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**"PRESERVING PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM IN LITERARY TRANSLATION:
A CASE STUDY OF KHALED HOSSEINI'S *THE KITE RUNNER*"**

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Abstract: The translation of literary texts involves more than the transfer of linguistic meaning from one language to another. It also requires the preservation of emotional depth, character psychology, and narrative authenticity. Psychological realism, which aims to represent human thoughts, emotions, motivations, and internal conflicts in a believable manner, is particularly vulnerable during the translation process. This article examines the challenges and strategies involved in preserving psychological realism in translation, using Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* as a case study. The analysis focuses on narrative voice, emotional expression, cultural references, and character development. The study argues that successful literary translation should maintain not only semantic equivalence but also the psychological complexity that shapes readers' understanding of characters and their experiences.

Keywords: Psychological Realism, Literary Translation, Translation Studies, Characterization, Emotional Equivalence, Narrative Voice, Cultural Context, Psychological Depth, Literary Discourse, Cross-Cultural Communication, Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, Literary Analysis.

Introduction

Translation studies have increasingly recognized that literary translation extends beyond the reproduction of lexical and grammatical structures. Literary texts contain complex psychological dimensions that contribute significantly to their artistic value. Readers engage with literary works through characters' emotions, memories, fears, desires, and moral dilemmas. Consequently, translators face the challenging task of preserving these psychological elements while adapting the text to a different linguistic and cultural context.

Among contemporary literary works, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini provides a valuable example for examining psychological realism in translation. The novel presents a deeply personal narrative centered on guilt, friendship, betrayal, redemption, and identity. Through the protagonist Amir's reflections and emotional struggles, the novel creates a psychologically realistic portrayal of human experience. Any translation of the text must therefore preserve not only the plot but also the emotional and psychological nuances that define the narrative.

The Concept of Psychological Realism

Psychological realism refers to a literary technique that emphasizes the inner life of characters. Rather than focusing solely on external actions, psychologically realistic texts explore thoughts, emotions, memories, and motivations. This approach enables readers to



Date: 1st July-2026

understand why characters behave in particular ways and how their experiences influence their decisions.

In literary translation, psychological realism is closely connected with the representation of subjective experience. The translator must recreate the emotional intensity and psychological complexity of the original text so that readers of the target language experience similar reactions. If emotional nuances are lost or altered, the characterization may become less convincing, reducing the overall impact of the literary work.

Psychological Realism in *The Kite Runner*

Hosseini's novel is strongly characterized by psychological realism. The narrative is presented from Amir's first-person perspective, allowing readers direct access to his thoughts and emotions. Throughout the novel, Amir experiences guilt over his betrayal of Hassan, fear of social judgment, longing for paternal approval, and a desire for redemption.

One of the most psychologically significant aspects of the novel is Amir's persistent sense of guilt. The narrative repeatedly returns to memories of childhood, demonstrating how past actions continue to shape his identity. Hosseini uses introspection, flashbacks, and emotionally charged language to portray Amir's psychological state. These elements contribute to the authenticity of the character and encourage readers to empathize with his internal conflict.

Similarly, Hassan's loyalty and emotional resilience are represented through subtle descriptions and dialogue. Although Hassan speaks less frequently than Amir, his actions reveal a profound emotional depth. Preserving such psychological characterization in translation requires careful attention to linguistic choices, tone, and context.

Challenges in Preserving Psychological Realism

One of the primary challenges in literary translation is the transfer of emotional meaning. Emotional expressions often carry cultural and linguistic connotations that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. A literal translation can preserve factual information while failing to communicate the emotional significance of a particular statement.

Another challenge involves narrative voice. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir's voice is reflective, personal, and emotionally expressive. His narration combines childhood memories with adult self-awareness.[2;p-12] Translators must preserve this distinctive voice to maintain the psychological coherence of the character. Any significant alteration in tone may change readers' perceptions of Amir's personality and emotional development.

Cultural references also present difficulties. The novel contains numerous references to Afghan culture, family relationships, social hierarchy, and religious traditions. These cultural elements influence the psychological experiences of the characters. Translators must therefore balance readability with cultural authenticity to ensure that psychological motivations remain understandable.

Date: 1st July-2026

Furthermore, figurative language contributes significantly to psychological realism. Metaphors, symbolism, and imagery often reflect characters' emotional states. Translators who focus exclusively on literal meaning risk weakening the psychological atmosphere created by the original text.

Translation Strategies for Preserving Psychological Realism

To preserve psychological realism effectively, translators may employ several strategies. First, they should prioritize functional equivalence over strict literalism. The objective is to reproduce the emotional effect experienced by readers of the source text rather than merely transferring individual words.

Second, translators should pay close attention to narrative perspective. Maintaining the consistency of the first-person narration in *The Kite Runner* is essential because the story relies heavily on Amir's subjective experience.[3;p-23] The translator's choices must support the continuity of his psychological voice throughout the text.

Third, contextual adaptation can help preserve emotional meaning. Certain expressions may require modification to achieve a comparable emotional impact in the target language. Such adaptations should remain faithful to the character's psychological state while respecting the linguistic norms of the target culture.

Finally, translators should preserve stylistic features that contribute to characterization. Sentence structure, repetition, pauses, and descriptive details often reveal emotional tension and psychological depth. Retaining these stylistic elements can help maintain the realism of the translated narrative.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the preservation of psychological realism in literary translation. The analysis is based on selected passages from *The Kite Runner* that reveal characters' emotions, thoughts, and psychological conflicts. A comparative textual analysis is used to evaluate how these elements are represented in translation. The study also draws on key concepts from translation studies, including equivalence, narrative voice, and cultural adaptation. The findings are interpreted to assess the effectiveness of translation strategies in maintaining psychological authenticity.

Discussion

The case of *The Kite Runner* demonstrates that psychological realism is a crucial aspect of literary translation. Readers connect with the novel primarily through the emotional experiences of its characters. Therefore, successful translation depends on the ability to recreate these experiences in another language.

The translator acts not only as a linguistic mediator but also as an interpreter of human psychology. Every translation decision influences how readers perceive characters' emotions, motivations, and relationships.[4;p-65] Consequently, preserving psychological realism requires sensitivity to both language and literature.

The analysis also suggests that cultural understanding plays an important role in maintaining psychological authenticity. Since emotional experiences are often shaped by

Date: 1st July-2026

cultural values and social expectations, translators must possess a deep awareness of both source and target cultures.

Conclusion

Preserving psychological realism remains one of the most important and demanding tasks in literary translation. Through the example of *The Kite Runner*, it becomes evident that psychological depth is central to readers' engagement with literary texts. Translators must carefully reproduce emotional nuances, narrative voice, cultural context, and stylistic features to maintain the psychological authenticity of the original work.

The study concludes that successful literary translation goes beyond linguistic accuracy. It requires the recreation of the psychological world of the text, allowing target-language readers to experience characters' emotions and internal conflicts in a manner comparable to that of the original audience. In this way, psychological realism serves as a vital bridge between languages, cultures, and human experiences.

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