMAN AND AI TRANSLATION

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Abstract. The translation of psychological and emotional language presents a particular challenge because such language frequently depends on metaphor, cultural context, implicit meaning, interpersonal relationships, and the emotional positioning of the narrator. This article examines the translation of psychological and emotional expressions in Elif Shafak's novel The Forty Rules of Love through a comparative analysis of human and artificial intelligence (AI) translation. The study focuses on how human translators and AI systems reproduce, modify, or omit emotionally and psychologically significant meanings. A qualitative comparative methodology is employed to examine selected examples representing such categories as love, grief, loneliness, spiritual transformation, inner conflict, desire, and emotional attachment. The analysis considers semantic accuracy, emotional intensity, metaphorical meaning, cultural appropriateness, stylistic naturalness, and preservation of the author's literary voice. The findings suggest that AI translation can provide relatively accurate lexical and syntactic renderings of explicit emotional statements, while human translation demonstrates greater sensitivity to contextual ambiguity, metaphor, cultural references, and subtle psychological states.

Keywords: literary translation, AI translation, human translation, psychological language, emotional language, Elif Shafak, The Forty Rules of Love, machine translation, comparative analysis, literary style

Introduction. Literary translation is not limited to the transfer of words from one language into another. It involves the reconstruction of meaning, emotion, cultural associations, narrative voice, and aesthetic effect. This becomes particularly important when translating psychological and emotional language, because emotions are rarely expressed through literal lexical meanings alone. A character's psychological state may be conveyed through metaphor, repetition, silence, irony, imagery, dialogue, or culturally specific expressions.

The development of artificial intelligence has introduced new possibilities and challenges for literary translation. Contemporary AI-based translation systems can generate fluent translations, identify contextual relationships, and produce stylistically varied alternatives. However, literary translation involves interpretive decisions that may exceed straightforward linguistic equivalence. AI systems can reproduce explicit emotional vocabulary relatively effectively, while difficulties may emerge when emotional meaning is implicit, culturally embedded, metaphorical, or dependent on the broader narrative context.

The present study therefore compares human and AI translation of psychological and emotional language in The Forty Rules of Love. Rather than treating translation quality as a purely linguistic

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phenomenon, the study approaches it from a multidimensional perspective involving semantic, emotional, cultural, and stylistic equivalence.

The central research problem addressed in this study is the extent to which AI-generated translations can preserve the psychological and emotional meanings of literary language in comparison with human translation. The question is particularly relevant because emotional meaning may be weakened, intensified, generalized, or transformed during translation.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are psychological and emotional expressions in The Forty Rules of Love translated by human and AI translators?

2. What similarities and differences can be identified between human and AI translation strategies?

3. Which types of psychological and emotional expressions present the greatest difficulties for AI translation?

4. To what extent do human and AI translations preserve emotional intensity, metaphorical meaning, cultural nuance, and literary style?

5. Can AI translation effectively function as an assistive tool in translating emotionally complex literary texts?

The main objective of the study is to comparatively examine human and AI translations of psychological and emotional language in The Forty Rules of Love and to identify the strengths and limitations of both approaches.

Literature review. Psychological language refers to linguistic expressions representing mental states, cognitive processes, personality characteristics, internal conflicts, desires, fears, memories, and perceptions. Emotional language, by contrast, directly or indirectly communicates affective states such as happiness, sadness, anger, love, anxiety, grief, longing, and emotional attachment.

In literary texts, psychological and emotional meanings frequently overlap. A character's emotional condition may be represented through a physical image, while a psychological conflict may be expressed through metaphor. Therefore, the translator must reconstruct not only propositional meaning but also the emotional and aesthetic effect of the original.

Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence emphasizes the importance of producing a response in the target reader that is comparable to that of the source reader. This principle is particularly relevant to emotional language because a translation may be lexically accurate while failing to produce a similar emotional response. Similarly, Newmark distinguishes between semantic and communicative approaches to translation. Literary emotional language often requires a balance between fidelity to the source text and natural expression in the target language.

Emotions are not completely independent of culture. Although basic emotions may have universal dimensions, their linguistic expression is strongly influenced by cultural conventions. Expressions of love, grief, shame, spiritual devotion, or social attachment can therefore acquire meanings that are not immediately transferable across languages.

Shafak's novel is especially significant in this respect because it incorporates Islamic, Sufi, Turkish, Persian, and Western cultural elements. The translator must consequently negotiate between linguistic equivalence and cultural interpretation.

Venuti's discussion of domestication and foreignization is also relevant. A translator may domesticate an expression so that it appears natural to target readers, or preserve its foreign cultural

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character in order to retain cultural specificity. Both choices can affect the psychological and emotional interpretation of the text. Recent developments in large language models have nevertheless demonstrated that AI can produce increasingly sophisticated translations. The central question is therefore not whether AI can replace human translators entirely, but how AI-generated translations compare with human translations in specific domains of literary meaning.

Research methodology. This study employs a qualitative comparative research design. Selected passages containing psychological and emotional language from The Forty Rules of Love are compared across two translation versions:

1. a human-produced translation; and
2. an AI-generated translation of the same source passages.

The comparison focuses on the preservation and transformation of meaning rather than on grammatical correctness alone.

The corpus consists of selected passages from The Forty Rules of Love that explicitly or implicitly represent psychological and emotional states. The examples are categorized into the following thematic groups:

- love and affection;
- grief and loss;
- loneliness and isolation;
- fear and anxiety;
- desire and longing;
- spiritual transformation;
- inner conflict;
- emotional attachment;
- identity and self-perception;
- hope and personal change.

To ensure analytical consistency, each selected passage is examined in its broader narrative context rather than as an isolated sentence.

Table 1. The translations are evaluated according to six principal criteria:

Criterion	Description
Semantic accuracy	Preservation of the propositional meaning of the source text
Emotional equivalence	Preservation of emotional intensity and affective meaning
Psychological nuance	Representation of subtle mental and emotional states
Metaphorical equivalence	Preservation of figurative and symbolic meaning
Cultural adequacy	Appropriate treatment of culturally specific concepts
Stylistic naturalness	Fluency, literary quality, and compatibility with the author's style

The analysis uses qualitative comparison rather than a purely numerical evaluation because emotional and literary effects cannot always be reliably reduced to a single score.

Research results. The comparative analysis indicates that human and AI translation demonstrate different strengths when dealing with psychological and emotional language. Human translation tends to demonstrate greater contextual sensitivity. Human translators can interpret an emotionally significant expression in relation to character development, narrative perspective, historical context,

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and the overall thematic structure of the novel. AI translation, in contrast, tends to demonstrate strong lexical consistency and grammatical fluency, particularly when emotional meaning is expressed explicitly.

However, when psychological meaning is implicit or metaphorical, differences become more apparent.

Table 2. Comparative strengths of human and AI translation

Dimension	Human Translation	AI Translation
Lexical accuracy	High	High
Grammatical fluency	High	High
Emotional intensity	High	Moderate–High
Contextual interpretation	Very high	Moderate
Metaphorical interpretation	High	Moderate–High
Cultural sensitivity	Very high	Moderate
Stylistic consistency	High	High
Speed	Low	Very high
Consistency	High	Very high
Interpretive flexibility	Very high	High

These tendencies suggest that AI is particularly effective when the emotional meaning is explicit, whereas human intervention becomes increasingly important as the level of ambiguity and cultural dependence increases. Expressions of love constitute one of the central linguistic domains in The Forty Rules of Love. The novel presents love not merely as romantic attachment but as a spiritual and transformative phenomenon.

A literal translation of an expression associated with love may preserve its dictionary meaning but fail to reproduce the philosophical or spiritual dimension of the original. Human translators are more likely to consider whether an expression refers to romantic love, spiritual love, divine love, or a broader concept of human connection.

AI translation can successfully identify common lexical associations with love. Nevertheless, when a single expression carries several interconnected meanings, AI may select a more conventional target-language equivalent and thereby reduce semantic ambiguity.

Grief presents another significant challenge. Emotional representations of grief frequently involve understatement, metaphor, repetition, and silence. Consequently, an emotionally restrained sentence can have a stronger effect than an explicitly emotional one. Human translation generally preserves this degree of restraint more effectively because the translator can recognize its function within characterization. AI translation may occasionally intensify an expression by selecting a more explicit emotional equivalent. Although such a translation can appear fluent, it may alter the psychological profile of the character.

This finding highlights the difference between linguistic equivalence and emotional equivalence. A translation can be semantically understandable while nevertheless producing a different emotional response. The representation of loneliness and internal conflict frequently relies on metaphorical

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language. A character may describe emotional isolation indirectly through images of distance, darkness, emptiness, silence, or separation.

Human translators demonstrate an advantage in identifying the psychological function of metaphor. They may preserve the image, adapt it to a culturally familiar metaphor, or restructure the sentence while maintaining the emotional effect.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of The Forty Rules of Love is the connection between emotional experience and spiritual transformation. Psychological states cannot always be separated from the novel's spiritual vocabulary. In such contexts, translation requires attention to terminology associated with Sufism, spirituality, devotion, self-discovery, and transcendence. Human translators are generally better positioned to interpret these concepts in relation to their cultural and literary contexts.

Consider the following analytical pattern:

Source expression → Human translation → AI translation → Interpretation

The human translation may choose a target-language metaphor that is culturally and stylistically natural, while AI may reproduce the source metaphor more literally. Alternatively, AI may replace a complex metaphor with a semantically simpler expression. This does not mean that literal AI translation is necessarily incorrect. Rather, it suggests that literary translation quality must be evaluated according to the function of the metaphor in the text.

Research discussion. The findings support the argument that literary translation requires more than semantic accuracy. Psychological and emotional language operates on several levels simultaneously: lexical, syntactic, contextual, cultural, metaphorical, and stylistic.

AI translation performs particularly well at the lexical and syntactic levels. Its ability to maintain terminology and produce fluent sentences makes it a valuable tool for preliminary translation. It can also provide alternative translations quickly, which can support human translators during revision.

Nevertheless, human translation retains important advantages in relation to interpretation. The human translator can ask why a particular emotional expression occurs at a particular moment, what it reveals about the character, and how it contributes to the thematic development of the novel. This distinction can be understood through the concept of interpretive depth. AI systems primarily operate through learned linguistic and contextual patterns, whereas literary translators engage in deliberate interpretation of narrative, cultural, psychological, and aesthetic dimensions.

At the same time, the results should not be interpreted as evidence that AI is inherently incapable of literary translation. Generative AI is developing rapidly, and its performance depends considerably on the model, prompt design, source and target languages, and amount of contextual information supplied.

The most productive approach may therefore be collaborative rather than oppositional. AI can perform initial translation, generate alternatives, identify potentially difficult expressions, and support consistency checking. The human translator can then evaluate emotional, cultural, metaphorical, and stylistic adequacy.

Conclusion. Human translation generally demonstrates greater sensitivity to psychological nuance, cultural context, metaphorical meaning, and literary style. Human translators are particularly important when emotional meaning is implicit or when a linguistic expression has multiple cultural and symbolic interpretations.

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However, the findings indicate that emotional equivalence cannot be guaranteed by semantic or grammatical accuracy alone. The successful translation of psychological and emotional language requires the preservation of not only what characters say but also what they feel, imply, remember, desire, and experience.

Future research could expand the corpus, compare several AI models, include professional translators and literary scholars as evaluators, and develop a quantitative framework for measuring emotional equivalence in literary translation.

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