

Cultural References in Sa'di's *Gulistan*: Anderson's and Rosenbaum's Translations in Focus

Narjes Asgari Vartooni 

MA Student of Translation Studies,
Department of English Language and
Literature, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Mahmoud Afrouz* 

Associate Professor, Department of English
Language and Literature, University of Isfahan,
Isfahan, Iran

Abstract

The diversity between a source language and a target language and the variation in their cultures make the task of finding equivalents a serious challenge. Expressive texts are among the most difficult text-types to be translated. Being deeply rooted in the culture of a nation, classical literary texts are seldom devoid of culture-specific concepts or cultural references (CRs). Sa'di's (1208-1291) *Gulistan* is a prominent masterpiece of classical Persian literature that abounds with CRs. It is translated by many translators. Anderson (1861) and Rosenbaum (2010) are among the earliest and the most recent translators of the Persian masterpiece, respectively. The paper aimed at identifying categories of CRs in translations, determining translators' most and least frequent procedures and specifying the most challenging categories of CRs for each of them. The study aims at identifying various categories of the CRs in *the Gulistan* and the procedures employed by the two translators in rendering them. In order to specify the procedures, Davies's (2003) model and Huber and Kairys's (2021) taxonomy were used. The findings revealed that 'substitution', 'literal translation' and 'generalization' were averagely the most frequent procedures. Moreover, it was found that the terms belonging to the categories of 'religion', 'garments' and 'social life' were the most challenging concepts for the English translators.

Keywords: Classical Persian literature, Sa'di, *The Gulistan*, cultural references, translation procedures

*Corresponding author: m.afrouz@fgn.ui.ac.ir

Cite this article: Asgari Vartooni, N., & Afrouz, M. (2025). Cultural references in Sa'di's *Gulistan*: Anderson's and Rosenbaum's translations in focus. *Translation and Interpreting Research*, 2(7), 61-72.
<https://doi.org/tir.2026.90877.1056>

Publisher: ATU Press

Translation and Interpreting Research is the journal of Research Institute for Translation Studies (RITS), affiliated with Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

1. Introduction

Identifying an inextricable link and a sort of inseparability between the two concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘language’, researchers realized that the former is one of the most challenging concepts to be defined (Culpeper 2015, Kavalir 2015, Liang 2016). The diversity between a source-language and a target-language and the variation in their cultures make the task of finding equivalents a serious challenge. Re-producing a text in the target culture by adaptation of foreign lexical items (especially culture-specific concepts), and supplementing informative notes (of either intra- or extra-textual kind) for them could be referred to as general techniques of translation, but employing them, unquestionably, requires the translator to possess a comprehensive knowledge of the two languages and cultures involved (see Kočan Šalamon, 2015; Rot Gabrovec, 2015).

A culture-specific concept or cultural reference (CR) refers to any sort of “expression (textual, verbal, non-verbal or audiovisual) denoting any material, ecological, social, religious, linguistic or emotional manifestation that can be attributed to a particular community” and can be acknowledged as a feature “of that community by those who consider themselves to be members of it” (González-Davies & Scott-Tennett, 2005, p. 166).

From among various problematic areas in translation studies (e.g., the issues of form, style, cultural concepts, puns, metaphors, etc.), the current study principally concentrates on the CRs in two English translations of *the Gulistan* by Anderson (1861) and Rosenbaum (2010). The study aims at identifying various categories of the CRs in *the Gulistan* and the procedures employed by the two translators in rendering them. In order to specify the procedures, Davies’s (2003) model and Huber and Kairys’s (2021) taxonomy were used. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the categories of CRs in *the Gulistan*?
2. Have Anderson and Rosenbaum been consistent in adopting certain procedures for rendering CRs?
3. What are Anderson’s and Rosenbaum’s most and least frequently employed procedures?
4. What are the most and the least frequent procedures in rendering each category of CRs?
5. How is the distribution of untranslated CRs in various categories?
6. Which category of CRs was more challenging for Anderson and/or Rosenbaum? Was there any difference in this regard between the 19th and 21st century translators?

2. Literature Review

Cultural references are those linguistic items found in the source-language with no equivalent in the target-language. CRs pose great challenges since they encompass “foods, games, or family traditions which feel typical in the homeland and the source culture, but seem odd when sought in a different culture” (Aghakhani Chegeni et al, 2025, p. 119). Therefore, they impose “translation problems”, and translators need to “adopt” specific methods to cope with those problems (Yılmaz-Gümüş, 2012, p. 120). In the following, it is attempted to review a number of main studies carried out on the subject of CRs.

Concentrating on the issue of translating cultural words in laws, Sarcevic (1985, pp. 127-132) pointed out that attaining “denotative equivalence” is the main challenge encountered by translators of legal texts and proposed “lexical expansion” as the best strategy for dealing with such terms.

While one specific strategy was offered by Sarcevic (1985, p. 132) as an effective way of dealing with CRs, Shabanirad (2004), perhaps because of focusing on a very limited corpus, did not suggest any particular strategy for rendering CRs embedded in Persian literary texts. As was expressed by the

researcher, the main objective of her study was not to evaluate the quality of target-texts but to explore the effect of time-span on the TT's "strangeness" for their respective readership (Shabanirad, 2004, p. 65).

Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek (2005) focused on the potential ways of rendering proper names (PNs) as culture-specific concepts. The corpus of his study consisted of some administrative and institutional texts. As the researcher asserted, when "an official name" was given to "a legal institution", such a name would most probably "appear in identical form" throughout the majority of texts (p. 248).

Working on Granara's English translation of Wattar's 'Al-Zilzal' in order to shed light on the gaps posed by CRs while translating literary texts, Agti (2005, p. 101) merely came to this general conclusion that misunderstanding culture specific terms can cause "translation inadequacies".

Tobias (2006, p. 27) also focused on the issue of culture-bound lexical items in literary translations. On the basis of her findings, culture-specific customs are not easy to express without committing over-translation, and terms with "mimetic features" would certainly lose part of their "iconicity" while being translated into English (p. 34).

Safari (2008) also dealt with the methods employed in translating CRs in literary texts. The researcher, taking English translations of nine modern Persian short stories as the corpus of his study, concluded that most of the translators considered 'cultural adaptation' as the best procedure which could save them from the labor of explanation.

Adopting Aixela's (1996) model to analyze the corpus of his study, Zhao (2009) concentrated on the subtitling procedures used by subtitlers of the 30 scenes selected from the series *Friends* while rendering culture-bound terms. According to Zhao (2009, p. 82), "repetition" is the most frequently, but the least effective, used strategy of subtitling the American series. The researcher recommended the three more effective strategies of deletion, substitution, and creation to be used instead of repetition.

Samakar (2010) also conducted a study on the translation of CSIs in audiovisual texts. The data were gathered from Persian movies subtitled into English and were analyzed via the use of a number of strategies including specification, generalization, omission, retention, direct translation, and substitution. Specifying "substitution" and "paraphrase" as the most frequently employed strategies, the study found "generalization" to be the least frequently used strategy in translating CSIs in subtitling (p. 11). Samakar (2010) did not identify any strategy as the most effective one.

Yang (2010, p. 170), concentrating on the issue of cultural loss in translation, considered cultural differences as the main change confronted by translators striving to render Chinese poetry into English. Yang (2010) came to this conclusion that sensitivity to the ST's cultural connotation is of paramount importance while translating poems. The researcher did not deal with strategies and, consequently, no single strategy was identified by him as the most efficient or practical one. Rasouli (2011) conducted a study on the procedures opted for in rendering culture-specific items in the context of the Iranian civil code. He identified the following procedures Iranian legal translators employed while dealing with CRs: couplets, calque, generalization, componential analysis, transference, functional equivalent, modulation, descriptive equivalent, omission, paraphrase, cultural equivalent, and neutralization. Rasouli, similar to Shabanirad (2004), Safari (2008) and Zhao (2009), and in contrast to Sarcevic (1985), just mentioned a number of potential strategies for rendering CRs and failed to offer one single strategy as the most effective one in dealing with such terms.

While Terestyényi's (2011) work reported transference and generalization to be the most and the least frequently employed procedures of rendering CRs, respectively, Noruzi's (2012) research paper was narrowly restricted to mere categorization of CRs embedded in journalistic texts and had nothing to do with potential strategies to deal with them.

Brasiené's (2013) study focused on the translation of CRs by Arvydas Sabonis based on the procedures offered by Venuti (foreignisation and domestication) and Davies (addition, preservation, globalisation, omission, localisation, creation and transformation). The most frequently used translation strategies for rendering CRs were localization, preservation, and addition. The researcher, however, did not identify the most effective strategies.

Afrouz (2017) compared procedures of translating CRs adopted by a native translator (Bashiri) and a non-native translator (Costello) and came to this conclusion that "Costello, as compared with Bashiri, has been less concerned with observing the cultural differences, while Bashiri had been more cautious of preserving the national identity" (Afrouz, 2025, p. 721). According to Afrouz, "functional equivalent" and "notes" had a high capacity "for conveying the concepts underlying" the CRs embedded in the source text (Afrouz, 2017, p. 10). His research also revealed that the combination of functional equivalent and notes results in a more precise comprehension of the CRs than does other procedures. Yousefi's (2017) paper analyzed 110 cultural-specific items in Rehatsek's translation of *the Gulistan* based on Newmark's (1988) model.

The corpus of Ku's (2019) study included *Journey to the West* and its three Spanish translations made in 1992, 2010 and 2011. His study aimed to compare and contrast "the contents length, chapter arrangement of the original work and its translations as well as the translation strategies for cultural elements" (p. 51). Ku (2019) had just attempted to compare the strategies of rendering CRs without exploring the effect of translators' being (or not being) a native of SL, or identifying the capacity of procedures in conveying concepts underlying the CRs in the source-text.

Abdullah and Edris (2021, p. 41) explored cultural challenges in translating "Qur'anic dialogue between God and Moses from Arabic into English". The study compared "Arberry's translation with al-Hilālī and Khān's" (2021, p. 41). Based on their findings, Arberry's translation revealed great tendencies towards choosing domestication strategies, but al-Hilālī and Khān tended to use foreignization strategies which keep "some of the source culture's foreignness in the TT" (p. 63).

Working on two translations of *the Gulistan* (by Burton 1888 and Eastwick 1880), Afrouz (2022) focused on challenges posed by religious-specific terms. He used Ivir's (2003) taxonomy for analyzing the data and found that "translators of *the Gulistan* experienced more challenges in rendering RBTs related to 'concrete religious concepts', 'proper names', 'religious verdicts' and 'abstract religious concepts'" (p. 12).

None of the previous studies attempted to reveal the most challenging categories of CRs for both 19th and 21st century translators of classical Persian literature. Therefore, the present study was conducted to fill the research gap.

3. Methodology

The corpus of this study consists of Sa'di's *Gulistan* as an instance of classical Persian literature, and two of its English translations. Classical Persian literature "refers to the literary tradition that emerged in the third Islamic century (ninth century AD)" (Zandjani, 2019, pp. 812-813). *The Gulistan* is internationally recognized as one of the greatest masterpieces of classical Persian literature written by Sa'di (1208-1291). Like other great masterpieces in Persian literature, *the Gulistan* owes its "formal and semantic aesthetics" to "the Holy Qur'an" (Tahmasbi Boveiri et al., 2025). *The Gulistan* is a "rhythmic prose mixed with verse" and belongs "to the genre of moral literature" (Meneghini, 2019, p. 665). This study focuses on *the Guilestan* as it is replete with cultural references of various types.

The Gulistan is rendered into English by a number of translators (e.g. Sullivan, 1774; Gladwin, 1806; Dumoulin, 1808; Johnson, 1836; Ross, 1823; Burton, 1842; Eastwick, 1852; Anderson, 1861; Platts & Clark, 1879; Rogers, 1880; Rehatsek, 1888; Arnold, 1899; Arberry, 1945; Newman, 2004).

The English translation entitled *The Gulistan or Rose Garden of Sa'di* was translated by Edward Rehatsek in 1888 and, two centuries later, in 2010, it has been edited by David Rosenbaum. This new edition is now the latest available version of the this translation. Anderson's (1861) translation was the earliest translation the researchers had access to.

To examine the Persian work and its English translations, the study relied on a combination of procedures proposed in Davies's (2003) model and Huber and Kairys's (2021) taxonomy. This integrated model includes the following translation procedures:

1. **Retention:** It means transferring "the referent" embedded in the ST into the TT "with little to no change" (Huber & Kairys, 2021, p. 10). When translators are in doubt whether to employ this procedure for rendering CRs, which would seem to be totally unfamiliar to the target audience, then they could typically complement retention with another procedure. If a translator initially transfers a ST word into the TT and then phonologically and morphologically adapts it to the target language system, they have employed 'naturalization'. Naturalization is considered as a sort of retention.
2. **Substitution:** It occurs when translators resort to a near TL equivalent.
3. **Literal Translation:** It requires the description of a ST cultural concept or the literal rendition of the components of some compound terms. It can also occur when a translator finds equivalent for each sense-components of a single SL word so that the final product would be more than two TL lexical items. In some cases, it may even involve explaining the meaning of the ST segment. This process may involve a change in the grammar from the ST to the TT. One frequent change usually occurs when the part of speech of the TL equivalent appears to be different from that of the original word.
4. **Addition:** It occurs when translator decides to supplement the text with the information they consider necessary.
5. **Omission:** It occurs when a CR is totally deleted.
6. **Generalization:** It requires the application of a word which is not considered to be a CR. Superordinate terms, generalized or neutralized lexical items would be the first candidates to be selected by translators interested in applying such a procedure.
7. **Specification:** It occurs when translators opt for a target language CR as an equivalent for a SL term. The selected equivalent is neither a superordinate term, nor a generalized or neutralized lexical item in the TL.
8. **Creation:** It occurs when the translator creates culture-specific references that cannot be found in the ST.

Then the Persian CRs in *the Gulistan* and their English equivalents were extracted and classified. Untranslated CRs were marked, and the frequency of translated CRs with different translation procedures was calculated.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

In order to answer the research questions, the data gathered would be presented via tables and graphs in the forthcoming subsections.

4.1. CRs Translation Procedures

The analysis of the translation of 192 CRs revealed that neither of the translators was consistent in adopting a certain procedure for rendering various CRs. In some cases, they were not even consistent in applying one single procedure for the same CRs (in the same context) repeated throughout *the Gulistan*. A few examples of CRs and the analysis of their translations are presented below.

The lexical item دلق /dalq/ refers to the special garment of Dervishes made from wool (Anvari, 2000, p. 104). It is rendered by Rosenbaum as ‘frock’ (in chapter 2, story 16) and ‘robe’ (in chapter 3, story 3). Rosenbaum, in this case, used two different procedures (i.e., specification and generalization) that led to the two equivalents ‘frock’ and ‘robe’. Neither cultural-equivalent ‘frock’, nor the generalized-equivalent ‘robe’ convey the underlying sense-components of the original CR. Anderson, who initially (in chapter 2, story 16) translated the CR as ‘coarse frock’, then (in chapter 3, story 3) referred to the material of the garment and rendered it as ‘a coarse woolen frock’.

Rosenbaum also changed his selected equivalent from ‘vagabond’ to ‘profligate’ while rendering the term رند /rend/, appeared in the second and the fifth chapter. Anderson, however, consistently used ‘profligate’. Similarly, the term مصطفی /moṣṭafā/, which refers to the selected one and is an attribute of Prophet Muhammad, is rendered by Rosenbaum as ‘the elect’ in the introduction of the book, while the same word is simply transliterated as ‘Mustafa’ in the third chapter. Rosenbaum (2010, p. 236) also provided his readers with the following informative note: “[I]terally the Elect, another name for Muhammad as the chosen prophet of the age”. Anderson adopted the procedure of retention and rendered the term as ‘Mustufa’.

As for the term زکات /zakāt/, Rosenbaum performed differently. In the first appearance of the word, in chapter 2, he transliterated the term and provided the following note: “[T]he legal alms, enjoined by the Qur’an, consisting of 2½ per cent from the income of every estate” (Rosenbaum, 2010, p. 239). Oddly, however, in the second appearance of the word, in chapter 7, he changed his procedure and selected the cultural equivalent “tithe” which refers to “a tenth or other fixed part of the goods that somebody produces or the money that they earn, that they give regularly to help support the Church” (Oxford Advanced Genie Software Dictionary). In this case, Anderson preferred the procedure of generalization and opted for the equivalent ‘alms’.

It should, however, be noted that translators are not expected to opt for one equivalent for two homonymous terms or those terms with two different meanings in two different situational contexts. There was only one such instance in the corpus. In Persian, the term درهم /deram/ is a measurement of both “weight” (i.e., about 4 grams) and “money” (i.e., silver coins) (Anvari, 2000, pp. 150-153). In chapter 3, story 6, where the term is used as measurement of “weight”, Rosenbaum associated the transliteration of the term (i.e., *dirhem*) with the following note: “[m]onetary denomination minted of silver” (Rosenbaum, 2010, p. 231). No mention, however, is made of the second sense-component of the term. Even in the second appearance of the term, in the tenth story of the same chapter, Rosenbaum just neutralized the term by employing the superordinate term ‘money’. His shift of procedure, from retention to generalization, may capture the attention of the deep-readers of the TT.

As an answer to the second research question, Table 1 presents the distribution of the translation procedures in the two English translations.

Table 1. Distribution of the procedures used by translators

Procedures	Literal Translation	Substitution	Addition	Generalization	Specification	Omission	Retention	Creation
Rosenbaum's Translation	27 14.1%	58 30.2%	46 24%	30 15.6%	13 6.8%	7 3.6%	11 5.7%	0 0%
Anderson's Translation	44 22.9%	72 37.5%	10 5.2%	34 17.7%	8 4.2%	8 4.2%	16 8.3%	0 0%
Total	71 18.5%	130 33.9%	56 14.6%	64 16.7%	21 5.5%	15 3.8%	27 7%	0 0%

As is illustrated in Table 1, approximately one third (33%) of all CRs are rendered via substitution. Furthermore, substitution is used about five times as many as retention (7%), and more than three times as many as addition (14.6%) and generalization (16.7%). This procedure's rate of recurrence exceeds the sum of all these procedures: generalization, specification, omission, retention, and creation. The procedures of omission, and specification, are the least frequently adopted procedures—each below 6%. The two translators never employed the procedure of creation.

4.2. Categorization of CRs

Regarding the third research question, it was found that CRs of *the Gulistan* could be classified in eleven categories.

Vlahov and Florin (1980, as cited in Terestyényi, 2011, p. 13) mentioned five categories of geographical, ethnographic, art and culture, ethnic, and socio-political. Newmark (1988) also referred to five classifications including ecology, material culture, social culture, concepts, and gestures. Espindola and Vasconcellos's (2006, pp. 49-50) categorization included twelve items: toponyms, anthroponyms, forms of entertainment, means of transportation, fictional character, legal system, local institution, measuring system, food and drink, scholastic reference, religious celebration, and dialect.

In order to categorize the data, an eclectic classification of CRs mentioned above was adopted. It involved the following items: materials, foods, customs and ideas, garments, measurements, ecology, symbols, location, games, social life, and religion. A few examples of CRs from each category are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Examples of CRs Categories in *the Gulistan*

Categories	A selection of Cultural References
Religion	مصطفى (moṣṭafā), أعراف (a'rāf), تربت (torbat), جامع (jām'e), مشايخ (mashāyekh)
Social life	پیر (pīr), بربط سراي (barbaṭsorāy), مُريد (morid), مطرب (moṭreb), شوریده (shūrīdeh)
Location	حجره (hojreh), طاق ايوان (ṭāqe eyvān), طور (ṭūr), غرفه (ghorfeh), جوسق (jusaq)
Garments	دببقي (dabiqi), دلقي (dalq), پرنیان (parniyān), نسيج (nasij), ديمياطي (demyāṭi)
Measurements	م لمان (man), درم (deram), فرسنگ (farsang), دانگ (dāng)
Materials	قصب الجيب (qaṣbol jayb), چمچه (chamcheh), سپند (sepand), دف (daf)
Customs & ideas	برد عجز (barde 'ajūz), جهاز (jahāz), غراب البين (ghorābolbayn), سهيل (soheyl)
Foods	كوفته (kufteh), حلوا (halvā)
Game	نَفت اندازی (naft andāzi)

Ecology	باد صبا (bāde sabā), مغيلان (moqīlān), سَموم (samūm)
Symbols	هما (homā)

The percentage of CRs in different categories are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of CRs in Different Categories

Categories	Religion	Social Life	Location	Garments	Measurements	Materials	Customs	Foods	Games	Ecology	Symbols
Frequency	144	68	24	41	18	39	20	10	4	12	4
Percentage	37.5%	17.7%	6.3%	10.7%	4.7%	10.2%	5.2%	2.6%	1%	3.1%	1%

As is presented in Table 3, the frequency of the items related to 'religion' approximately equals to the sum of the items belonging to nine other categories: symbols, ecology, game, customs and ideas, materials, measurements, garments, location, and foods. CRs in the category of 'social life' are the second most frequent terms in *the Gulistan*.

In an attempt to answer the fourth research question, Table 4 illustrates the frequency and percentage of procedures in each category of CRs.

Table 4. Distribution of Procedures in Each Category

Procedures	Categories						
	Addition	Substitution	Literal Translation	Generalization	Retention	Omission	Specification
Religion	23 16%	36 25%	25 17.4%	35 24.3%	8 5.6%	9 6.3%	8 5.6%
Social life	9 13.2%	26 38.2%	12 17.6%	8 11.8%	10 14.7%	---	3 4.4%
Location	2 8.3%	8 33.3%	6 25%	3 12.5%	1 4.2%	---	4 16.7%
Garments	7 17.5%	10 25%	11 27.5%	3 7.5%	1 2.5%	5 12.5%	3 7.5%
Measurements	4 22.2%	6 33.3%	---	2 11.1%	6 33.3%	---	---
Materials	4 10%	22 55%	5 12.5%	7 17.5%	---	1 2.5%	1 2.5%
Customs	2 10%	13 65%	5 25%	---	---	---	---
Foods	---	1 10%	5 50%	2 20%	---	---	2 20%
Games	2 50%	1 25%	---	1 25%	---	---	---
Ecology	1 8.3%	7 58.3%	2 16.7%	1 8.3%	1 8.3%	---	---
Symbols	2 50%	---	---	2 50%	---	---	---

As Table 4 reveals, translators preferred generalization for rendering 24.3% of the religious CRs; in other words, nearly one fourth of the religious terms have been either neutralized or generalized. However, it does not mean that translators did not have any familiarity with such terms since they provided informative notes for 16% of them while resorting to retention in just 5.6% of the cases. The sheer use of retention, being among the least demanding tasks which require the least energy of translators, does not convey the meaning of the ST cultural references to the TT readers. That is the reason such procedures as retention, transliteration, transference or even generalization are principally recommended (Newmark, 1988) to be used along with informative notes. Substitution was the most frequently adopted procedure in rendering CRs in the following categories: social life (38.2%), location (33.3%), garments (25%), measurements (33.3%), materials (55%), customs (65%), and ecology (58.3%).

Generalization is Anderson's second and Rosenbaum's third mostly used translation procedure. It reveals both translators' strong tendency towards employing 'near equivalents' and 'generalized/neutralized equivalents' in rendering CRs in various categories.

4.3. Translation of CRs with Notes

The use of informative notes via footnotes or endnotes can indirectly indicate that there was a sort of challenge on the part of the translator to provide more information when rendering the CR. Table 5 shows the percentages and frequencies of CRs translated by employing the procedure of 'addition'.

Table 5. Distribution of CRs Translated Through Addition

Categories	Religion	Social life	Garments	Location	Measurements	Materials	Customs	Foods	Games	Ecology	Symbols
Frequency	23	9	7	2	4	4	2	0	2	1	2
Percentage	41%	16%	12%	3.75%	7%	7%	3.75%	0	3.75%	2%	3.75%

As is revealed in Table 5, the categories of religion, social life, and garments showed the highest frequencies in the use of explanatory notes.

Leaving a CR untranslated can majorly be considered as a potential indication of its challenging nature. Table 6 reveals the percentages and frequencies of untranslated CRs.

Table 6. Distribution of Untranslated CRs

Translations	Frequency	Categories			
		Religion	Garments	Material	Total
Rosenbaum's Translation	Frequency	3	3	1	7
	Percentage	43%	43%	14%	47%
Anderson's Translation	Frequency	6	2	0	8
	Percentage	75%	25%		53%
Total	Frequency	9	5	1	---
	Percentage	60%	33%	7%	---

As is demonstrated in Table 6, untranslated CRs merely occurred in the two categories of religion and garments. Most of the untranslated CRs (60%) were religious ones. Moreover, the difference between the number of CRs left untranslated by Anderson and Rosenbaum was slight.

Overall, based on the data presented in Tables 5 and 6, it can be concluded that religion and garments were the most challenging categories since most of the 'notes' and 'untranslated' CRs were in these two categories.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that CRs of *the Gulistan* could be classified in the following eleven categories: Symbols, Ecology, Game, Customs and ideas, Materials, Measurements, Garments, Location, Foods, Social life, and Religion.

Brasiené (2013) found localization, preservation, and addition as the most repeatedly used procedures of rendering CSIs. In Davies's model, localization, preservation and addition are respectively the same as specification, retention, and addition in the integrated model used in this study. We can, therefore, come to this conclusion that the results of the present study stand in contrast to that of Brasiené's (2013) since specification, retention, and addition were averagely among the least used procedures by the two translators.

The current study also supports the findings by Kočan Šalamon (2015) who had emphasized the method of 'adding notes' (being the same as the procedure 'addition') to deal appropriately with CRs embedded in literary works.

Furthermore, the present study confirmed the finding of Afrouz (2017) in specifying the combination of the following two procedures as an effective method of translating CRs in modern Persian literary-texts: 'functional equivalent' (being roughly the same as generalization in our integrated model) and 'notes' (being the same as addition in the current study). It should, however, be noted that the current study focused on classical Persian literary texts, while Afrouz's (2017) research dealt with modern Persian literature. Interestingly, therefore, it may generally be assumed that in Persian literary texts (both classical and modern) the use of addition (including 'generalized equivalent' plus 'notes') can be considered as one of the effective procedures of translating cultural concepts.

Based on the results, the untranslated terms mainly occurred in rendering the CRs classified in the categories of religion and garments. Anderson's and Rosenbaum's failure to provide any equivalent for such CRs could indicate the challenging nature of such terms. Overall, the categories of religion, social life and garments included the most challenging CRs, but religious CRs, by far, seemed to be the most challenging terms in translating *the Gulistan*. As a result, prospective translators wishing to render classical Persian literary texts, in general, or offering a re-translation of *the Gulistan*, in particular, are highly recommended to enhance their knowledge in the following three categories of CRs: garments, religion, and social life. Familiarity with terms related to these categories seems essential for literary translators.

In the age of artificial intelligence, "while technology can significantly help us in terms of translation speed, it should be remembered that professional or specialized human translators can play a pivotal role in capturing the cultural nuances and emotional resonance" of the source text (Asgari Vartooni, & Afrouz, 2025, p. 112). Therefore, as a suggestion for further study, future researchers are recommended to conduct a study on the advantages or weaknesses of AI in rendering CSIs in classical literary texts.

References

- Abdullah, A., & Edris, L. (2021). Cultural and semantic challenges in Arberry's translation of the Qur'anic dialogue: The dialogue between God and Moses. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 50(1), 41-65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2020.1815823>
- Afrouz, M. (2017). A comparative-interpretative study of the role of native and non-native translators in preserving national identity. *Journal of Language and Translation Studies*, 49(1), 41-55.
- Afrouz, M. (2022). Challenges posed by religious-bound terms while rendering classical Persian literature: English translations of Sa'di's *Gulistan* in focus. *SKASE Journal of Translation and Interpretation*, 15(1), 1-12.
- Afrouz, M., & Asgari Vartooni, N. (2025). The retranslation hypothesis revisited: A meta-analytical study. *Trans-kom*, 18(2), 712–730.
- Aghakhani Chegeni, F., Asgari Vartooni, N. & Afrouz, M. (2025, December 5-7). *Translating for children: Challenges, strategies, and cultural implications* [Paper presentation]. Fourth International Symposium on Literature, Culture and Language, Van, Türkiye.
- Agti, A. (2005). *A study of the English translation, by William Granara, of the Arabic culture-specific terms in Tahar Wattar's novel 'Al-Zilzal'* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Mentouri University.
- Aixela, J. F. (1996). Culture-specific items in translation. In R. Alvarez, & M. C. A. Vidal (Eds), *Translation, power, subversion* (pp. 52-78). Multilingual Matters.
- Anderson, R. P. (1861). *The Gulistan of Shaik Saday*. Thacker Spink and Co.
- Asgari Vartooni, N. & Afrouz, M. (2025, December 5-7). Sport translation: The global language bridge— More than just words [Paper presentation]. *Fourth International Symposium on Literature, Culture and Language*, Van, Türkiye.
- Brasienė, B. (2013). Literary translation of culture-specific items in Lithuanian translation of Orwell's *Down and out in Paris and London* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Vytautas Magnus University.
- Culpeper, J. (2015). Cultural encounters: A final word. *ELOPE*, 12(1), 137-139.
- Davies, E. (2003). A Goblin or a Dirty Nose? The treatment of culture-specific references in translations of the Harry Potter Book. *The Translator*, 9(1), 65-100.
- Espindola, E., & Vasconcellos, M. L. (2006). Two facets in the subtitling process: Foreignisation and/or domestication procedures in unequal cultural encounters. *Fragmentos*, 30, 43-66.
- González Davies, M., & Scott-Tennent, C. (2005). A problem-solving and student-centred approach to the translation of cultural references. *Meta*, 50(1), 160-179.
- Huber, L., & Kairys, A. (2021). Culture specific items in audiovisual translation: Issues of synchrony and cultural equivalence in the Lithuanian dub of "Shrek the Third". *Studies about Languages*, 38, 5–15. <http://doi.org/10.5755/j01.sal.1.38.24743>
- Kavalir, M. (2015). House and home across cultures. *ELOPE*, 12(1), 29-47.
- Kočan Šalamon, K. (2015). Translating culture: Contemporary African American poetry. *ELOPE*, 12(2), 211-224.
- Ku, M. (2019). A westward journey vs. a playful journey: Strategies for the translation of cultural elements in journey to the west. *Onomázein*, 43, 50-69.
- Liang, W. (2016). Translators' behaviors from a sociological perspective: A parallel corpus study of fantasy fiction translation in Taiwan. *Babel*, 62(1), 39-66.

- Meneghini, D. (2019). Sa'di-ye Shirāzi and Bono Giamboni in dialogue: A comparative approach to temperance. *Iranian Studies*, 5-6, 663-689. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2019.1656055>
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Prentice Hall.
- Noruzi, M. (2012). Culture-specific items in Iranian journalistic texts. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*, 2(2), 1685-1689.
- Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, M. (2005). Strategies and methods in dealing with culture specific expressions on the basis of Polish-English translations of certain administrative and institutional terms. *Theory and Practice in English Studies*, 3, 243-248.
- Rasouli, M. (2011). *Strategies applied in translation of CSIs in translation of the I.R.I. constitution and the civil code* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Allameh Tabataba'i University.
- Rosenbaum, D. (2010). *[A New Edition of Edward Rehatsek's] The Gulistan or Rose Garden of Sa'di*. Omphaloskepsis Books.
- Rot Gabrovec, V. (2015). Translators: Travelers, not tourists. *ELOPE*, 12(2), 225-238.
- Sa'di, A. M. (1258). *The Gulistan* (collected in 2000 by Hasan Anvari). Qatreh.
- Safari, J. (2008). *Strategies employed for the translation of culture-specific items: A comparative study of the translation of Sadegh Hedayat's works into English* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Allameh Tabataba'i University.
- Samakar, S. (2010, February 6). Translation of extralinguistic culture-bound elements in Persian movies subtitled into English: A case study of *The Lizard*. Retrieved from <http://www.translationdirectory.com/articles/article2110.php>
- Sarcevic, S. (1985). Translation of culture-bound terms in laws. *Multilingua*, 4(3), 127-133.
- Shabanirad, F. (2004). *Strategies applied in the translation of culture-specific items in literary texts* (Unpublished master's thesis). Allameh Tabataba'i University.
- Tahmasbi Boveiri, S., Afrouz, M., & Miraki, M. (2025). Intertextuality and Quranic terms in translated literature: The case of Saleh Hosseini's works. *Translation and Interpreting Research*, 2(7), 15-28.
- Terestyényi, E. (2011). Translating culture-specific items in tourism brochures. *SKASE Journal of Translation and Interpretation*, 5(2), 13-22.
- Tobias, S. (2006). Culture-specific items in Japanese-English literary translation: Comparing two translations of Kawabata's *no Odoriko*. *Monash University Linguistics Papers*, 5(1), 27-35.
- Vlahov, S., & Florin, S. (1980). *Neperevodimoje v Pervode*. Meždunarodnyje otnošenija.
- Yang, L. (2010). Cultural loss in the English translation of Chinese poetry. *Babel*, 56(2), 168-185.
- Yılmaz-Gümüş, V. (2012). Translation of culture-specific items in self-help literature: A study on domestication and foreignization strategies. *ELOPE*, 9(2), 117-129.
- Yousefi, S. (2017). Translation of cultural specific items: A case study of *Gulistan* of Saadi. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 4(5), 62-75.
- Zandjani, N. (2019). The social and literary context of German translations of Sa'di's *Golestān*. *Iranian Studies*, 52(5-6), 809-832. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2019.1653173>
- Zhao, H. (2009). *A comparative analysis of subtitling strategies: Culture specific items in the series Friends* (Unpublished master's thesis). Auckland University of Technology.