

In the Name of God



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Aim and Scope

The aim of this journal is to provide a platform for scholars, researchers, and practitioners to explore and exchange cutting-edge knowledge, insights, and innovations in the dynamic fields of translation and interpreting. The journal fosters a comprehensive understanding of translation and interpreting, covering a broad range of topics, including but not limited to translation theory, translation practice, methodology, intercultural communication, translation technologies, and professional ethics. Contributions are welcomed that delve into the challenges, trends, and advancements in translation and interpreting, facilitating interdisciplinary discussions and promoting excellence in the field. By encouraging rigorous research, critical analysis, and practical implications, the journal serves as a catalyst for advancing scholarly discourse and professional development within the realm of translation and interpreting.

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Translation of Humor in Dubbed Animations: The Case of *Minions*

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how humorous language and content are rendered in audiovisual translation. Focusing on the animated film *Minions*, the study compares two Persian dubbed versions produced by Kaszadeh (2015) and Khajavi (2015). The entire film was analyzed, and humorous instances were identified and compared with their Persian equivalents to examine the translation strategies employed. The findings reveal notable differences between the two translations. Kaszadeh predominantly relies on free translation, while Khajavi more frequently employs cultural equivalence. Furthermore, Khajavi's version demonstrates a higher degree of fluency, suggesting a more effective transfer of cultural nuances and contextual references into Persian. These results underscore the impact of translation strategy choice on the naturalness and reception of humor in dubbed animated films.

Keywords: Animation, dubbing, humor, *Minions*

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Introduction

Humor is one of the interesting tools people rely on to convey their messages in a more meaningful, effective, and fun way. Linguistic, cultural, and social elements are of great importance in humor (Fefelova & Anisimova, 2025). Vandaele (2010, p. 149) states that “humor occurs when a rule has not been followed; when an expectation is set up and not confirmed; when the incongruity is resolved in an alternative way”.

Humor is a practical tool in mass media for engaging people, conveying a point, and shaping their views (Ofori & Senta Dogbatse, 2023). This function becomes critically crucial in dubbing, where humor must be culturally translated, not just linguistically. A simple literal translation often fails, so adapters must find culturally resonant equivalents—such as swapping a local joke for a foreign one or using a familiar voice actor—to achieve the same emotional effect. In this way, effective dubbing uses humor as a bridge to make foreign content feel local, preserving the original’s engagement and intent for a new audience.

Sarmi et al. (2025) explain that translating humor can be particularly challenging because it often overlooks grammatical correctness. Pragmatic problems can arise when the source and Target Languages (TLs) have different practical ways of thinking or fundamental truths or rules. Dealing with the cultural aspects of humor translation is a major concern for every translator. Humor is a many-sided phenomenon commonly stated in actions or tales perceived as humorous and generating laughs or smiles, linked to the cognitive potential that permits the production or recognition of jokes or witticisms, and that could be considered a strategy (Feingold & Mazzella, 1993).

A dubbing process in translation is one of the critical fields within the translated version. According to Luyken et al. (1991), dubbing is a complex audiovisual translation technique. It does not just translate the words; it replaces the original spoken dialogue with a new recording in a different language. This new version must meticulously synchronize with the existing video, aligning with the actors’ lip motions, the pacing of their speech, and the natural breaks in their conversation, more than just substituting voices. It requires significant cultural adaptation of the translated script to make it suitable for the target audience. Additionally, achieving lip synchronization demands numerous textual alterations. The translator’s role is the first step in this extensive and complex process, which always involves a degree of deviation from the source material. Audiovisual translation is a multi-stage, sequential workflow, meaning that an issue at any stage can negatively impact subsequent ones. In this context, Orero (2004) contends that the translator’s initial text is frequently not the final version, but rather a draft that is later refined and tailored to meet the specific demands of the dubbing medium.

Anyone who has attempted to translate humor into another language understands how frequently the joke falls flat. This is primarily because what is considered funny is often deeply tied to the specific language and cultural context in which it originated. Verbal humor commonly relies on ambiguities, wordplay, and cultural references that are unique to the source culture. The translator’s challenge is greatest when a joke depends on a word or phrase with a double meaning. Success is only possible if the target language has an equivalent term with the same range of meanings. In those rare cases, the translator’s task is nearly complete.

However, it is possible for a direct translation of the words to exist, while the cultural foundation of the humor remains too specific to be understood, creating a barrier that cannot be overcome. Baker (2018) states that the SL word may express a concept unknown in the target culture. Consequently, translating humor is a complex task, and the translator should be able to distinguish humor and be

familiar with the cultures of both the SL and the TL. Newmark (1988/1995, p. 92) calls them “cultural words” and relates their existence to “gaps” between the SL and TL that cause translation problems.

The purpose of this study is to examine the translation strategies for humor in *Minions*. It tries to find out which strategy is applied in the two translations based on Newmark’s model, as well as how to attract more children to animation in each country’s culture. The central focus of this analysis lies in the significance of cultural meanings embedded within the ST and how these meanings are effectively transformed into TT. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What strategies are used by Kaszadeh (2015) and Khajavi (2015) in translating the humorous phrases of the animation *Minions* based on Newmark’s model?
- Which of the two Persian translations is more fluent based on the cultural equivalent?

Literature Review

The academic study of humor has a long history, originating with classical thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, and now spans a wide range of disciplines from mathematics to medicine. The field is supported by dedicated scholarly associations, as well as numerous academic journals and book series. Within this field, known as humorology, linguistics has played a particularly important role. This is both due to its significant theoretical contributions and because language itself is the primary vehicle for a great deal of humor. Attardo (2017) argues that even humor created entirely outside language (for example, visually or musically) should be defined in language by scholars analyzing it.

Laurian (1989) and Xia et al. (2003) clarify that, humor often cannot be translated because of fundamental issues with word meanings, including both their literal definitions and their implied cultural associations. Furthermore, Vandaele (2010) notes that translating humor is linguistically complex because it often relies on specific words, dialects, and wordplay (puns). These elements are tricky to translate directly. The main issue is that humor loves to use these very things—in-group language and playful wordplay—to strengthen social bonds within a group, which makes it especially hard to translate. Translation problems arise from linguistic “denotation” when a joke is built around a concept, object, or social reality that exists only in the source culture and has no direct equivalent in the target language. It explains that a significant challenge in translating comedy arises from register and language variety. It gives the example that a specific type of joke—like using a formal “Sir” in an informal New York cab—does not work in French because the same social dynamics does not exist with “Monsieur” in a Paris taxi. The core problem is that comedy often relies on the clash between different social dialects, registers, and speech patterns (like “the Queen’s English”) that may not have direct equivalents in another language. The text ends by posing the problematic question of how a translator could recreate the humor from these very specific English sociolects in a language like French (Antonopoulou, 2014; Vandaele, 2010).

The features of humor are multifaceted, often operating through the interplay of incongruity, superiority, and relief. Incongruity-based humor arises from the violation of logical or expected patterns, creating surprise through absurdity, irony, or witty wordplay (Grawe, 2015; Karpenko, 2017). Conversely, superiority theory suggests that laughter stems from a feeling of enhanced self-esteem at others’ expense, as seen in slapstick comedy or satire, where characters become the butt of a joke. Additionally, psychoanalytic relief theory posits that humor serves as a release valve for psychological tension and forbidden impulses, enabling the safe expression of taboo subjects. These core mechanisms are further expressed through a vast range of techniques, including hyperbole, understatement, sarcasm, and parody, all of which serve to provoke amusement, critique societal norms, or forge a shared sense of connection through laughter (Grawe, 2015).

Linguistically, humor can involve syntactic, semantic, and contextual dimensions, including the use of specific lexicons, structural statistics, and phonetic styles, contributing to sentence congruity (Khurana et al., 2024). Moreover, Zhou and Chen (2013) explain that this form of humor, often categorized as verbal wit or linguistic humor, arises from the clever and frequently subversive use of the fundamental building blocks of language. It operates on multiple levels, from the simple manipulation of phonetics, as in puns and homophones that create double meanings with a single sound, to the bending of syntax and grammar for unexpected comedic effect.

From a social and emotional perspective, humor can be understood through theories of superiority and relief (Bužarovska, 2011). Furthermore, Hussain and Ameer (2024) state that humor often carries a sense of correction and sympathy, and can involve tenderness, distinguishing it from satire, which may contain bitterness. In addition, Rosenberg et al. (2024) explain that an ideal sense of humor can include caring as a key trait, even if it occasionally incorporates elements like sarcasm or hostility, the balance of which is often culturally determined. Effectively wielding humor, especially in a leadership role, is a complex skill that demands a keen reading of the context, a clear and positive intention, and sound judgment. This must be paired with skillful delivery and an acute awareness of the audience's reactions. Ultimately, both the creation and reception of humor are profoundly shaped by the prevailing atmosphere and the broader socio-cultural context (Rosenberg et al., 2024).

Translating humor is increasingly essential for cross-cultural communication, but it presents a unique challenge (Kovacs, 2020; Wang & Zhan, 2024). As Chiaro (2010) observed, humor is a complex mix of universal, cultural, linguistic, and personal elements. This multi-layered nature makes it a concrete and challenging problem for translators to solve.

The first stage of communication involves the ST author and the translator. The author, as the communicator, expresses a message with both an informational purpose (the joke itself) and a communicative intention (the desire to amuse the reader). The translator, acting as the audience, must do more than decode the words. They need to use contextual clues to infer the author's intentions and identify the humorous part of the text. By applying the principle of relevance, the translator seeks the most logical connection between the humorous utterance and the surrounding context. This is an active process of interpretation, as simply understanding the literal meaning of the words is not enough to grasp the humor (Wang & Zhan, 2024). On the other hand, in cases where the humor is tightly bound to the original semantic and syntactic structures (e.g., a pun that can be directly translated, or wordplay that exists in both languages), a semantic approach can be attempted. Its use is justified when the literal meaning itself is the source of the humor and can be effectively transferred (Farghal & Ymak, 2025; Jiang et al., 2019).

On the other hand, dubbing is a major form of revoicing, so challenging that it is often referred to as *traduction totale* (total translation) (Abdirasulov & Abiyatova, 2025; Cary, 1960). In dubbing, the translated dialogue must closely match the actors' lip movements. This is challenging because the original and translated languages often have different sentence lengths and grammatical structures, making perfect lip-sync difficult to achieve (Zaki & Dole, 2024). This distinction highlights a key difference between the two methods. Dubbing aims for seamlessness, making it appear as if the on-screen characters natively speak the viewer's language, thereby concealing the translation process. In contrast, the voiceover constantly reminds the audience that they are watching something foreign and translated. This inherent visibility places voiceover, along with subtitling, in the category of overt translation (Díaz Cintas & Orero, 2010). The translation mode in an audiovisual context usually depends on the target audience and the country where the translation will be presented.

Much research has been done on the translation of humor. Among the studies conducted in the area, Rong et al. (2025) analyzed how humor was translated in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*. Using Schmitz's (2002) and Newmark's (1988) models, the study identified 159 instances of humor, which

fell into three categories: Universal humor was the most common, followed by Linguistic humor and culture-based humor. To translate this humor effectively, translators used techniques like paraphrasing, cultural equivalence, transference, and notes/glosses. The goal of these methods was to preserve the comedic effect by adapting the content to the target audience's culture, retaining authentic references, and explaining complex ideas. Moreover, Hashemian and Farhang-Ju (2021) analyzed the translation of humor from three dubbed Iranian series based on qualitative research (*Shamsolemareh*, *Chimney*, and *Medical Building*) into English. The most frequent types of humor used in the series were 'clumsiness' and 'parody'. The three most common translation strategies used were 'omission', 'word-for-word translation', and 'free translation'. The study concluded that these strategies were largely unsuccessful at preserving the humorous tone of the original series, preventing English-speaking audiences from fully appreciating the humor. The researcher suggested that these findings could help improve the quality of humor translation in the future.

In a follow-up study, Khodabande (2019) analyzed the translation of humor in the Persian dubbing of *The Boss Baby*, comparing versions from two TV channels: *Nahal* and *Gem Junior*. The study found that *Gem Junior* most frequently used 'literal translation'. However, *Nahal* most often used 'replacing' and 'deleting' humorous content. The study concluded that the two channels had different translation approaches: *Nahal* adopted a target-culture-oriented approach, adapting the dialogues to be closer to Iranian children's culture. On the other hand, *Gem Junior* used an approach that was a mix of 'domestication' and 'foreignization'.

There are similarities and differences between the current research and the mentioned studies. The present study on *Minions* shares fundamental similarities with the mentioned research, as all primarily investigate the translation of humor in audiovisual media, focusing specifically on dubbing. A key commonality is the analytical focus on identifying and categorizing the specific translation strategies employed, with the present study explicitly aligning with Rong et al. (2025) by utilizing Newmark's model for this purpose. Furthermore, like Khodabande's research, this study adopts a comparative framework, analyzing two different dubbed versions to contrast how translation choices diverge. Underlying all these works is a central concern for cultural adaptation, exploring the continuum between domestication (adapting to the target culture) and foreignization (retaining source culture elements) to understand how humor is bridged for a new audience.

The primary differences lie in the specific research focus, source material, and cultural direction. Unlike Rong et al. (2025), who incorporated a typology of humor (e.g., universal, culture-based), the present *Minions* study appears to focus more narrowly on translation procedures themselves rather than first classifying the humor type. The source material also differs significantly; while Khodabande (2019) also analyzed an American animation, the unique nature of the *Minions* franchise—with its heavy reliance on visual gags, non-standard language, and distinct cultural positioning—presents a different set of translation challenges compared to a sitcom (*The Big Bang Theory*) or other animations. Finally, the direction of translation is exclusively from English to Persian, which contrasts with Hashemian and Farhang-Ju's study (2021), which analyzed the reverse (Persian to English).

Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate the translation of humor in Persian dubbing of the American animation, *Minions*, as translated by Ali Kaszadeh (2015) and Mohammad Khajavi (2015), and by dubbing Manager Mehrdad Raisi and Hooman Khayat, respectively. The entire 91-minute animation was analyzed to document instances of humor embedded in its dialogues. This process involved identifying specific phrases or sentences. These humorous items were then compared to their Persian equivalents in the two dubbed versions. The study then focused on the identification of translation strategies relying on Newmarks' (1988/1995) model as presented in Table 1 below. The

strategies were then classified and the frequency and percentage of each strategy were calculated to present the results.

Table 1. Newmark's Translation Strategies (1988)

Methods / Strategies	Definitions
1 Word-for-word translation	The SL word order is preserved and the words are translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context.
2 Literal translation	The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents, but the lexical words are translated singly, out of context.
3 Faithful translation	It attempts to produce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures.
4 Semantic translation	It differs from 'faithful translation' only insofar as it must take more account of the aesthetic value of the SL text.
5 Free translation	It produces the TL text without the original's style, form, or content.
6 Idiomatic translation	It reproduces the message of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms that do not appear in the original.
7 Communicative translation	It attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in a way that makes both the content and the language readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership.
8 Adaptation	It is the freest form of translation, used mainly for plays (comedies) and poetry; themes, characters, and plots are usually preserved, the SL culture is assimilated to the TL culture, and the text is rewritten.
Procedures / Strategies	Definitions
9 Cultural Equivalent	It means replacing a cultural word in the SL with a TL one; however, they are not accurate.
10 Transference	It is the process of transferring an SL word to a TL text. It includes transliteration and is the same as "transcription" (Harvey, 2000).
11 Naturalization	It adapts the SL word first to the standard pronunciation, then to the typical morphology of the TL.
12 Functional equivalent	It requires the use of a culture-neutral word, i.e., deculturalising a cultural word, which is the most accurate way of translating.
13 Descriptive equivalent	In this procedure, the meaning of the culturally bound term (CBT) is explained in several words.
14 Translation Label	This is a temporary translation, usually for a new institutional term that should be placed in quotation marks and can later be discreetly withdrawn.
15 Through-translation	The literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations, and components of compounds. It is the same as calque or loan translation.
16 Shifts or transpositions	It involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL. One type is the change from singular to plural. The second type of shift is required when an SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL. The third type of shift is one in which literal translation is grammatically possible but may not accord with natural usage in the TL.
17 Modulation	It occurs when the translator reproduces the message of the original text in the TL, in conformity with the current norms of the TL, since the SL and the TL may appear dissimilar in perspective.
18 Recognized translation	It occurs when the translator uses the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term.

19	Paraphrase	It is used to explain or reinforce the meaning of a section of the text. Usually, this strategy is used in an 'anonymous' text when it is poorly written or has important implications and omissions.
20	Reduction and expansion	A term of little importance in the TL culture may be deleted or expanded. These are said to be somewhat imprecise translation procedures. In some cases, they are practiced intuitively.
21	Compensation	It occurs when the loss of meaning, sound effect, metaphor, or pragmatic effect in one part of a sentence is compensated for in another part or in a contiguous sentence.
22	Componential analysis	It is the process of comparing an SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components.
23	Couplet	It occurs when the translator combines two different procedures.
24	Synonymy	It is a "near TL equivalent." Here, economy trumps accuracy.
25	Omission	It occurs when a word or phrase in the SL is omitted from the TL text.

Data Analysis

A few examples of humorous items in the original animation and their Persian translations are examined below.

Example 1:

ST: Love is the way, brother! (00:17:52)

TT1 (by Khajavi): قربان چرخت برم که بچرخه که منو بردی!

TT2 (by Kaszadeh): داداش نوکرتم! دمت گرم!

The phrase "Love is the way, brother!" as humor implies a light-hearted and playful perspective on the concept of love, emphasizing its importance and presenting it in a catchy and colloquial manner. The humor in this phrase may stem from the unexpected combination of the profound notion of love with the casual and familiar term "brother", creating a humorous contrast that elicits amusement and lightheartedness. Both translators applied the concept of "cultural equivalent" because they recognized the importance of capturing the cultural nuances and references present in the original English animation and conveying them effectively in Persian. By utilizing cultural equivalents, the translators aimed to maintain the humorous and comedic impact of the original film by finding equivalent expressions, jokes, or references that would resonate with the Persian-speaking audience.

Example 2:

ST: But I'm so very polite that I shall keep my mouth shut. (00:53:37)

TT1 (by Khajavi): اما نظر بنده اصلاً مهم نیست و شما هم چیزی نشنیدین.

TT2 (by Kaszadeh): البته بنده در این مورد نباید چیزی به شما می‌گفتم ولی جداً همه جوهره تو در دسر افتادیم.

The phrase "But I'm so very polite that I shall keep my mouth shut" as humor conveys a sense of irony and wit. The humor lies in the contrast between the character's claim of being extremely polite and the implication that they have something to say or express but choose to remain silent. This contradiction between their professed politeness and the underlying implication of withholding their thoughts or opinions adds a humorous twist to the statement. The phrase plays with the audience's

expectations and creates a comedic effect by highlighting the discrepancy between what is said and what is implied.

The first translator used “modulation” because he recognized the need to adapt the humorous expression from a different angle or a different way of thinking. However, the second translator used “free translation” because he aimed to prioritize conveying the overall meaning and comedic effect of the humorous expressions rather than sticking closely to the original wording. Free translation allows greater flexibility and creativity, enabling the translator to adapt humorous expressions more freely to suit the linguistic and cultural context of the TL.

Example 3:

ST: You are three tiny, golden, pill-shaped miracle workers. (00:53:54)

TT1 (by Khajavi): شما سه تا نابغه کوچولوی کپسولیِ بلا هستید.

TT2 (by Kaszadeh): شما سه تا کوچولوی زرد موزی ...

The phrase “You are three tiny, golden, pill-shaped miracle workers” as humor implies a playful and exaggerated description of the characters being addressed. The humor lies in the extravagant and unexpected portrayal of the characters as “tiny, golden, pill-shaped miracle workers.” This humorous statement is likely intended to evoke amusement by using vivid, imaginative language to describe the character in a whimsical, exaggerated way. The phrase plays with the audience’s expectations and injects a lighthearted tone into the dialogue, adding an element of humor to the overall scene or situation.

Therefore, the first translator’s use of “idiomatic translation” aimed to reproduce the core message and humor of the original animation, even if it meant potentially sacrificing certain nuances of meaning in favor of colloquial and idiomatic expressions that were more culturally relevant to the Persian-speaking audience. On the other hand, the second translator applied “reduction” because they aimed to simplify or condense the humorous expressions in the translation process. Reduction involves minimizing or streamlining the original content to convey the core message or comedic effect more concisely.

Results and Discussion

The study’s primary focus was not on categorizing the nature or source of the humor itself (e.g., as universal, social, cultural, or linguistic), but rather on analyzing the translational response to the inherent challenges that humor presents. By adopting Newmark’s model of methods and procedures, the study addresses how translators overcome the obstacles posed by humor’s complex features. Therefore, 70 humor samples were extracted, and the Persian translations of *Minions* (2015) were analyzed to determine the methods and procedures applied by the translators (Kaszadeh, 2015; Khajavi, 2015).

The findings indicate that the most frequently used strategy by Kaszadeh for translating humor in the “method” subcategory was “free translation”. Figure 1 shows the frequency with which Kaszadeh applied the strategies.

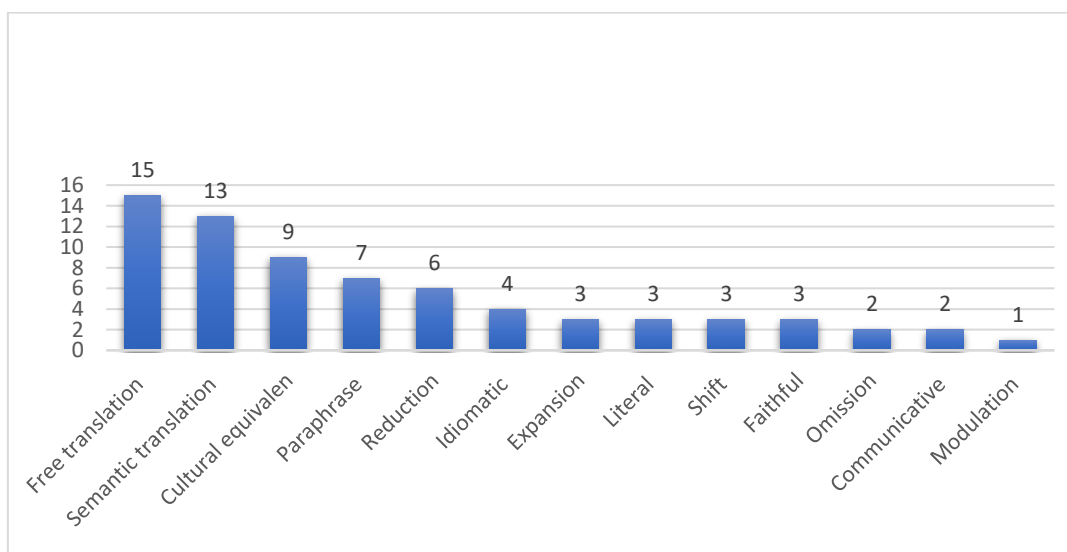


Figure 1. Frequency of strategies used by Kaszadeh

With regard to Khajavi's version, the results reveal that "cultural equivalent" with 14 occurrence was the most frequently used strategy and modulation with only 3 instances the least frequently used one. Figure 2 presents the frequency of translation strategies used by Khajavi.

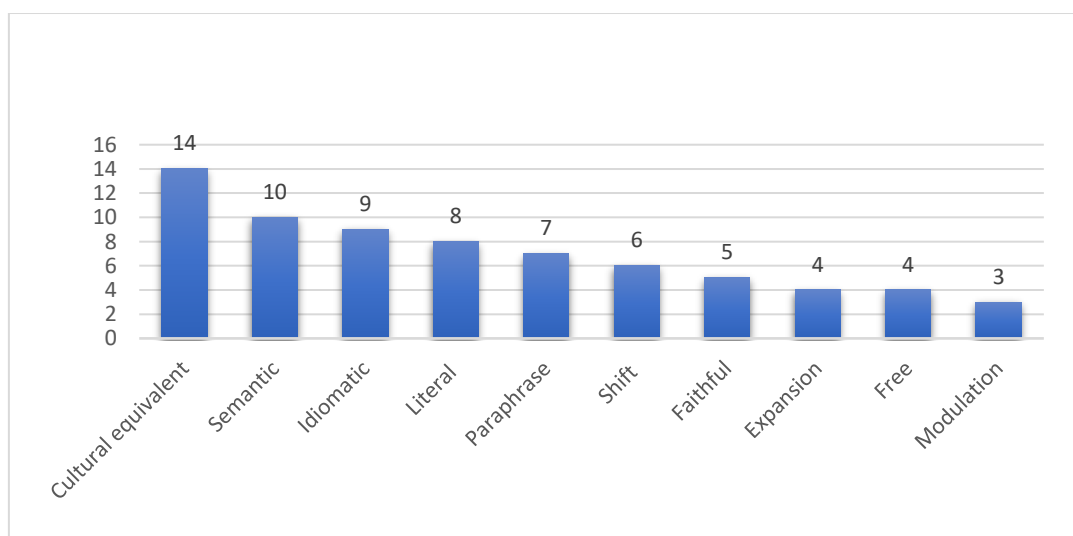


Figure 2. Frequency of strategies used by Khajavi

The statistical data from the two translations show that Khajavi's most frequently employed strategy was "cultural equivalent," with 14 cases (20%). On the other hand, the most frequently used strategy by Kaszadeh was "free translation", with 15 cases (21.42%). Moreover, Kaszadeh used the strategy "cultural equivalent" nine times, which was fewer than Khajavi. The study found that Khajavi's Persian translation is more fluent according to Newmark's cultural equivalent. Figure 3 illustrates the comparison between the two translators' application of the "cultural equivalent" strategy.

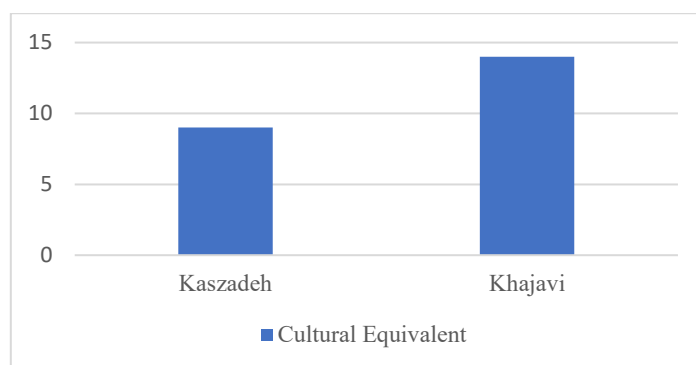


Figure 3. Use of cultural equivalent by two translators

Humor in films, such as the *Minions* animation, is a powerful tool that fosters connection, evokes laughter, and communicates universal and culturally specific ideas (Banazeer Banu & Gunasekaran, 2025; Gibson, 2019). Many forms of humor have demonstrated cross-cultural appeal, meaning they can be appreciated and understood by people from different cultural backgrounds. Humor can be used to create lighthearted moments, relieve tension, and elicit laughter, thereby fostering a positive and memorable viewing experience (Davies, 1998; Rong et al., 2025). The ambiguous and culturally dependent nature of humor makes it difficult to translate directly. A single error can undermine the entire comedic effect, as jokes are often culture-specific. Consequently, the translator must not only transfer language but also bridge cultural knowledge gaps for the target audience, a process that can sometimes compromise the joke's original spontaneity (Noor et al., 2025; Sarmi et al., 2025). According to Attardo (1994), one of the challenges in defining humor lies in the skepticism expressed by certain scholars regarding the possibility of formulating a comprehensive definition that encompasses all aspects of humor. However, Rosenthal (1956) explained that humor is often associated with the temporary alleviation of the numerous constraints imposed by the physical and social environment on individuals.

Research on the humor genre has evolved into a significant area of interest in studies on audiovisual translation. As Chiaro (2010) notes, the field was initially overlooked, with early scholarship primarily concentrated on wordplay in literary works. In recent years, however, it has risen to prominence and is now recognized as a vital sub-discipline of AVT studies (Martínez Sierra & Zabalbescoa Terran, 2018). Furthermore, as Perego (2016) argues, audiovisual translation functions not only as a linguistic bridge but also as a crucial specialized instrument.

The results of this study were not consistent with those by Koolaji and Haratyan (2017). They considered a cultural comparative analysis of humor translation in the *Ramona Quimby* series. The most comprehensive ideas regarding the translation of cultural aspects and translational strategies have become a significant area of interest. The functional equivalent was the most frequent strategy used by the translator. In addition, the findings of the study were not consistent with those by Khodabande (2019), which examined humor translation in the Persian dubbing of an American animated film, *The Boss Baby*. The results showed that 'literal translation' was the most common strategy in dubbing the *Gem junior* channel, and 'replacing' and 'deleting' were the dominant *Nahal* channel strategies.

Moreover, the outcome of the current research was not in line with the results of the study carried out by Rong et al. (2025), who analyzed humor on the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* based on Newmark's model. They found the dominant strategy to be 'paraphrasing'. The second commonly used strategy was 'cultural equivalent', which was similar to Khajavi's translation strategy.

Conclusion

Comedy often reflects cultural values, social norms, and specific references that may be more easily understood by audiences familiar with that particular culture (Friedman, 2014; Rusi et al., 2025). The results of the present study revealed that “free translation” was the most frequently employed strategy by Kaszadeh (21.42%). This indicates that the strategy prioritizes producing the TL text rather than replicating the original text’s style, form, or content. Free translation is the subdivision of Newmark’s method and considers the whole text. When a literal translation is impossible, a translator has to abandon the form of the SL and choose free translation, keeping only its intended meaning (Lu & Fang, 2012).

Moreover, according to the outcome of the study, “cultural equivalent” was the most frequently employed strategy by Khajavi (20%). It refers to a translation procedure where a cultural word or concept in the SL is replaced with an equivalent term or expression in the TL. When a translator encounters a cultural gap between the SL and TL, they may need to create a different equivalent that is more suitable or familiar to the target culture. Instead of attempting a literal translation, which may result in confusion or misinterpretation, the translator seeks to find a TL term or expression that conveys a similar cultural meaning or effect (Newmark, 1988/1995).

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Intertextuality and Quranic Terms in Translated Literature: The Case of Saleh Hosseini's Works

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Abstract

In the domain of Persian literature, the Holy Qur'an has consistently played an influential subtextual role in shaping the formal and semantic aesthetics of literary works. The present study, aiming to analyze intertextual relations, investigates Saleh Hosseini's utilization of Quranic terms and concepts in his translations of English literary works. To this end, based on Kristeva's (1966) theory of intertextuality and Genette's (1982) taxonomy, selected examples from seven translated works were analyzed. Following the examination and analysis of the data, a comprehensive interview with the translator was conducted to triangulate the findings. The results indicate that the translator employed two main strategies—explicit intertextuality (direct use of Quranic terms and verses) and paratextuality (using footnotes and appendices)—to create complex references in translations. This approach, while maintaining fidelity to the source semantic networks, reconstructed the text within the cultural context of the target language, providing a multilayered and polyvocal experience for the target readers. In light of the analysis of the collected textual data and the translator's responses in the interview, it can be concluded that literary translation, far beyond the mere transfer of words, is a creative, interpretive, and intertextual process that facilitates deep cultural and discursive interaction among various texts.

Keywords: The Qur'an, intertextuality, literary translation, Kristeva, Genette

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Introduction

The Holy Qur'an has long been one of the most significant subtexts of Persian literature, serving as a constant source of inspiration for numerous poets and writers. The utilization of Quranic verses and concepts has not only enriched the semantic and aesthetic quality of these works but also signifies the inextricable link between literature and religious and cultural discourses. Examining how these elements are reflected in the translation of literary works is a fundamental question in Translation Studies.

To elucidate this matter, we need to first address the concept of intertextuality, a pivotal notion in 20th-century literary criticism. The origin of this term can be traced back to Bakhtin, who—prior to Kristeva—emphasized concepts such as dialogisme and polyphonie within a text, considering the novel an arena for the simultaneous presence of various voices and styles (Samoyault, 2005, p. 11). Drawing inspiration from Bakhtin's perspectives, Kristeva (1966) coined the term “intertextuality”, arguing that no text is independent; rather, it is always formed in connection with prior texts and existing discourses (Allen, 2011).

This concept also featured prominently in Barthes' (1968) famous essay, *The Death of the Author*. By emphasizing the active role of the reader, Barthes demonstrated that the meaning and interpretation of a text are only formed through the reader's encounter with it. He stated that every text is a fabric woven from various quotations, references, and cultural echoes—both from the past and the present—extensively embedded within it. He believed that the text is part of a network of other texts and should not be mistaken for its primary source. Consequently, the attempt to find the “original source” is, in fact, a form of falling into the erroneous belief of the work's genealogy, as many quotations are unidentified or untraceable, and their role gains significance only in interaction with the text and the reader (Allen, 2011, p. 67).

In this context, Genette (1982), expanding upon Kristeva's views, classified all forms of relationship between a text and the other texts with which it interacts under the title of transtextuality, dividing it into five categories, of which intertextuality is only one. The other four branches are: paratextuality, architextuality, metatextuality, and hypertextuality, each including its own specific sub-categories (Namvar Motlagh, 2007a, p. 83). According to Genette (1997a), textual transcendence refers to what he broadly characterizes as “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” (p. 1). He introduces *transtextuality* as his own adaptation of a concept that many other scholars generally describe as intertextuality. Within this framework, Genette (1997a) narrows the notion of intertextuality itself, defining it as “a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts ... the actual presence of one text within another” (pp. 1–2).

Barthes (1974) also explicitly emphasizes that every text is intertextual in nature and goes on to say that “they are so many fragments of something that has always been already read, done, experienced” (p. 20). This perspective clarifies the boundary between Kristeva's concept of intertextuality and Genette's notion of transtextuality, as Genette is clearly seeking to identify the relationships of influence and reception between texts, and in the branch of hypertextuality, this interaction between two or more texts is the fundamental focus of his analysis (Namvar Motlagh, 2007a, pp. 85–86).

Furthermore, Abrams (1993, p. 285) defines intertextuality as the set of ways through which a literary text establishes an inextricable link with other texts. According to Magendaz (2006, p. 161), this combination and co-occurrence of texts only gains meaning in the reader's mind. If the reader cannot correctly identify and analyze the connection between texts, their interpretation will be incomplete and sometimes erroneous. Given the complex and multi-layered nature of literary works, the translator's role holds a subtlety equal to that of the author. As Farahzad (2009, p. 127) states, translation is an “intertextual practice” that connects source text and target text. Just as the author

consciously employs intertextual elements, the translator needs to act with the same level of awareness and, by choosing appropriate strategies, convey the experience of encountering intertextual elements to the target language readers (Leppihalme, 1997, p. 15).

Religious intertextual elements hold a special position in this regard. In addition to their cultural and religious load, they are accompanied by deep semantic layers, and their transfer to another language requires great precision and creativity. Examining translators' strategies in dealing with such elements can reveal new dimensions of the challenges and achievements of literary translation. The present study seeks to answer the following questions: First, what instances of Quranic intertextual elements are present in the translations? Second, what strategies has the translator employed to integrate intertextual references into the translations?

Literature Review

Intertextuality has consistently been a central topic in Translation Studies, religious texts, and literature. Federici (2007) views the translator as a cultural intermediary whose "intertextual baggage", influenced by their identity and cultural background, affects the translation process. Similarly, Alawi (2010), in a study on translation between Arabic and English, emphasizes the importance of practical knowledge and intertextual awareness in translation training, demonstrating that proficiency in translation is the result of practice and the recognition of textual relationships.

Regarding the Holy Qur'an, Ebrahimi and Dastranj (2019), using an analytical-descriptive approach, examined the concept of «اغواء» "Ighwā'" through the intertextual and conceptual relationships of the words. By analyzing collocations such as «ربّ» "Rabb" (Lord) and «اغواء» "Ighwā'" and emphasizing the two narrative axes of Iblis (satan) and the offenders' apology, they conclude that this word expresses the absolute sovereignty of God and the meaning of falling from the path of spiritual growth.

In another case related to Quranic intertextuality and literature, Ahmadi et al. (2019) investigated the extent of the Qur'an's influence on the poems of Ali ibn Isa al-Irbili and showed that the poet drew inspiration from the Holy Qur'an at various linguistic and conceptual levels. Furthermore, Pirak (2022), based on the theory of intertextuality and a descriptive-analytical method, analyzed the influence of the Holy Qur'an on the poems of Nusrat Rahman at three levels: lexical, compound, and thematic. Furthermore, Sarbaz et al. (2023), in their analysis of Kilani's novel *Amaliqat al-Shamal*, demonstrated the author's use of verses and Islamic narratives to enhance the artistic and intellectual aspects of the work.

In the domain of the Bible and literature, García Raffi and García Raffi (2024) examined the presence and structural, rhetorical, and conceptual roles of the Bible in De Pol's novels. Their research findings indicate that these works, though lacking religious intent, are heavily influenced by the Bible in their literary formation.

Overall, the aforementioned studies have primarily focused on the direct influence of sacred texts (such as the Qur'an and the Bible) on literary works created in the source language. While these studies lay the groundwork for understanding subtextual relationships, they fall short in addressing the active role of the translator in intertextual processes. The main research gap in this field is the lack of tri-textual analyses (three texts that are intertextually connected) —where the translator encounters references to the Bible in an English text and must adapt and re-textualize it within the target culture's context with the Quranic subtext. The current study aims to address this gap by focusing on Hosseini's use of Quranic concepts in the translation of English works into Persian. This research emphasizes the translator's interpretive role, viewing the translation process not as a mere lexical transfer but as an active intertextual recreation and the synchronization of the religious discourses of the source and target, thereby generating a distinctive analytical value in Translation Studies.

Theoretical Framework

The present study examines the translator's use of Quranic elements in literary translations, relying on Kristeva's (1966) theory of intertextuality and Genette's (1982) taxonomy as its theoretical foundation for identifying and analyzing textual relations within literary works and their translations. Kristeva (1966) argues that every text is the product of dialogue with other texts and a system of prior cultural references. Expanding on this concept, Genette (1982) classifies all cross-textual relations into five categories: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality. Among these, intertextuality—defined as the direct or indirect presence of one text within another—forms the analytical core of the present research (Namvar Motlagh, 2011 b, pp. 58–59). Moreover, Genette's (1997b) second type of transtextuality is styled paratextuality. The paratext, as Genette explains, marks those elements which lie on the threshold of the text and which help to direct and control the reception of a text by its readers. This threshold consists of a peritext, consisting of elements such as titles, chapter titles, prefaces and notes (Genette, 1997b).

Within this focused intertextual approach, the analysis identifies two major forms of textual presence: (1) intertextuality (explicit inclusion), such as quotations, recognizable allusions, and direct references to earlier texts; and (2) paratextuality, in which thresholds surrounding the text— explanatory notes, prefaces, or marginalia—guide the activation of intertextual relations and shape interpretive pathways. Therefore, drawing upon these intertextual frameworks, the study provides a precise and operational method for examining how the translator employs intertextual references, how they preserve, modify, and how such choices affect the literary and cultural resonance of the translated text.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. Data were collected through library-based research and consisted of seven original English literary works, their Persian translations, and the Holy Qur'an as the primary intertextual reference. Sampling was conducted purposively, and only instances containing salient markers of Quranic intertextuality were selected for analysis. From each literary work, five chapters were examined, yielding a range of potential samples. From these, only the most representative and analytically significant cases were selected.

Each selected sample was analyzed at three levels: (1) the source text, (2) the target (translated) text, and (3) the corresponding Quranic or religious intertextual reference. In addition, the findings of the textual analysis were triangulated with data obtained from a semi-structured interview with the translator. The results from both sources were then systematically compared and interpreted in relation to one another.

The corpus of the study includes seven English literary works and their Persian translations by Hosseini (see Table 1). These works were selected as suitable samples for examining the translator's role in the intertextual domain due to their rich religious intertextual elements.

Table 1. English Novels and Persian Translations

Specifications of English Novels			Specifications of Persian Novels		
Title	Author	Date	Title	Translator	Date
<i>The Last Temptation of Christ</i>	Kazantzakis	1955	آخرین وسوسه مسیح	Hosseini	1360
<i>Lord Jim</i>	Conrad	1900	لرد جیم	Hosseini	1375
<i>Report to Greco</i>	Kazantzakis	1961	گزارش به خاک یونان	Hosseini	1387
<i>The Great Code: The Bible and Literature</i>	Frye	1990	رمز کل: کتاب مقدس و ادبیات	Hosseini	1388
<i>The Sound and the Fury</i>	Faulkner	1929	خشم و هیاهو	Hosseini	1390
<i>Moby Dick</i>	Melville	1851	موبی دیک یا نهنگ بحر	Hosseini	1401
<i>Short Novels</i>	Melville	1854	سه داستان	Hosseini	1401

Findings

In the analysis of Hosseini's translations, numerous instances of the conscious application of Quranic intertextuality were found, some of which are analyzed below.

A. Analysis of Explicit Quranic Intertextuality in Translations

Seven instances of explicit Quranic intertextuality are presented in Table 2 and discussed below.

Table 2. Examples of Explicit Quranic Intertextual Elements

No.	Source Texts	Translations	Intertextual References
1	Natural Depravity: A depravity according to nature! (<i>Billy Bad</i> , p. 143).	فطرت فاجره: فجور مطابق با فطرت (بیلی باد بحری، ص. ۲۰۷).	Sura Ash-Shams (91), verse 8: فَاللَّهُمَّهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا
2	Spokesman (<i>Billy Bad</i> , p. 180)	نگاهی آنچنان که گویی نگاه گوینده فرزندان غیور (رشکین) یعقوب بوده باشد (بیلی باد بحری، ص. ۲۳۱).	Sura Yusuf (12), verse 10: قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ ...
3	Magan est Veritus et Praevalebit (<i>Lord Jim</i> , p. 191)	جمله‌ای از «کتاب مقدس»، که برگردان دقیق آن- با توجه به حدیث نبوی-می‌شود: الحق یعلو و لا یعلی علیه (لرد جیم، ص. ۱۸۹).	Prophetic Hadith (Use of Hadith as a cultural-religious subtext).
4	Transcendent God (<i>The Great Code: The Bible and Literature</i> , p. 25).	خدای تعالی (رمز کل: کتاب مقدس و ادبیات، ص. ۳۹).	Frequent Quranic and Islamic vocabulary: تعالی
5	Tempter (<i>The Last Temptation of Christ</i> , p. 45).	خناس (آخرین وسوسه مسیح، ص. ۶۶).	Sura An-Nas (114), verse 4: مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ
6	It smells like the left wing of the day of judgment; it is an argument for the pit (<i>Moby Dick</i> , p. 404).	بوی آن مانند بویی است که در روز قیامت از اصحاب یسار شنیده می‌شود. این بو حتی است مبنی بر وجود هاویه (موبی دیک، ص. ۵۵۳).	Sura Al-Qari'ah (101), verse 9: فَأُمَّه هَاوِيَةٌ
7	Son of darkness (<i>Moby Dick</i> , p. 101).	این ظلمت (موبی دیک، ص. ۱۴۷).	The concept of the contrast between Light and Darkness in the Qur'an (e.g., Sura An-Nur (24), verse 35)

As Kristeva (1966) asserts, no text is produced in isolation; rather, it is always formed in relation and dialogue with other texts. This statement is doubly important in translation, as the translator is not

merely a conveyer of meaning but, through their linguistic and cultural choices, recreates the text within a new network of intertextual relationships. Genette (1982), with his concept of “transtextuality” and specifically “intertextuality”, also shows that the actual presence of previous texts in the new text—whether as an overt quotation or a lexical substitution—can create a new meaning (as cited in Namvar-Motlagh, 2007a). This view aligns well with Hosseini’s approach to translation.

In response to the question of why the translator utilizes Quranic terms in the translation, he states: “many English novels, at their core, are close to Quranic themes ... That is why I sometimes draw upon the language and context of the Qur’an so that the Persian-speaking reader can better connect with the spirit of the work”. He further adds, “the art of the translator lies in being able to use expressions and compounds derived from other influential texts”.

To substantiate this claim one can refer to the translation of *Moby Dick*, where the translator uses the Quranic term هاويه (Hawiyah) for the English term (pit) (example 7). In the original text, this word carries a semantic load limited to the Biblical image of the place of sinners on the Day of Judgment. In the interview, the translator emphasizes the importance of mastery over the target language and culture, stating, “one of the fundamental principles of translation is familiarity with the target language and culture and complete skill in its application”. This skill is evident in the choice of هاويه, as Hosseini has not only conveyed the meaning of the original text but has also situated it within the Islamic theological system. In the footnote, he asserts, “according to the Gospel of Matthew (Chapter 15), on the Day of Judgment, those condemned to the fire of hell stand on the left side of God, contrary to the people of Paradise who stand on the right side and are, in Quranic terminology, the companions of the right” (Hosseini, 2022, p. 553).

Here, the translator has not only translated the Biblical narrative into Persian but has also enriched it with verses from the Qur’an. This example clearly shows that Hosseini sought not merely an equivalent-seeking translation but adapted the text to the Quranic semantic system. According to Kristeva’s theory, this is a reflection of the co-existence of discourses, as the Christian narrative engages with the Quranic narrative in a single text, creating a polyvocal meaning.

Another example is found in the same translation (Example 8). In the original text, the phrase “Son of darkness” could have had a simple and neutral translation, but the translator rendered it as ابن ظلمت (Ibn Zulmat). This choice, while closer to the Arabic and Quranic linguistic tradition, also evokes the conceptual load of the Quranic contrast between “Light” نور and “Darkness” ظلمت. From Genette’s (1982) perspective, this choice is a type of explicit linguistic intertextuality that directly refers to Quranic vocabulary. At the same time, based on Kristeva’s view (1966), such a choice shows that the translation is formed as a network of references, and even the simplest words carry a broad cultural-religious load.

Similar examples are also evident in the translation of *Billy Budd*. For instance, the word (Spokesman), which seemingly has a general meaning, is translated as گوینده (Guwaindeh) by invoking the Qur’an (Example 2). This is exactly what Hosseini emphasizes in the interview: “Familiarity with the subject of the original text is essential for successful translation.” He is familiar with the original text, the target text, and the sacred texts of both languages, and this familiarity makes it possible to construct intertextual equivalents. In explaining the choice of this equivalent in a footnote, he states: “The original text uses ‘spokesman’. But by considering the story of Joseph narrated in the Qur’an, قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِي غَيَابَتِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ (Yusuf/10)—‘A spokesman from among them said, “Do not kill Joseph, but drop him into the bottom of the well; he may be picked up by some travelers, if you are going to do so”—I have chosen the term گوینده (Hosseini, 2022, p. 231).

In the translation of this book, Hosseini was not only looking for an equivalent for “spokesman” but also linked its narrative to the story of Joseph. Also in the same translation, the term فطرت فاجره (Fitrat-e Fājirah) is adopted instead of (Natural Depravity) (Example 1). Instead of the common translation of “corruption” or “depravity”, the translator chose the word فجور (Fujur) from the verse فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا (A-Shams/8), and created a new compound called فطرت فاجره. He adds in the footnote:

Instead of *depravity*, the contemporary Farhang-e Hezareh dictionary gives “corruption”, but “corruption” is not entirely adequate for the purpose. This word is a theological term and, in light of the Protestant belief, refers to the inherent or innate corruption that has become intertwined with human existence due to “Original Sin” (Adam and Eve’s sin for disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit). Further proof for this argument could be this beautiful poem by Hafiz: «از دل تنگ گنهگار برآرم آهی / کآتش اندر گنه آدم و حوا فکنم»، “From my soul, cramped and sinful, I will raise a sigh / That shall set fire to the sin of Adam and Eve”. In any case, considering this verse: وَ نَفْسٍ وَ مَا سَوَّاهَا فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَ تَقْوَاهَا (By the soul and how He formed it and inspired it with its wickedness and its piety)—{فجور} was chosen instead of *depravity*. Furthermore, فطرت فاجره is a transposition of فجور فطری (*Fajr-e Fitri*) (Hosseini, 2022, p. 207).

This choice is a clear example of explicit intertextuality that is not only based on the sacred text but is also creatively restructured. In this context, Kristeva (1984, p. 60) says:

We shall call transposition the signifying process’ ability to pass from one sign system to another, to exchange and permute them; and representability of the specific articulation of the semiotic and the thetic for a sign system. Transposition plays an essential role here inasmuch as it implies the abandonment of a former sign system, the passage to a second via an instinctual intermediary common to the two systems, and the articulation of the new system with its new representability.

In Kristeva’s (1966) view, this restructuring indicates the text’s interaction with several layers of meaning: Christian theology of Original Sin, the Quranic tradition of *fujur* and *taqwa*, and even the poetry of Hafiz, to which the translator has referred. Thus, the translation becomes a polyvocal text in which various discourses are intertwined.

Another example is also evident in the translation of *Lord Jim*. In this novel, the Latin phrase “Magan est Veritus et Praevalebit” has its roots in the Christian tradition. The translator replaced this phrase with the Prophetic Hadith الحق يعلو و لا يعلو عليه (The truth prevails and nothing prevails over it) (Example 3). This choice once again shows that Hosseini does not regard translation as a means to merely convey the meaning of words, but rather as a means to strengthen the intertextual links between sacred texts.

In the translation of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, there is also an illustrative example. The word “Tempter” which means “one who tempts”, is replaced with the Quranic term خنّاس (Khannās) (Example 5). Regarding this, the translator adds in the footnote: خنّاس means “Tempter” ‘Satanic whispers’. But since it began with a capital letter, I preferred to use this Quranic term—خنّاس (Hosseini, 1981, p. 66). This choice clearly refers to a verse from Sura An-Nas: مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ: (An-Nas/4). Such an approach indicates that the translator seeks to link the religious-Islamic load with the translation and thereby localize it for the Persian-speaking audience.

In *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, the selection of the phrase {خدای تعالی} (Khodāy-e Ta’ālā - The Exalted God) for (Transcendent God) is a perfect example of a Quranic reference (Example 4). The choice of the word {تعالی} (*Ta’ālā* - Exalted) is clearly reminiscent of Quranic usages, and thus the Western text is re-read within an Islamic framework. As Hosseini mentions in the interview, “Literary taste and talent are necessities.” This choice reveals that, relying on his taste and religious-literary knowledge, the translator transforms translation into an arena of cultural interaction. The importance

of this method is that the translated text becomes part of the ongoing dialogue between religions and traditions, and its meaning is redefined in the cultural context of the target audience.

The analysis of the collected examples shows that Hosseini is not only a translator familiar with the source and target languages but also has a deep understanding of cultural and religious layers and views translation as a creative act. This approach results in English literary works being restructured within an Islamic context and becoming more familiar and understandable to the Persian-speaking audience. His translations, according to the theories of Kristeva and Genette, are a prominent example of polyvocal and explicit intertextuality: Old Testament narratives, Quranic verses, Christian tradition, classical Persian literature, and the original English text intermingle and create new meanings.

In other words, Hosseini's translations are not merely representations of the original texts, but rather recreations that place Western literary texts within a network of intertextual relationships with the Qur'an. This recreation both makes the transfer of meaning possible and turns translation into an arena for cultural interaction. Thus, the translator plays the role of a cultural intermediary and, through the use of explicit intertextuality, reproduces the texts within the cultural-religious context of the target audience.

Analysis of Paratextual Quranic Intertextuality in Translations

Seven instances of paratextual Quranic intertextuality are presented in Table 3 and discussed below.

Table 3. Examples of Paratextuality

No.	Source Text	Translation	Intertextual Reference
1	Mammom (<i>Report to Greco</i> , p. 350)	ممونا (گزارش به خاک یونان، ص. ۴۱۳)	Sura Al-Qasas (28), verses 76 to 82: إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ
2	Golden Calf (<i>Report to Greco</i> , p. 220)	گوساله طلایی (گزارش به خاک یونان، ص. ۲۸۵)	Sura Taha (20), verses 85 to 98: فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خُورٌ فَأَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَى
3	Benjamin the child of mine old age held hostage into Egypt (<i>The Sound and the Fury</i> , p. 155)	بنجامین فرزند روزگار پیری ام که در مصر به گروگان گرفتندش (خشم و هیاهو، ص. ۱۹۶)	Sura Yusuf (12), verse 80: قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنِ آبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ
4	When the word of the Lord came a second time; and Jonah, bruised and beaten-his ears, like two sea-shells, still multitudinously murmuring of the ocean-Jonah did the Almighty's bidding (<i>Moby Dick</i> , p. 65)	هنگامی که کلام خدا بار دوم بر یونس نازل می شود و یونس، زخمی و کوفته - گوش هایش مانند دو صدف، که زمزمه اقیانوس از همه سو از آنها برمی آید - فرمان خدای عزوجل را به جای می آورد (موبی دیک، ص. ۹۷)	Sura Al-Anbiya (21), verse 87: فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَن لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ
5	Ahikar has left his mark on at least the Apocrypha (Tobit is said to be Ahikar's uncle); on Greek literature, where he is identified with Aesop; and on the Koran (Sura 10), which as a rule has even less interest in secular literature than other sacred books. (<i>The Great Code: The Bible and Literature</i> , p. 123)	نقش تأثیر اخیقار دست کم در اسفار مجعول پیداست (گفته اند که تو بیت عمومی اخیقار بوده است)؛ و همین طور در ادبیات یونان که در آنجا با ازوپ همتا می شود؛ و همین طور هم در قرآن (سوره دهم) که در آن علی القاعده علاقه به ادبیات ملکی بسی کمتر از دیگر کتب مقدس است (رمز کل: کتاب مقدس و ادبیات، ص. ۱۷۸)	Sura An-Naml (27), verse 40: قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ

6	... Like pious Solomon devoutly worshipping among his thousand concubines (<i>Moby Dick</i> , p. 378)	... همچون سلیمان شاه که در میان زنان متعه دوکروری اش خاضعانه به درگاه احدیت نیایش می کند (موبی دیک، ص. ۵۱۶)	Sura Al-Baqarah (2), verse 102: وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ
7	... He is condemned to the pots, and, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, his spermaceti, oil, and bone pass unscathed through fire (<i>Moby Dick</i> , p. 408)	... محکوم شدنش به دیگ های مسی و، همچون شدرک و میشک و عبدنفو، گذر رویینه اسپرماستی و روغن و استخوانش از میان آتش را (موبی دیک، ص. ۵۵۹)	Sura Al-Baqarah (2), verse 102: قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

In Hosseini's literary translations, numerous examples of the use of paratextuality can be observed, indicating his interpretive and allusive approach when confronting intertextual texts. *Report to Greco* is a revealing example for examining religious intertextual elements. In the source text, the term "Mammōn" is rooted in the Christian tradition and is presented as a symbol of wealth (Example 1 in Table 3). The translator, with cultural precision, links it to the concept of "Qarun" in the Qur'an and explains in the footnote: "Mammōn (a Syriac word) means wealth. In the Gospel of Matthew, it is said that one cannot serve both God and Mammōn. Mammōn is the symbol of gold. Perhaps it can be said that in the Qur'an, Qarun is mentioned with this same meaning" (Hosseini, 1387, p. 413). This choice is not merely lexical but a type of interpretation that allows the Persian reader to re-read the text through a Quranic lens. Such an approach demonstrates that the translator, instead of simply reproducing Christian connotations, attempts to find an intertextual equivalent in Islamic culture that conveys a similar semantic load.

In the same book, the reference to the "Golden Calf" is also significant (Example 2 in Table 3). In the Biblical tradition, this symbol refers to the Israelites' worship of a golden calf, but the translator aligns it with the "Samiri's Calf" in the Qur'an through the footnote: "The Golden Calf is the same as what is called the Samiri's Calf in Islamic culture" (Hosseini, 1387, p. 285). This subtle note is an example of paratextuality. The difference between this type of alignment and explicit intertextuality is that the target text does not overtly mention the source, but only provides a context so that the audience can recognize the reference. This approach aligns exactly with what Hosseini explains in the interview: "My intention is not to religionize the text; rather, it is to convey its profound meaning". Thus, the translation becomes not only a bridge between two languages but between two different religious and cultural systems.

Another example of this approach can be seen in the translation of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (Example 3 in Table 3). In this novel, the character of Benjamin is introduced as the "child who was held hostage into Egypt". The translator clarifies in the footnote: "According to the Bible, the person held hostage in Egypt is Simeon" (Hosseini, 1390, p. 196). The translator, faithful to the source text, has tried to bring this difference to the readers' attention and provided a context for the audience to grasp the implicit nature of this reference. This approach indicates that the translator consciously distinguishes between the author's narratives and the Bible and aims to make the reader aware of the textual differences. From Genette's (1982) perspective, such an approach is a clear example of paratextuality because the Biblical reference is not overtly reflected but is only revealed through the translator's comparison and annotation.

Additionally, in the translation of *Moby Dick*, there are also notable examples of paratextuality. In this novel, Prophet Solomon is mentioned devoutly worshipping among his thousand concubines (Example 7 in Table 3). This image is rooted in the Old Testament, but the translator, by including a Quranic explanation in the footnote, emphasizes that according to the explicit text of the Qur'an, Prophet Solomon is free from such slanders or accusations:

It is mentioned in the Old Testament that Prophet Solomon had more than a thousand concubines. It is necessary to recall that in the Bible, both Prophet David and Prophet Solomon are considered kings of the Jewish people, and therefore such accusations are not unexpected. But we Muslims, according to the explicit text of the Qur'an, especially Surah An-Nisa, verse 163—"indeed, We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. And We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the book [of Psalms]"—consider them true Prophets, and based on this, we hold Prophet Solomon to be free from these slanders or accusations. (Hosseini, 1401, p. 516)

The translator, while accepting the existence of the Biblical narrative, simultaneously aligns it with the Quranic reading and, through this alignment, constructs new semantic boundaries for the target text. The Persian reader, who is familiar with Islamic texts, realizes through these explanations that Biblical narratives always require re-reading in light of the Qur'an. This work shows that the translator's role in confronting implicit intertextuality is not merely informative, but also includes interpretive and textual correction based on the target audience's intellectual and religious system. In other words, this reminder is a clear instance of "enlightenment"—something Hosseini considers the "translator's task" in the interview: "Enlightenment". Here, the translator neither changes the text nor explicitly quotes the source; rather, with a footnote, he reminds the audience the difference in sacred narratives.

In the same novel, the story of Jonah is recreated with an indirect reference to his suffering, wounds, and God's repeated command, a matter addressed in both the Old Testament and the Holy Qur'an (Example 4 in Table 3). The author implicitly uses the narrative of the sacred texts, and the translator, in a footnote links it to verses from Surah Al-Anbiya and Surah Al-Saffat, allowing the Persian reader a better understanding of the intertextual layers (Hosseini, 1401, pp. 97-98).

Elsewhere in the same work (Example 7 in Table 3), the translator expands the text's semantic layers by placing the narrative of the Three Hebrew Youths alongside the stories of Siyāvosh and Prophet Abraham {قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ} (Al-Anbiya/69). This action transforms the translation into a cultural act in which the source text is linked through translation to Siyāvosh in Iranian myths and Prophet Abraham in the Qur'an. This amalgamation demonstrates the translator's deep understanding of the intertextual nature of literature, as it transcends the source text from its cultural limitations and reproduces it in a multi-layered context. The translator's explanation is quoted below:

These three—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—are the three youths who, for defying Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship and prostrate themselves before the golden idol, are thrown into a blazing furnace, but the fire does not harm them (Book of Daniel, Chapter 3). In ancient Iranian tradition, it was also believed that fire does not harm the pure. An example is Siyāvosh's passage through fire and his safe emergence. And certainly, in the Holy Qur'an, the fire becoming a garden for Prophet Abraham. (Hosseini, 1401, p. 559)

Additionally, in *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, there is a reference to the character of Ahikar, who appears in Greek literature, and the author of the work has attributed it to the Qur'an (Example 6 in Table 3). The translator expresses his doubt in the footnote and suggests that the author's intention might have been Asaf ibn Barkhiya or Luqman: "It is unknown what the author's source of information was, as such a thing is not found in the Qur'an. Perhaps the intention was Asaf ibn Barkhiya; and perhaps Luqman" (Hosseini, 1388, p. 177). This interpretive task demonstrates that the translator is not merely a conveyer of the text but is a commentator who tries to clarify intertextual ambiguities. This explanation helps the audience recognize the implicit reference, even if the primary source is not accurately mentioned in the text.

Elsewhere in the same book, we read (*burning bush*), which refers to the Biblical narrative of God revealing Himself to Moses from within a burning bush (Example 5 in Table 3). This reference remains allusive and at the level of implicit intertextuality in the source text. The translator expands this reference in a footnote (Hosseini, 1388, p. 165), linking it to three reference texts: first to the Qur'an (*Shajar Akhḍar* - Green Tree in Surah Al-Qasas, verses 30–31), then to Hafez: “The Fire of Moses” — «بیا» «که آتش موسی نمود گل» (come, for the Fire of Moses manifested as a rose), and finally to Mollana (Rumi): “The Burning Tree” — «چون کلیم حق بشد سوی درخت آتشین» since Moses, the possessor of truth, went towards the burning tree. Such an approach is a clear instance of paratextuality; the source text only has a brief allusion, but the translator, by adding Quranic and mystical layers, establishes it in a new culture. This choice is directly aligned with the translator's statement in the interview: “My intention in using the language of the Qur'an is not to religionize the text; rather, it is to convey its profound meaning”. Thus, the translator not only clarifies the Biblical reference for the Persian reader but also links it to a broader network of sacred and mystical texts. He broadens the semantic field of the initial allusion by adding Quranic and mystical layers, allowing the audience to recognize this reference within their cultural and religious context.

The significance of this approach lies in the translator's simultaneous adherence to two principles: first, fidelity to the source text and the transfer of its intertextual layers, and second, fidelity to the target culture by providing familiar Quranic references for the Iranian audience. This amalgamation elevates translation beyond mere linguistic reproduction and transforms it into a cultural interpretation. In other words, intertextual references in Hosseini's translations establish a “dialogue of texts”—a dialogue in which the Bible, the Qur'an, Iranian myths, and Persian literature are placed alongside each other, creating new meaning.

Discussion and Conclusion

Literary translation, especially in texts with a high cultural and religious load, is a process that transcends the mere transfer of words and assumes an interpretive, creative, and cross-cultural nature. In literary works, authors often grant new depth and semantic richness to their texts by directly or indirectly referencing sacred texts or past literary works. These references—whether explicit or implicit—make the understanding of the work challenging. The target language audience may lack the necessary knowledge to decode these references; therefore, the translator needs to play an active and creative role, acting as a cultural mediator to facilitate the complete understanding and experience of the text for the reader. The examination of Hosseini's translations, along with the analysis of the interview conducted with him, indicates that in such texts, the translator is a cultural mediator and interpreter of meaning. Hosseini himself asserts that the “translator's task is enlightenment” and that a translator should only choose works that add something to the “human soul”. This ethics-driven perspective has made translation, in his view, an interpretive and meaning-creating act, not a mechanical reflection of the source text's structure and vocabulary. He believes that preserving the author's style means conveying the “intent” in the form of the target language, not transferring the structures of a foreign language into the target language.

The analysis of Hosseini's translations shows that the Qur'an and Persian literature are two essential intertextual sources in his works; sources that stem from his long-standing familiarity with them. As he states in the interview, “he has been reading the Qur'an since adolescence and has also memorized masterpieces such as *Golestan* and the *Divan of Hafez*”. This literary-religious memory plays an active role in his translations, enabling him to make the implicit layers of the source text more tangible for the Persian reader. Many of the novels Hosseini has translated are rich in spiritual inquiry, ethical concerns, and Biblical references. Hosseini maintains that this semantic world cannot be adequately

conveyed without drawing on sources familiar to the Persian-speaking audience; therefore, the Qur'an and Persian poetry function as creative tools through which he seeks to clarify and render the text's meaning. In his translations, intertextuality occurs at both the intertextual and paratextual levels. At the intertextual level, he often chooses equivalents that create a clear link between the religious terminology of the English text and the Persian religious tradition. The phrase "Faṭrat-e Fājereh" in *Moby Dick* serves as a scintillating example of this point. At the paratextual level, he uses Quranic imagery and allusions as well as Hafez and Mawlana to explain the hidden layers of the text; such as the translation of the "burning bush", where the image of the burning bush from the Qur'an, alongside the mystical allusions of Persian literature, creates a new network of meaning in the target language through footnote. In the translation of *Moby Dick*, numerous examples of this type of intertextuality can be observed. For instance, the following text "... as the eager Israelites did at the new bursting fountains that poured from the smitten" (p. 318), refers to the story of Moses and the springs of water in the desert, the translator harmonizes the Old Testament narrative with verse 60 of Sura Al-Baqarah. In the footnote, the translator writes: "regarding this, the Qur'an says: "and when Moses sought water, We told him to strike the stone with his staff {فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ} whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it ..." (Hosseini, 2022, p. 436).

The results derived from the interview indicate that such uses of the Qur'an and Persian literature are neither artificial nor arbitrary; rather, they are part of the translator's interpretive task. Hosseini believes that many of the English novels he translates are "about the soul and spirituality of human beings", and the Persian reader needs a familiar framework to grasp their depth. Therefore, his translations possess a tri-textual structure: the English text with Biblical references, the semantic world of the Qur'an and Persian literary tradition, and finally, the target language, which is the site of the final reconstruction of the text. Hosseini, in his translations, is not merely seeking linguistic equivalence but, by employing Quranic verses and concepts, is reproducing English literary texts within an Islamic cultural-religious framework. This tri-textual structure marks a significant difference from studies that have only addressed the presence of the Qur'an in the source text; because here, the intertextual flow is two-way, and the translator guides it with full awareness. Thus, the Persian-speaking audience, instead of encountering a mere image from the Old Testament, is faced with a familiar and more acceptable Quranic narrative.

Furthermore, the analysis of the data indicates that no instances of "non-explicit intertextuality" in the sense of plagiarism or hidden use of other texts were found in his works. All uses of sacred texts or prior literary works were made with full awareness and in the direction of clarifying the semantic layers. This adds to the academic and ethical credibility of Hosseini's translations and shows that his intertextual use is creative, transparent, and purposeful.

The findings of the present study are consistent and aligned with the findings and theories of previous research in many aspects, but in the nature of the intertextual process, they show fundamental and core differences with the results of some studies and present a significant innovation. On the one hand, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of Federici (2007) and Alawi (2010), who consider the translator as an aware agent with an "intertextual baggage". Hosseini's ability to judiciously use the Qur'an and Persian literature to reveal the hidden layers of the text is a clear example of the realization of these theories. On the other hand, the findings of this research differ from works that have only examined the one-sided influence of the Qur'an on poets or writers of the source language (Ahmadi et al., 2019; Pirak, 2022; Sarbaz et al., 2023); because in Hosseini's translations, the influence of texts is not one-sided but tri-textual: the Biblical reference of the English text passes through the filter of the Qur'an and the translator's literary mindset and is then reconstructed in the Persian language.

Another distinction is between the findings of this study and research such as that by García Raffi and García Raffi (2024), who considered religious references to lack theological intent. In contrast, the textual analysis, and the translator's explanations in the interview indicate that his use of the Qur'an is not merely rhetorical but sometimes redefines or modifies some of the religious references of the source text for the Persian audience; therefore, his approach is not solely literary but interpretive and sometimes corrective.

Finally, the analysis of the data suggests that for Hosseini, fidelity in translation is not a mechanical reliance on the lexical surface but a creative adherence to the semantic and cultural networks of the text. In multiple examples, he shows that to convey the profound meaning, it is necessary to use tools such as meaningful vocabulary, literary allusions, and even short explanations; because true fidelity in such texts is the preservation of the work's "spirit", not its linguistic form. The outcome of this process is translations that are not only faithful to the source text but also build a bridge between different textual traditions and provide a polyphonic and multi-layered experience for the Persian audience. Accordingly, literary translation at the level achieved by Hosseini is not a linguistic activity but an interpretive-cultural act that elevates the text to an arena of intertextual dialogue and recreates meaning at the intersection of three traditions—Biblical, Quranic, and Persian literature.

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Beyond Text: Multimodal Translation in the Persian Localization of *Modern Art*

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Abstract

This study investigates the localization of the rulebook of the board game *Modern Art* into its Persian version, by focusing on multimodal translation. Taylor's (2016) framework was employed to examine multimodal translation of the rulebook by focusing on four types of elements, being linguistic, semiotic, cultural, and narrative. To analyze linguistic changes, translation techniques proposed by L. Molina and A. Hurtado Albir (2002) were used, and the findings indicate that reduction, adaptation, and amplification were the most frequently used techniques. Regarding semiotic changes, the matrix proposed by Kostelnick and Roberts (2011) was applied, and the results revealed significant changes, such as modifications in images and the use of exclamation marks. Cultural analysis demonstrated major changes, including the replacement of all the artists featured in the board game. By contrast, the localized version of the board game did not alter its narrative. Overall, the localized version adapts the artworks and artists while preserving the mechanics and essence of the original board game.

Keywords: Board game, rulebook, localization, multimodal translation

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Introduction

Nowadays, board games are played by people of different ages and cultures. To meet a diverse range of audiences with different languages and cultural backgrounds, board games are increasingly being localized. To localize a board game, multiple elements must be taken into consideration, which are generally categorized into two groups of linguistic and non-linguistic elements. The present research aims to assess both of these elements at the same time within a single board game, namely *Modern Art*, localized from English to Persian. This integrated approach responds to calls in translation studies to move beyond text-centric models and to account for the interaction between verbal and non-verbal resources in meaning-making. The study, then, positions the localization of board games within the current dialogue of multimodal translation and game studies.

For the linguistic assessment, the linguistic techniques most frequently employed in the translation of the text were identified. For the non-linguistic assessment, semiotic, cultural, and narrative elements were examined to determine whether these elements were changed and, if so, in what ways. This dual-track analysis provides documentation of the changes made and provides insight into the localizing strategies that are applied to create functionality and cultural relevance to the product.

To this end, the rulebook is treated not merely as a written document but as a multimodal artifact whose interpretation depends on the coordinated functioning of multiple semiotic systems.

This research is significant because it evaluates the board game rulebook as a multimodal entity that mediate play, culture, and instruction simultaneously. This research can be of value to experts in board game localization and designers, as well as to publishers, translators, and scholars in translation and game studies. They can gain insight into how both linguistic and non-linguistic elements affect the adaptation of board games across cultures.

Board Game Localization

Although board games are highly popular these days, they are not a new phenomenon; rather, they have a long and rich history “dating back to approximately 7000 BC” (Samarasinghe et al., 2021). Traditional board games continue to be played worldwide; however, according to a study conducted by Samarasinghe et al. (2021), most of the board games that have ranked among the 10,000 top board games were distributed after 2015.

People play board games for different reasons. One of the primary reasons is that people seek to socialize with one another through playing board games (PÍŠOVÁ, 2023). Besides socializing, many adults play board games “as a way to relax and reduce stress from work and life in general” (PÍŠOVÁ, 2023, p. 33). Besides the reasons for playing, the question of what board games are and how they can be defined is also a subject of research. Since there are many types of board games and they are varied, providing a precise and exact definition can be challenging (Tomková, 2014). However, some researchers have proposed definitions of board games. D’Astous and Gagnon (2007) noted that a board game is defined by the following characteristics: 1. It can be played by two or more people, 2. It is played around a board or any kind of physical entity, 3. It has a set of rules, 4. The aim of the game is clear (as cited in Tomková, 2014, p. 12). Whereas some scholars define board games based on a single trait. Cronin (1998) believes that what makes board games different and particularly interesting is that they are unpredictable and there is more than one way to win the game. Another scholar, Schell (2008) argued that one characteristic specific to games, which can be used to define them, is that they offer problem solving and “Any game with a goal effectively has presented you with a problem to solve” (p. 35).

Evans (2013) argues that, to achieve the goal of the game, players strategically combine the rules of the game with the components of the board game. Another significant characteristic of board games that has contributed to their widespread popularity is the fact that they encompass a wide range of different genres. Silverman (2013) believes that the variety of board game genres is one of the primary reasons that people these days are paying more attention to board games; “Board games have seen an unexpected resurgence among gamers of all kinds” (p. 1). Based on these genres, people interested in board games tend to categorize them into various groups and classifications. Seen in this light, Whitehill (2008, p. 53) emphasizes that the classification of board games is necessary in order to establish a coherent system of description and terminology that facilitates better communication about games. Both historians and contemporary players share this desire to compare and contrast games. Whitehill (2008) notes, “The need to classify games comes with the yearning to understand the similarities and differences between games old and new across cultural boundaries” (p. 53).

One influential categorization proposed by Whitehill (2008) suggests that board games can be divided into seven main categories, which are as follows: 1. Games of alignment, 2. Race games, 3. Games of capture, 4. Building games, 5. Trading and negotiation games, 6. Games of survival, and those which cannot be categorized in the previous six sections as 7. Others. Also, Rendón Arboleda (2025) argued that, throughout history, different board games have been created to suit various people and preferences, leading to distinct categories of board games such as “games for children, educational games, sports games, word games, card games, strategy games, and more” (p. 1).

Board games from different genres have various game parts, boards, sets of rules, and stories, all of which contributes to understanding a board game completely. While genre distinctions show what kind of experience a game offers, it is the rulebook that determines how that experience is communicated. Rules are very crucial for playing board games; as Schell (2008) asserts, “A game is not just defined by its rules, a game is its rules” (p. 149). Board game rulebooks outline the mechanics of play, resolve possible questions that players might have, provide helpful guides, and help the game to reach more people and markets (Rendón Arboleda, 2025). Rulebooks typically contain texts, illustrative photographs, manuals, and additional relevant information. Since rulebooks contain many layers, “Perhaps the most overt multimodality is found in the rulebook itself” (Bartels, 2023, p. 20). This multimodality causes the understanding of the rulebook to be dependent on all of its layers and shows the importance of examining all the layers together. Damaskinidis (2015) believes that the meaning of a multimodal text is understood through the interplay of multiple semiotic modes on a single surface like a paper, whereas monomodal materials rely solely on written language in paragraphs (p. 23).

Methodology

The English board game, *Modern Art*, and its localized version هنر مدرن (Honare Modern), were chosen for the aim of this study. *Modern Art* was selected as the focus of this study, because, on the one hand, it holds a strong rating on BoardGameGeek, and on the other hand, the extent of localization observed in its Persian version is significant. The game is categorized under card games and economic games. Moreover, it is considered a strategy board game. *Modern Art* was first published in German in 1992. The creator of this board game is Reiner Knizia. It is played in the form of an auction, and the cards of the game are paintings of famous painters; therefore, this board game is highly connected to a country’s culture and art.

This study aims to answer the following question based on the chosen board game: What are the linguistic, semiotic, cultural and narrative differences between the original and localized versions of the board game?

Four considerations of Taylor (2016) were used as the main framework for this study. Since board game rulebooks are considered to be multimodal, this framework provides a strong foundation for analyzing them. It can be used for analyzing linguistic and non-linguistic features of a material, which in this study would be rulebooks. Rulebooks contain written texts, photos, symbols, and other modes of transferring information. For the localization of a rulebook, all these modes should be taken into consideration and transformed carefully where needed, and as a result, this framework can help examine these changes.

Data Analysis Procedure

This study contains both verbal and non-verbal data which was taken from the rulebooks of two English and Persian versions of the game. Four groups of elements were assembled and analyzed according to the framework proposed by Taylor (2016), which focuses on four types of elements in multimodal texts: linguistic, semiotic, cultural and narrative.

For each element, different sets of data needed to be collected. The data for the textual elements were obtained from the text of the story, the explanation of the aim of the game, the description of how to prepare the game, the introduction of the game components, the general and specific rules, the instructions on how to play, and an example of the gameplay. These constitute the first part of the rulebook for this board game. However, the second part of the rulebook, covering nearly twenty pages, is dedicated to introducing the artists whose works are featured in the board game, and also includes an art book showcasing their pieces. Although this section appears to the same extent in the localized rulebook, the artists and their artworks are entirely different. In the localized version, Iranian artists are introduced, and their paintings are presented; therefore, there is no direct equivalence. In terms of translational linguistic analysis Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) list of translation techniques were adapted. It includes adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalent, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition and variation.

However, as mentioned earlier, a rulebook does not contain only linguistic elements. It also includes numerous semiotic elements, such as photos, symbols, images of components, artworks, photos of artists, and semiotic features applied to words, such as boldness and italicization. All these elements were collected from both rulebooks. They were then compared to determine which of the following conditions had occurred: 1. Added 2. Changed 3. Omitted, 4. Compensated, and 5. Kept. These five conditions were selected because they encompass all the possible situations that could occur with these elements.

For analyzing semiotic elements, the visual language matrix proposed by Kostelnick and Roberts (2011) was used. This matrix identifies different types of changes in visual elements by distinguishing three modes, which are textual, graphic, and spatial. It also includes there are four levels, which are intra-level, inter-level, extra-level, and supra-level. Together, these categories produce twelve possible types of changes that can occur in visual elements.

Some of these types of changes were eliminated from the analysis of this study because they proved to be irrelevant. For this study, two pairs of changes were merged based on their similarities and the same function that they offered for board game rulebooks. Ultimately, the matrix was reorganized into five groups to more effectively align with the analysis of board game rulebook localization and the data were analyzed based on these five types of changes. The resulting groups, together with their corresponding modes and levels, are: 1. Textual mode/intra-level: micro-level textual form: style, size, weight, and posture of letters, numbers, and symbols, 2. Graphic mode/ intra-level: marks: punctuation, underscoring; iconicity of letters and words, 3. Textual mode/ supra-level: macro-level

serial and segmenting devices: section titles, numbers; page headers, pagination, 4. Spatial mode/ supra-level: cohesion of entire document over several planes: page breaks, size; location of extra-textuals within text, 5. Graphic mode/ supra-level: coding marks unifying pages or sections of text: line work, color, icons, logos, tabs.

At the cultural level, culture-specific components, including character names, idiomatic expressions, mentions of artist names, subjects related to a specific country, and broader cultural notions, were identified and analyzed to determine whether they matched the target culture. Cultural elements and their changes were presented only in the form of qualitative data. However, to describe the type of change for cultural elements, three categories were determined: unchanged (retained in their original form without any modification), changed but not culturally adapted (altered linguistically but without aligning with the target culture), and changed and culturally adapted (modified to align both linguistically and culturally with the norms of the target culture).

The final set of elements that were assessed in this study consisted of narrative elements. Since these elements must be viewed holistically rather than as separate components, the data were presented in a qualitative form, and they were not quantified. For this assessment, the general storyline was checked to determine if the story had changed after the translation. To describe the type of change for these elements, two categories of types of changes were needed, unchanged (the general storyline was kept the same) and changed (the general storyline was changed).

Findings and Discussion

The localization of this board game was carried out by the company سرزمین ذهن زیبا [The Land of Beautiful Mind]. It should be mentioned that only the rulebooks of these two versions were analyzed for this study. The details of the versions are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Rulebooks' Specifications

No.	Name	Version	Company	Year
1	<i>Modern Art</i>	English	Hans im Glück + 22 more	1992
2	هنر مدرن (Honare Modern)	Persian	The land of beautiful mind	Unknown

Linguistic Dimension

Table 2 provides three extracts from the *Modern Art* rulebook, along with their corresponding sentences from the Persian rulebook. These samples are not intended to be exhaustive; rather, they are representative instances that illustrate how linguistic choices are shaped by broader cultural and functional considerations in the localization process.

Table 2. Linguistic Dimension Samples

No.	English Sentence	Persian Sentence	Translation Technique
1	Rafael Silveira does very well in the first round.	استاد «علی اکبر صادقی» در دور نخست فوق العاده بود.	Adaptation (change of the name)
2	Cards in the players' hands are not discarded between rounds.	ولی کارتهایی که هنوز در «دست» بازیکنان هستند، برای دور بعدی در دست بازیکنان باقی میمانند.	Modulation (change of point of view)
3	For now, players will just be auctioning off the paintings.	---	Reduction (omission of the unit)

Although many concepts have remained seemingly intact in the localized version of this board game, the sentences have undergone numerous changes to suit the target audience and enhance comprehensibility. These changes indicate that the localization strategy prioritizes functional clarity over formal equivalence. Some sentences were completely omitted as instances of reduction, one example of which can be seen in the third row of the table. In such cases, the meaning was conveyed through other sentences rather than through direct translation.

The names of painters and individuals in examples of gameplay were all changed, which were considered instances of adaptation. This holistic replacement of personal names goes beyond stylistic preference and reflects a culturally motivated effort to localize gameplay scenarios, allowing Iranian players to engage more easily with examples by situating them within a familiar cultural framework. On the other hand, changes in point of view were mostly cases of modulation, such as the example presented in the second row. The original sentence states “cards are not discarded”; however, in the translation, it states “کارت‌ها در دست بازیکنان باقی می‌مانند”, which reflects a shift in point of view and, therefore, a case of modulation. This modulation aligns with Persian instructional discursive norms, which often favor explicit affirmation over implicit negation, particularly in rule-based texts.

All the translation techniques used for the translation of the sentences and phrases of the original rulebook were counted and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Translation Techniques

No.	Translation Technique	Frequency of Usage	Percentage of Usage
1	Borrowing	1	0.8%
2	Compensation	1	0.8%
3	Particularization	7	5.7%
4	Generalization	5	4%
5	Discursive creation	2	1.6%
6	Calque	3	2.4%
7	Reduction	29	23.7%
8	Amplification	23	18.8%
9	Adaptation	25	20.4%
10	Modulation	8	6.5%
11	Linguistic compression	3	2.4%
12	Variation	3	2.4%
13	Transposition	3	2.4%
14	Linguistic amplification	9	7.3%

The most frequently used technique for translating the text of the rulebook was reduction. In the context of board game rulebooks, reduction should not be interpreted as a loss of meaning but rather as a strategic adaptation aimed at improving usability and readability. Several sentences were completely omitted from the translated rulebook of the localized board game, such as “number of cards dealt at the beginning:” which appeared above a table in the rulebook. This table provided instructions regarding how many cards should be dealt to each player. In the Persian version, only the table was included. Moreover, many sentences were not fully translated, and they underwent reduction in the translation process.

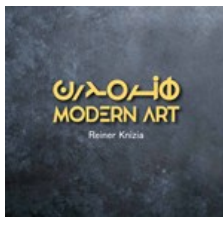
Two other techniques that were used most frequently were adaptation and amplification, respectively. The high frequency of adaptation underscores the centrality of culture in, as culturally specific references were consistently reconfigured to resonate with Iranian collective culture. For example, instances of changing names to Iranian names were considered cases of adaptation.

Other techniques were used far less. However, linguistic amplification, modulation, and particularization together constituted almost twenty percent of the techniques employed. Taken together, this distribution suggests that linguistic variation in the localized rulebook is not random but indeed oriented toward cultural accessibility, instructional clarity, and player engagement. Seen in this light, it reinforces the view that linguistic choices in board game localization are ultimately governed by cultural and functional priorities rather than textual fidelity.

Semiotic Dimension

There are many semiotic elements in both versions and they were compared to examine how they changed during localization. Three examples of this comparison are presented in Table 4. It should be mentioned that these instances might include other types of changes as well which are not the focus of this section.

Table 4. Semiotic Changes Samples

No.	English Unit	Persian Unit	State	Place in Matrix
1	Without letting any other player see your bid, hold out a closed fist with your bid hidden inside.	در هر صورت، هیچ بازیکنی نباید از مبلغ داخل مشت شما (چه ۰ دلار چه ۱.۰۰۰.۰۰۰ دلار) باخبر شود!!	(Exclamation mark/ exclamation mark) Added/ Added	Intra-level/ graphic mode
2			(Picture) Omitted	Supra-level/ spatial mode
3			Changed	Supra-level/ graphic mode

Semiotic changes can occur at different levels and across various modes, and they may take different forms, such as additions and alternations. In the localized version of this rulebook, many exclamation marks were added to increase emphasis, with each exclamation mark counted as a single instance. To assess the images at the supra-level and within the spatial mode, the location of pictures was examined. In some cases, such as the example presented in the second row of Table 4, the image was completely omitted, and only the name of the board was written on the page. Therefore, it was the case of an omitted state. At the top of every page, there was a line containing the name of the board game, included throughout the rulebook to keep it consistent. Although this feature appeared in both English and Persian versions, it was modified in the localized version.

In Table 5, the changes of semiotic elements along with their localization state are presented. At last, the numbers written show how many semiotic changes have occurred in the process of localization of this rulebook.

Table 5. Semiotic Changes

Semiotic Elements	Added	Changed	Omitted	Compensated	Kept
Italic	-	4	15	-	11
Bold	-	-	18	-	25
Underlined	-	-	-	-	-

Exclamation mark	58	-	-	-	2
Headings	-	-	1	-	20
Location of extra-textual elements	3	3	1	-	1
Page colors	2	1	-	-	4
Page watermark	-	-	-	-	-
Icons spread all over the page	2	4	-	-	-

The most noticeable number in Table 5 is fifty-eight added exclamation marks. The exclamation mark falls under the intra-level and graphic mode. Although only two exclamation marks were used in the English rulebook, numerous exclamation marks were added to Persian sentences to increase emphasis. Writing in italics is not very common in Persian, and fifteen italicized units were rendered in non-italic form; however, interestingly, eleven units that were not originally italicized became italic in the localized rulebook. This shift indicates a refunctionalization of typographic emphasis, adapted to Persian reading habits and expectations rather than mechanically reproducing source-text conventions.

Many bold units were kept, some were omitted, and none were added. Furthermore, most of the headings remained similar to those in the original rulebook. This relative stability suggests that higher-level structural markers were considered sufficiently neutral or functional across cultures, requiring minimal adaptation. Notably, there were no underlined units in either rulebook, and neither version contained watermarks.

Cultural Dimension

Because of its use of paintings and named artists, this board game is intrinsically and explicitly embedded in cultural production. In the localization version, the paintings and the artists were changed completely. These changes represent one of the most radical interventions observed in the localization process, as they directly affect the symbolic and cultural identity of the game. The cultural examples of these rulebooks are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Cultural Elements Samples

No.	English unit	Persian unit	State
1	15 cards Rafael Silveira	۱۴ تابلو کارت از استاد «آیدین آغداشلو»	Changed and culturally adapted
2	The Banker gives 100 k€ (100.000 €) to each player:	بانکدار، به هر بازیکن 100 \$ (یک صد هزار دلار) پول می‌دهد.	Changed but not culturally adapted
3			Changed and culturally adapted

Three possible outcomes may occur with cultural elements: the elements may remain unchanged, they may change without cultural adaptation, or they may change with cultural adaptation. In the localized version, the names of the artists were all changed to real Iranian artists' names, and their paintings were included in the rulebook of the board game. This systematic replacement goes beyond localization at the level of reference and constitutes a form of cultural re-anchoring, whereby the game's symbolic capital is relocated within the Iranian artistic tradition.

Likewise, the museums, which are important components of this board game, were changed and culturally adapted. For example, one of the museums in the original board game was Sao Paulo Museum; however, in the localized board game, this museum was replaced with Tehran Museum of

Contemporary Art. These are two instances of cultural elements that were changed and culturally adapted. In the second example, the currency unit in the English rulebook was Euro, but in the Persian version, it was changed to dollar. Unlike the adaptation of artists and museums, this change does not align fully with Iranian cultural norms and therefore falls into the category of change without cultural adaptation.

Since this board game is about art and artists of a country, it is highly related to a country's culture. In the original board game and its rulebook, real artists and artworks were used. The alteration of paintings and artists in the rulebook resulted in a deeper connection between the Iranian player and the game by invoking a sense of cultural familiarity. The localizers of this board game had taken permission from the creator of the game and all the artists whose works have been used in this board game before they localized it. However, there exist a few cases that have not been appropriately changed based on the cultural norms like the currency. The museums featured in this board game, which are important components, were mostly the same for both versions; only one was changed to an Iranian version, which was the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. The combination of different museums gave a sense of internationality to the localized version.

Narrative Dimension

The rulebook of this board game did not consist of a specific storyline based on its genre. Nevertheless, the explanation of the game's objectives and mechanics effectively serves as its implicit narrative, framing the roles, actions, and strategies of the players within a coherent situational context. Part of it can be viewed in Table 7.

Table 7. Narrative Structure Samples

No.	English Unit	Persian Unit	State of Narrative
1	In the game, players take on the role of a Museum that is trying to buy and sell paintings at the best price.	بازیکنان، موزه‌دارهایی هستند که تلاش می‌کنند تابلوهای نقاشی را به بهترین قیمت، خرید و فروش کنند.	Unchanged
2	Each round, paintings are auctioned by the players.	در هر دور، بازیکنان، تابلوهایی را به حراج می‌گذارند.	Unchanged

This section in the rulebook describes the role of the players and the situation in which they participate and thus can be considered as the narrative dimension of the board game. It could exist in two possible states: unchanged, where the original gameplay description is preserved, and changed, where adjustments may be made for localization or adaptation purposes. Two examples presented in Table 7 illustrate two narrative units that have not undergone any modifications.

Players take on the roles of museum owners and are required to choose a museum to place in front of them. Throughout the game, auctions provide opportunities for strategic decision-making, where players may acquire artworks to hold for future advantage and sell them at moments that maximize profit. This concept and narrative remained the same in the localized version. In fact, while several surface details of the board game were adapted to suit the target audience, the core narrative and underlying gameplay dynamics remained intact. This illustrates how localization can modify peripheral elements without altering the fundamental narrative structure of a game, preserving both the experiential and strategic essence intended by the original designers.

Taken together, the findings reveal a clear hierarchy of localization priorities. What distinguishes this localization from more conventional cases is the degree to which localization operates not as textual mediation but as cultural re-authorship. Rather than merely translating the rulebook, the localizers reconstructed the semiotic and cultural identity of the game while preserving its mechanical core. This

positions the Persian version closer to a culturally recontextualized edition than to a straightforward translation. This case supports the argument that localization, particularly in multimodal artifacts such as board games, must be understood as an interpretive and creative practice rather than a derivative one. The Persian version of *Modern Art* exemplifies how localization can function as cultural mediation, design adaptation, and experiential translation simultaneously.

Conclusion

The localization of *Modern Art* into its Persian version illustrates the challenges of adapting a multimodal text — in this case, the rulebook — for a different cultural context. While the Persian version underwent significant changes in semiotic and cultural elements, the linguistic components experienced lighter edits, and the narrative elements remained unchanged. Regarding linguistic elements, reduction, adaptation, and amplification were the most frequently used translation techniques. The overall meaning of sentences was largely preserved; however, details were often omitted or added to ensure clarity. In terms of semiotics, most images were modified, and numerous exclamation marks were added to heighten enthusiasm. Additionally, the text itself experienced several modifications, such as the use of bold type for certain words. At the cultural level, the Persian rulebook showed many differences from the original rulebook, appealing to Iranian norms, by using Iranian artworks. However, in some cases—such as the choice of the game’s currency—the changes were not exactly based on cultural norms. Finally, with respect to narrative elements, the board game did not undergo changes, and the descriptions of the board game and the roles of players remained consistent between the Persian version and the original version.

Therefore, it can be observed that most of the changes in this board game occurred in semiotic and cultural elements, reflecting a tendency to make the game visually familiar, interesting, and culturally appropriate for its target players. By preserving the fundamental mechanics and narrative, the game successfully delivered the same gameplay experience as the original version. It can be concluded that maintaining the essence of a board game while ensuring that it is understandable, and culturally suitable for players is of significant importance.

This study might hopefully offer insights not only to researchers and localizers working in this area but also to anyone interested in the subject of board game localization. Future studies may explore how multimodal design elements, such as layout or typography, influence players’ comprehension and ultimately affect their gameplay experience.

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Hybridity in Translation: The Case of *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America*

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Abstract

This study examines hybridity in translation through a case study of *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America*. It analyzes how references to American and Iranian cultures are rendered in the Persian translation and how these choices shape the hybrid character of the text for different readerships. To this end, the English source text and its Persian translation are compared to identify the translation strategies applied to hybrid elements reflecting Iranian and American cultures. The findings show that material culture, such as food, clothing, housing, and transportation, constitutes the most prominent category of hybrid elements. Transference is the most frequently used strategy overall, particularly for elements reflecting American culture, indicating a predominantly foreignizing approach. In contrast, hybrid items reflecting Iranian culture are more often translated through cultural equivalence and reduction. Interpreted in light of Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization, the results suggest that the translator preserves the hybrid nature of the memoir by maintaining the foreignness of American elements while reducing familiar Iranian ones.

Keywords: Hybridity, memoir, cultural references, domestication, foreignization

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Introduction

The intricate relationship between language and culture, particularly as manifested in hybrid texts, forms the core of this study. This research investigate a memoir written by an Iranian author raised in America, focusing on the unique challenges posed by the hybrid elements as they are conveyed in English and subsequently translated into Persian. This research scrutinizes the translation strategies adopted by the translator, examining how they navigate the transfer of both familiar (Iranian) and foreign (American) cultural elements. The underlying premise is that cultural hybrid elements serve as vital markers of national identity, thought processes, and societal norms, and that their hybrid presentation in a memoir offers a compelling lens through which to understand the shifts in mindset and experience influenced by different cultural landscapes.

Literature Review

The foundational concept for examining textuality and hybridity lies in understanding the definition of a hybrid text. As Schöffner and Adab (2001, p. 169) articulate, “a hybrid text is a text that results from a translation process. It shows features that somehow seem out of place, strange, or unusual for the receiving culture, i.e., the target culture”. This inherent characteristic of translated works, particularly those rich in culturally specific items (CSIs), positions readers in a unique “dual space”. Shams Nejati et al. (2024, p. 60) elaborate on this, stating, “this ‘dual space’ phenomenon – the coexistence of original and translated cultural elements – functions as both a literary device and a translation challenge”.

A direct correlation exists between diasporic experiences and the hybridity observed in authored texts and their subsequent translations. Mollanazar and Parham (2010, p. 32) posit that “hybridity is a phenomenon believed to emerge in specific cultural spaces like postcolonial communities and diasporas”. In their study, Mollanazar and Parham (2010) further quantified this, reporting 180 instances of descriptive approaches, or hybridizations, within a Persian translation of a particular book. The significance of the selected book for this research is underscored by its notable richness in hybrid items.

This novel serves as a compelling illustration of a hybrid text, manifesting hybridity at both micro and macro levels. The narrative eloquently describes the intersection and interplay of two distinct cultures—Iranian and American—forming a story centered on identity, culture, and family. (Parham, 2010, p. 88)

For hybrid texts arising from diaspora contexts, Parham (2011) established a significant distinction between concrete and abstract expressions of diaspora. The translation and interpretation of these texts are best guided by specific theoretical frameworks. Notably, Fillmore’s Scenes and Frames Semantics (SFS) has been instrumental in detailing the processes of hybridization, rehybridization, and dehybridization (Birjandi & Parham, 2015; Mollanazar & Parham, 2009).

The profound influence of culture and culturally specific items on translation and the resultant hybridity is undeniable in contemporary discourse. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990), as cited in Bassnett (2007, p. 13), emphasized this interconnectedness, stating, “the object of study has been redefined; what is studied is text embedded within its network of both source and target cultural signs”. The significance of studying culture within translation has long been recognized. Nida (1964), in a passage cited by Bassnett (2011, p. 78), articulated the inseparable nature of language and culture: “a language cannot be understood ‘outside the total framework of the culture, of which the language in question is an integral part”.

Acquiring a culture can be achieved through various methods. Anthropologists suggest that “culture may be learned through formal or unconscious parenting, socialization or other inculcation through long term contact with others. It then becomes unconsciously shared amongst the group” (Katan, 2009, p. 74). Crucially for translation, Katan (2009, p. 82), referencing Agar (2006), highlights that “culture becomes visible only when differences appear”, implying that translators must effectively convey these cultural distinctions to illuminate the nuances of the source culture.

The act of translation inherently possesses the potential to enrich and advance societies and cultures. Woodsworth (2013, p. 74) notes that “translation has done much to enrich, advance or strengthen individual societies, nations or cultures – through language, art, scientific thought or values that have been imported”. However, he also acknowledges that “the impact of translation, however, can also be construed as negative”.

Every translation endeavor is underpinned by a rationale, as Toury (1978) posited that “translation activities should be regarded as having cultural significance” (as cited in Bassnett, 2007, p. 18). The profound cultural significance of translation is particularly evident in its role in fostering intercultural interaction. Bassnett and Lefevere (1998), cited in Bassnett (2007, p. 18), asserted that “in the 1970s, translation was seen, as it undoubtedly is, as ‘vital to the interaction between cultures’”. They further elaborated on the importance of studying this cultural exchange (as cited in Bassnett, 2007, p. 19).

Language and culture are fundamental in shaping individual experiences and perspectives. Sturge (2009, p. 67) points out that “[...] it will be difficult to grasp and convey experiences that take place within a different system of filters, outside our own frames of reference”. Consequently, translation transcends mere linguistic mediation, encompassing the transfer of intentions and perceptions. Katan (2004), as cited in Bassnett (2011, pp. 81-82), believed this role is complex, requiring translators “to involve interpreting not just the expressions of each cultural group, but also the intentions, perceptions, and expectations, which is much more problematic”.

Determining the extent of translator intervention is a critical consideration. Katan (2009, p. 70) suggests that “the extent to which a translator should intervene (i.e. interpret and manipulate rather than operate a purely linguistic transfer) will be in accordance with our beliefs about which frame(s) most influence translation”. In line with this, some scholars view translations as forms of rewriting. Bassnett and Lefevere, as quoted by Marinetti (2011, p. 27), stated that “the concept of ‘manipulation’ goes hand in hand with the notion of rewriting in helping to redefine translation after the cultural turn. Translation is rewriting and ‘rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power’”.

Translators are often viewed as mediators, facilitating cultural exchange and resolving cross-cultural barriers. Firoozeh Dumas’s endeavor to bridge cultural divides for her American readership, while commendable, introduces complexities that challenge the translation of her work into Persian. This aligns with Newmark’s (1981) concept of ‘the cultural value’ of translation, and resonates with the International Federation of Translators’ (n.d.) bylaws, which similarly posit that translation’s value lies in its capacity to “assist in the spreading of culture throughout the world” (as cited in Katan, 2009, p. 71).

A significant consideration in translation is the inherent difficulty in achieving perfect comprehension of the source text, irrespective of the strategies employed. Lefevere (1999) addresses this challenge, posing critical questions: “Do the grids always define the ways in which cultures will be able to understand each other? Are the grids, to put it in terms that may well be too strong, the prerequisite for all understanding or not?” (as cited in Bassnett, 2007, p. 20). When discussing translation frameworks and the transfer of culture, certain requirements are paramount. Nida and Taber (1969) outlined these essential criteria for a translation: “1. Making sense; 2. Conveying the spirit and manner of the original; 3. Having a natural and easy form of expression; 4. Producing a similar response” (as cited in Halverson, 2010, p. 379). Achieving adequate translation necessitates a deep contextual

understanding, which in turn enables translatability. As Bassnett (2011, p. 78) explains, “without this kind of contextual understanding, which necessarily involves rethinking one’s own position and mediating between the potential gaps created by fundamental cultural differences, adequate translation will not take place”.

Perspectives on translatability diverge. One viewpoint suggests that certain textual features, particularly cultural aspects, render translation impossible. Hermans (2009, p. 301) posits, “languages are embedded in the cultural environment of which they are a constitutive part”. Conversely, another perspective argues that all texts and culture-specific items are translatable, with differences arising solely from the strategies employed. Jakobson (1959), as cited by Hermans (2009, p. 300), believed that “all cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language’ and ‘[l]anguages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey”.

Chesterman (1997) distinguishes between two key types of translation strategies: “global and local strategies, and between comprehension and production strategies” (as cited in Gambier, 2010, p. 414). The decision-making process for selecting an appropriate strategy can be complex, as accurately transferring the source text’s meaning is crucial. Translators must navigate choices that may prioritize the source text or the target audience’s cultural context. Consequently, the translator’s subjectivity becomes significant, and the intended function of the translation within the target culture guides these choices, reflecting a departure from source-focused theories and signaling a cultural turn in translation studies (Bassnett, 2007, p. 14).

Gambier (2010, p. 413) notes that various scholars use different terminology to describe the strategies translators employ. Broadly, translation strategies can be categorized into three types: “1. Shifting between languages; 2. Solving a problem; 3. Translation working process” (Gambier, 2010, pp. 413-415). The objective of translation is often to introduce culture-specific items from the source language to the target language. While foreignization is a common strategy, translations often undergo domestication. Venuti (1998) suggests that domestication can represent a standardization of translated language or may be an inherent aspect of all translation, stating, “translations, in other words, inevitably perform a work of domestication” (as cited in Paloposki, 2011, pp. 40-41).

Writers may choose to compose multilingual works for a variety of reasons, stemming from personal life experiences or the societal contexts in which they develop. Meylaerts (2013, p. 522) observes that “a writer’s multilingualism may be the result of his/her personal life story and/or of the specific societal context in which he/she grows up”. The prevalence of English as a global language means that many non-native English writers opt for English to achieve international success (Bassnett, 2011, p. 80).

Writers like Firoozeh Dumas can be categorized as travel writers. Bassnett (2007, p. 22) describes the travel writer as operating within a “hybrid space, a space in-between cultures, just as the translator operates in a space between languages, a dangerous transgressive space that is often referred to as ‘no-man’s land’”. The study of travel and its connection to translation presents a novel and intriguing research avenue. Bassnett (2007, pp. 22-23) highlights the significant, yet under-researched, relationship between these two fields, noting that “the travel writer and the translator are major elements in shaping the perspective one culture has of another, and it is interesting that so little research should have been undertaken to date on the relationship between travel and translation”.

Methodology

This research adopts a descriptive approach to investigate hybridity in Firoozeh Dumas’s memoir, *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America* (2003). The study examines the phenomenon of hybridity as manifested in the source text and its Persian translation by Mohammad Soleimaninia.

The selection of this novel was motivated by its critical acclaim, including bestseller status and award nominations (Thurber Prize, PEN/USA Award), and its rich portrayal of experiences blending Iranian and American cultures with a distinct humorous tone. The chosen Persian translation is the first authorized rendition, noted for its preface by the author and a significant degree of domestication, making it a pertinent subject for analyzing the rendering of hybrid elements. The analysis is based on the latest available editions of both the original English text (187 pages, approximately 65,000 words) and its Persian translation (192 pages, approximately 60,000 words).

Data collection focused on identifying and analyzing expressions that exemplify the text's hybridity. To achieve this, the analytical framework integrates Newmark's (1988) categorizations of culture-specific items, including those related to 1. ecology (Animals, plants, local winds, mountains, plains, ice, etc.), 2. material culture (Food, clothes, housing, towns, transport, and communications), 3. social culture (work and leisure), 4. organizations, customs, and ideas (Political, social, legal, religious, artistic), as well as 5. gestures and habits. These identified elements were then analyzed using Newmark's (1988) seventeen translation procedures: 1. transference, 2. naturalization, 3. cultural equivalent, 4. functional equivalent, 5. descriptive equivalent, 6. synonymy, 7. through-translation, 8. shift or transposition, 9. modulation, 10. recognized translation, 11. translation label, 12. compensation, 13. componential analysis, 14. reduction and expansion, 15. paraphrase, 16. couplets, and 17. notes, additions, glosses.

Furthermore, the study situates the translator's choices within the theoretical framework of domestication and foreignization (Schleiermacher, 1838, as cited in Venuti, 1995). This perspective, particularly Venuti's (1995) conceptualization of domestication as an ethnocentric reduction and foreignization as an emphasis on cultural difference, is used to evaluate how the Persian translation negotiates the source text's hybrid cultural expressions.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the corpus of the study resulted in the identification 350 hybrid elements. Among this, 285 focused on American culture and 65 on Iranian culture. These instances were categorized following Newmark's (1988) typology, and the corresponding translation strategies were evaluated through a comparative analysis of the source text and its Persian rendition. A few examples of the analysis of these hybrid elements are presented below.

Example 1: *And my parents still don't understand why teenagers want to be cool so they can be hot.* (p. 12)

برای پدر و مادر هنوز قابل درک نیست چرا نوجوان‌ها می‌خواهند cool باشند برای اینکه hot محسوب شوند. (p. 17)

In this example, the words *cool* and *hot* are translated through the strategy of transference.

Example 2: *More important, his Wednesday evening bowling nights had forced him to miss The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour.* (p. 16)

مهم‌تر از آن، برنامه بولینگ چهارشنبه عصرها باعث شده بود از سریال کمدی سانی و شر عقب بماند. (p. 22)

In this example, there is a use of couplets—the integration of two or more translation procedures—which facilitated the conveyance of complex cultural referents. The rendering of *The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour* as *شر و سانی کمدی سانی*, supplemented by a clarifying footnote, utilizes a combination of expansion and communicative glossing to bridge the gap in cultural literacy.

Example 3: *My father and I set out for Montgomery Ward.* (p. 44)

من و پدر راهی فروشگاه شدیم. (p. 50)

Here *Montgomery Ward* is translated into فروشگاه, which is an instance of the application of reduction strategy.

These three examples included hybrid elements that focused on American cultures. Example 4 is an instance of hybrid item focusing on Iranian culture.

Example 4: *We place them next to the stuffed turkey with all the trimmings.* (p. 74)

همه غذاها چیده می شوند کنار بوقلمون شکمپر و مخلفاتش. (p. 80)

In this instance, cultural equivalent was employed. This strategy was dominant in rendering Iranian hybrid elements. Here *trimmings* is rendered as مخلفاتش which is a term that captures the domestic culinary lexicon familiar to Persian readers.

Results and Discussion

The study's findings are categorized into two primary classes: hybrid elements reflecting American culture and those reflecting Iranian culture. For the American cultural elements (see Figure 1), 'material culture' emerged as the most frequent category. This category encompasses various aspects of daily life, including food, clothing, housing, towns, transportation, and communication. Following closely was 'social culture,' which includes references to universities, magazines, and movies. 'Organizations, customs, and ideas' and 'ecology' were the third and fourth most frequent categories, respectively, with no instances of 'gestures and habits' identified within this class.

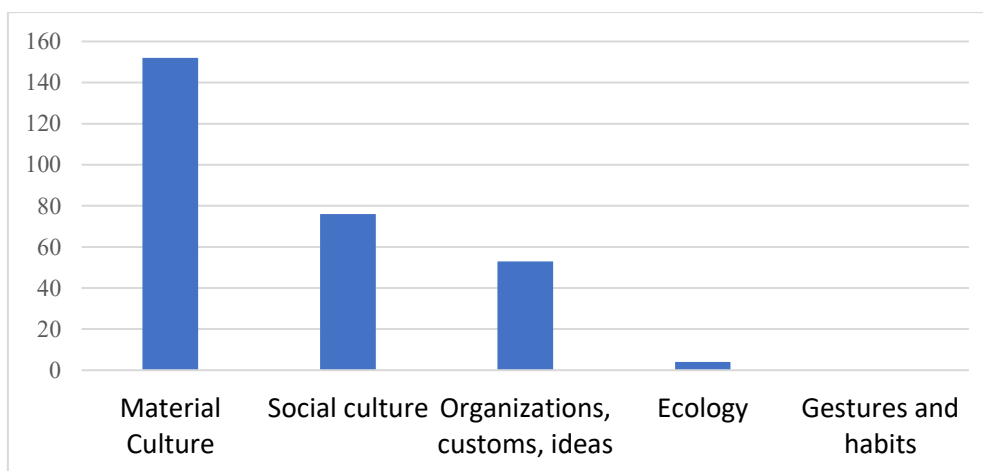


Figure 1. Frequency of Hybrid Elements Focusing on American Culture

Turning to the second class of data, which comprises hybrid elements reflecting Iranian culture (see Figure 2), 'material culture' again demonstrated the highest frequency. The second most prevalent category was 'organizations, customs, and ideas'. In this context, 'ecology' appeared as the fourth most frequent category, with a limited number of references to mountains and earthquakes. Similar to the American cultural elements, no instances of 'gestures and habits' were found among the hybrid elements echoing Iranian culture.

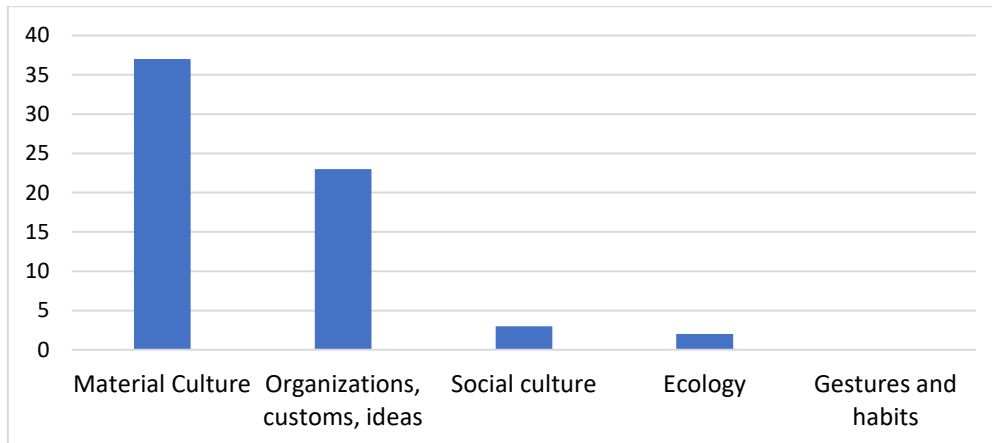


Figure 2. Frequency of Hybrid Elements Focusing on Iranian Culture

The most frequently employed strategy for translating hybrid elements reflecting American culture was transference (see Figure 3). The source text contained a significant number of names for food, films, ceremonies, and places, many of which may not be familiar to an Iranian audience. The second most common strategy was the use of couplets, often integrating transference with supplementary notes, additions, glosses, expansion, and occasionally reduction. While the translator did employ domestication strategies such as modulation and cultural equivalents, the high incidence of transference and couplets incorporating transference indicates a predominant approach of foreignization for hybrid elements reflecting American culture.

For hybrid elements echoing Iranian culture, the translator predominantly utilized cultural equivalents. To avoid redundant information for a familiar audience, the reduction strategy was employed as the second most frequent approach (see Figure 3).

Considering the analyzed data, the overall translation strategy for the novel appears to aim at foreignizing hybrid elements reflecting American culture while retaining a degree of domestication for hybrid elements echoing Iranian culture by simplifying or omitting elements presumed to be widely understood by the target readership.

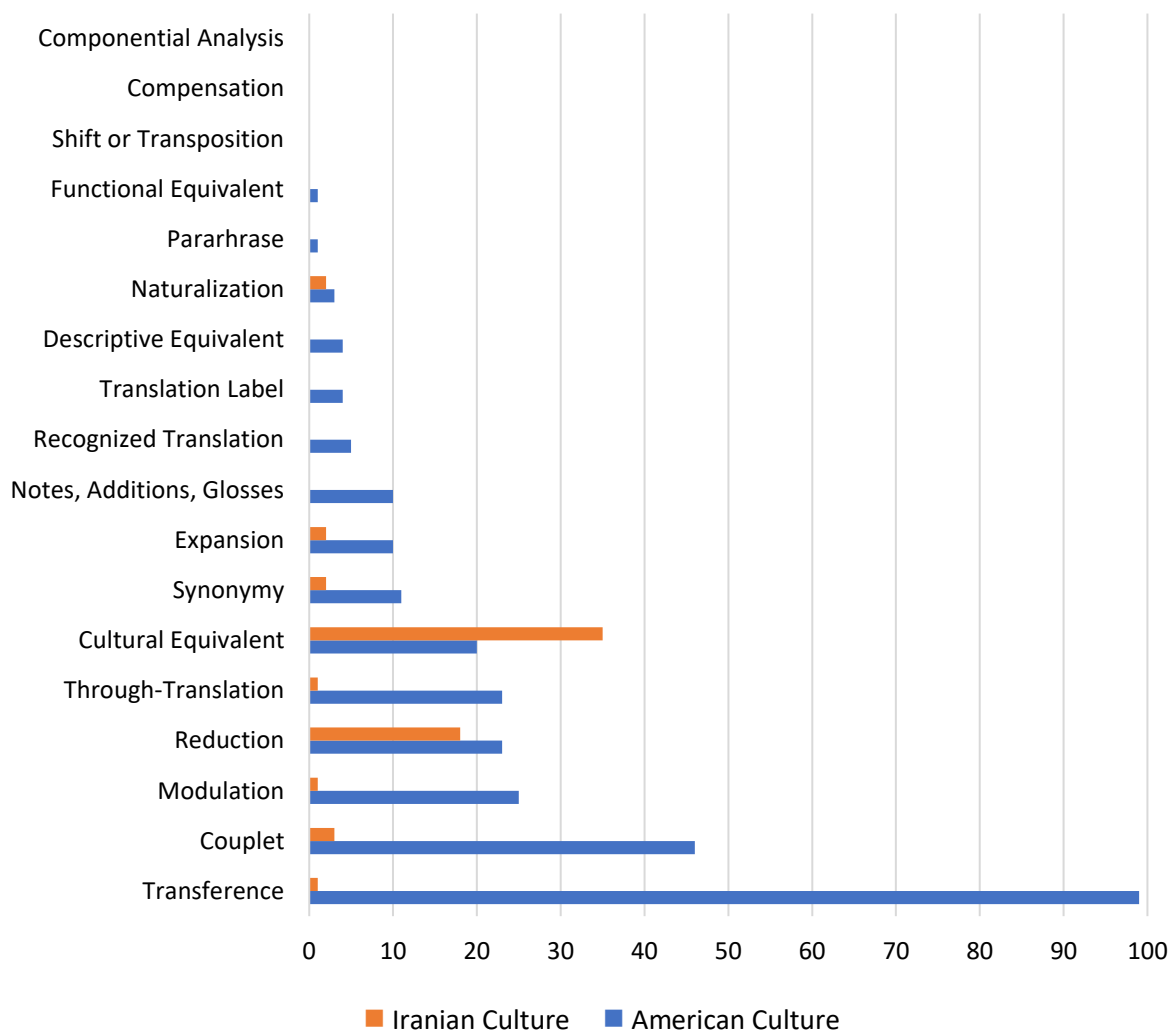


Figure 3. Frequency of Strategies Used to Translate Hybrid Elements Focusing on American and Iranian Cultures

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the phenomenon of hybridity within the text, categorizing the hybrid elements and analyzing the translation strategies employed, based on Newmark's framework. The primary objective was to ascertain whether the Persian translation of the book felt natural or alienating to a Persian readership. Furthermore, the research sought to identify the most prevalent translation strategies used by the translator when rendering the text from English into Persian, examining the differences in strategy application between hybrid elements echoing Iranian and American cultures. Ultimately, the study aimed to determine if the translated version, characterized by its hybridity, successfully conveyed a similar effect to the original English source.

The analysis revealed that 'material culture' constituted the largest category of hybrid elements. The predominant translation strategy observed was transference, indicating the translator's effort to foreignize the translation and achieve an effect on the target audience comparable to that of the source novel. For hybrid elements specifically echoing Iranian culture, the translator most frequently employed cultural equivalents. Additionally, reductions were used for certain explanations of Iranian culture in the source text, while expansions were applied to clarify foreign cultural items. The

significant use of couplets incorporating transference, along with footnotes, further highlighted the translator's inclination to preserve the American cultural aspects of the source text.

The distribution of translation strategies for hybrid elements demonstrated a foreignization approach when dealing with American cultural elements, through transference. Conversely, for familiar Iranian cultural elements, the translator opted for reduction and cultural equivalents. Generally, the translator aimed to maintain the distinct hybrid nature of the text by adopting a foreignization strategy. With the exception of the untranslated chapter, the overarching goal was for Iranian readers to experience and comprehend the foreign culture as presented in the source text, while being mindful of the religious and cultural sensitivities of Iranian society.

This research offers valuable insights for those studying hybrid translations, the potential unfamiliarity of Persian translated versions, the translation of memoirs, cross-cultural differences, and the strategies employed in translating hybrid elements. It also addresses whether translators of books rich in cultural specificities effectively convey the same impact to their readers.

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Translation and the Promotion of Science at Dar al-Fonun School in Iran Under the Qajars

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Abstract

The present study examines the role of translation in promoting new sciences in Dar al-Fonun, the first modern school of higher education in Iran during the Nasser period (1831-1896). Amir Kabir, the chief minister under Nasser al-Din Shah – following his modernization programs for the development of Iran subsequent to the Western industrial revolution after which Iran experienced a delay in benefiting from advancement in science and technology during the early 19th century – established Dar al-Fonun school in a Western and European style with the aim of promoting and strengthening science and knowledge so that Iranian specialists could be trained in various scientific fields. As a result, translation became one of the tools for introducing modern sciences to Iran in order to fight against the country's backwardness in various fields. The period covered by this research is from 1851 to 1896 – from the foundation of the school to the end of the Nasser era. The results of the study, conducted by using library method, second-hand sources and their content analysis, show that translation in various ways enabled Iranian students to benefit from modern higher education and after graduation, they served as experts in various fields, making a huge contribution to the expansion of modern sciences for the development of the country.

Keywords: Dar al-Fonun School, promotion of sciences, Qajar, Nasser era

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1. Introduction

Translation has functioned as a vital tool in establishing scientific, educational and socio-political infrastructures across various historical eras, a role which can also be seen in Iran under the Qajars during the 19th century. This period can be regarded as an important era in the history of Iran, because the country witnessed dramatic changes that were unprecedented in its history. Due to some events, Iran became increasingly aware of the developments in certain Western countries as well as its own backwardness. This awareness initiated fundamental changes in Iran and propelled the country toward modernization. In the processes of modernizing Iran, some attempts were made by both governmental and non-governmental institutions. The present research explores one of those efforts made by the Qajar government to modernize the country through education by the establishment of a modern school in which translation played a prominent role.

2. Education in Iran Under the Qajars

The founder of the Qajar dynasty was Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar, who ruled over Iran from 1789-1797. After Agha Muhammad Khan, six Qajar kings succeeded to the throne: Fath-Ali Shah (r. 1797-1834), Muhammad Shah (r. 1834-1848), Nasser al-Din Shah (r. 1848-1896), Mozaffar al-Din Shah (r. 1896-1907), Mohammad Ali Shah (r. 1907-1909) and Ahmad Shah (r. 1909-1925). Altogether, the Qajar dynasty ruled over Iran about 136 years. The present research primarily covers 1851 to 1896 time period – from the foundation of Dar al-Fonun school to the end of the Nasser era.

In the early 19th century, the country was in a bad situation in terms of literacy. “Illiteracy [rate] was very high; more than 90% of the population was illiterate” (Fard Saidi, 1974, p. 14). The rate of literacy was less than 5% among urban settlers. More importantly, this rate was limited to three groups: the courtiers, the clerics and the merchants (Zibakalam, 1394/2015). Educational facilities were very poor. The educational system of the period was traditional, based on which elementary education was provided in the *maktabs* (literally, the place of writing) run by clergies called *molla*.

In *maktabs*, under the tutelage of clergies, the students first learned the alphabet and then the recitation of the Holy Qur’an, ethics and Sharia law; however, mathematics and other kinds of empirical sciences were not taught there (Madani, 2015). The knowledge of the literate was limited to reading and writing; hence, there was no ground for the intellectual growth of the majority of people. By the first half of the 19th century – before the foundation of Dar al-Fonun – politics, economics, chemistry, biology, physics, medicine, etc. were not known in Iran. The number of periodicals and books on modern sciences was scarce and no communication tools existed in the country (Zibakalam, 1394/2015). Iranians’ knowledge about the world was little and they were not aware of the Renaissance, the discovering of the new lands (such as the Americas), the scientific revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the Great French Revolution (Zibakalam, 1394/2015).

Although in the previous centuries during which the East was the transmitter of science to the Western world, in this period due to the Western Industrial Revolution a shift was seen – the East needed to access the Western scientific knowledge and Iran was not an exception (Farahzad & Adili, 2019). According to Alam and Biseda (1393/2014, p. 254):

Nineteenth-century Iran was a country that, after years of chaos resulting from the collapse of the Safavid dynasty and the rise of different individuals to power in short intervals, witnessed the formation of a new government called the Qajar dynasty. This rise to power coincided with an encounter with a new and civilized world that was full of industrial, scientific, and military discoveries and that greatly influenced Iran, which due to its strategic position, was in relation to the major powers of the time.

After the Industrial Revolution in the West (1790-1840) resulted in the development, modernization and industrialization of the Western countries, Iran – disconnected and isolated from the rest of the world in the early 19th century – suffered from retardedness scientifically, socially, politically, culturally and economically; one of the results of which was Iran’s loss in Russo-Persian wars (1804-1813) whose main reason was Russian advanced weapons and modern artillery.

The awareness developed among some of senior figures of the Qajar government concerning the characteristics of the new advanced world, especially the West, with its scientific, technical, and military advances, provided a favorable basis for beginning efforts to compensate for the backwardness. (Alam & Biseda, 1393/2014, p. 254)

Hence, after Iran’s defeat in the Russo-Persian wars, the early serious attempts were made to fight the presumed social, political, cultural, economic and scientific backwardness including commissioning the translation of a variety of books from different languages into Persian and dispatching students to European countries to educate specialists in various fields. At the beginning, several books on military materials concerning military equipment, war techniques, military regulations, etc. were commissioned, then other topics such as science, health, and history were added to the modernization agenda (Farahzad & Adili, 2019). Thus, translation became one of the early measures taken by the Qajar government to confront backwardness. However, according to Haddadian Moghaddam (2014, p. 53):

The institutionalization of translation did not take place until the establishment of [the]Dar al-Fonun [lit. the house of techniques] in 1851, the first modern school of higher education in Iran, thanks to the efforts of the reformist Amir Kabir (1807–1852), chief minister to Nasir al-Din Shah [the third king of the dynasty].

3. Establishment of Dar al-Fonun

The idea of establishing a secular school in European style to teach modern sciences in order to meet the basic needs of the Iranian society was first proposed by Amir Kabir in order to train “Iranian youth in modern military, scientific and bureaucratic disciplines” (Ekhtiar, 2001, cited in Atefmehr & Farahzad, 2021, p. 84). Amir Kabir, who had become familiar with the educational systems of Russia and the Ottoman Empire during his political missions to those countries, placed the expansion of new sciences and technologies as part of his reformist and modernization agenda. Furthermore, not satisfied with the previous efforts in dispatching the students to the European countries for not acquiring sufficient skills in the related fields and techniques, the high cost of living in Europe, the small number of the students and the need of the government for more specialized personnel, he decided to establish Dar al-Fonun (Mahboubi Ardakani, 1354/1975, cited in Alam & Biseda, 1393/2014) whose main reasons according to Pazouki (1395/ 2016, p. 13) were:

1. Training and educating knowledgeable and specialized individuals for the country
2. Organizing the army through training skilled personnel
3. Preventing the influence of British and Russian agents in Iran by cultivating the talents of Iranian youth, especially in the field of national politics
4. Changing the methods and procedures of traditional education and raising people familiar with modern sciences
5. Production of imported industrial products within the country, such as medicines, spermaceti candles, paper, crystal dishes, fabrics, etc.
6. Providing the necessary conditions for training informed and independent managers in the future

E'temad al-Saltaneh, the statesman, translator and author active during the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah, explains that:

Nasser al-Din Shah had always been concerned about educating Iranians all over the country; thus, to spread modern sciences, such as mathematics, natural sciences and chemistry as well as other discoveries of European scientists, the school of Dar al-Funun was built. (E'temad al-Saltaneh, 1295AH /1878, cited in Atefmehr & Farahzad, 2021, pp. 84-85)

In addition, in the Nasser era, the necessity for the establishment of secular schools was emphasized by the intellectuals of the period; moreover, many articles were being published in the newspapers in favor of establishing modern secular education. Those intellectuals saw Europe as the cradle of modern science and technology and believed that the reasons for the development of Western countries were their schools and their efficient educational systems; therefore, they considered the study of Western sciences as an essential pre-requisite to eliminate the widespread illiteracy, ignorance, backwardness and superstitions prevalent in the Iranian society. They saw the path of development in modern education through which the entire population could enjoy education to acquire modern knowledge.

Accordingly, after receiving positive feedback from Nasser al-Din Shah, Amir Kabir issued a decree to hire expert teachers most of whom were from central Europe where French was the language of diplomacy (Ruhbakhshan, 1987, cited in Bahri, 2011). So, French became the official language of Dar al-Fonun (Kamali, 1392/2013). Those teachers were hired to teach a variety of subjects such as medicine and surgery, engineering, mineralogy, agriculture, pharmacology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, military sciences, foreign languages, history, and geography (Hashemian, 1379/2011). However, at the beginning, language turned out to be a big problem as both the teachers and students could not communicate since neither the students were familiar with French nor the teachers knew Persian. To overcome the problem some solutions were sought through which translation played a great role. Karimi-Hakkak (1998) acknowledges this significant role of translation and states, "translation as well as interpretation began to play a crucial role in the evolution of pedagogical processes in modern Iran" (p. 518).

4. Solutions Sought to Overcome Language Problems

The content analysis of the second hand sources gave rise to the identification of five solutions to overcome language problems which are discussed below.

4.1. The First Solution

At the outset, it was decided the class lectures were being simultaneously interpreted into Persian; a few of these interpreters were the dispatched students to France during the reign of Muhammad Shah – the second king of the dynasty – who were now back home (Azarang, 1394/2015). Of those students Mirza Zaki can be named who was dispatched to France to major engineering but he had to come back to Iran due to the French Revolution of February 1848 and also the death of Muhammad Shah in September of the same year; after the establishment of Dar al-Fonun, he was hired as the interpreter of August Karl Krziz, the artillery teacher (Atefmehr & Farahzad, 2021).

Another class interpreter who could be named was Mirza Malkom Khan sent to France by his family to continue his education, then returned to Iran after eight years. In Dar al-Fonun, "he was the interpreter of Zatti, the Italian teacher, who taught mathematics" (Azarang, 1394/2015, p. 279). Some of the class interpreters later reached the level of teacher and sometimes taught courses as well; Mirza Malkom Khan was one of them and taught arithmetic, general geometry, logarithms, and geography (see

Kianfar, 1384/2005). However, the number of those interpreters was limited and other solutions had also to be sought.

4.2. The Second Solution

The second solution was related to translation again. The foreign instructors used to write their course materials in foreign language, and the interpreters who assisted them in the classroom or other translators rendered the materials into Persian (see Azarang, 1394/2015). The need for the publication of textbooks in the Dârol-Fonun led to the foundation of a small printing-house in the school in 1851, which can be considered as the first specialized printing-house in the history of Iran. In this printing house, which was active until 1882, 30 to 40 textbooks were published (see Mirzay Golpaygani, 1378/1999).

Kianfar holds that (1384/2005), those books were mostly devoted to military, basic sciences, and medical sources. Of those foreign instructors who wrote books, August Karl Krziz could be referred to who wrote some books related to basic sciences and military. Mirza Zaki, his class interpreter, translated them into Persian. As stated by Atefmehr and Farahzad (2021):

Mirza Zaki compiled and translated some booklets from what Krziz taught in classes or from the pamphlets he prepared for the students. One of the early booklets, perhaps the first one that was prepared by Krziz and Mirza Zaki for the students of Dar al-Fonun, is titled *Qava'ed-e Mashq-e Dasteh va Qa'ed-ye Nazm-e Tupkhaneh-ye Mobarakeh* (1296/1852) [...]. Other booklets are *Mizan al-Hesab* (1274/1857), *Elm-e Jerasqil* (1274/1858), *Resaleh dar Elm-e Mashq* (1270/1854), *Elm-e Masahat* (n.d) and *Elm-e Tupkhaneh* (n.d). (p. 89)

Another instructor who authored some books in basic sciences and military was a French teacher called Monsieur Bohler who taught calculus, geometry, algebra, trigonometry, cartography, engineering and military sciences in Dara al-Fonun; his books were translated into Persian by Abdol Rasul Khan Isfahani, Mirza Shafi Tabrizi, and J'afar Qoli Khan Hedayat, the then president of Dar al-Fonun (see Kianfar, 1384/2005; Heydari & Haqir, 1401/2022). One of his famous books, *Resale-ye Elm-e Tahasson* [A treatise on building castles], according to Heydari and Haqir (1401/2022, p. 5) "was translated into Persian in 1858-9 for the purpose of teaching engineering skills and fortifications. It contains some information about building castles, bridges, moats and urban fortifications on the basis of contemporary methods and techniques in 17th century".

The first translated medical books were the works of Dr. Edward Jacob Polak, a famous Austrian physician at Dar al-Fonun whose works were mainly translated by his class interpreter Muhammad Hossein Khan Qajar (see Kianfar, 1384/2005). Another physician at Dar al-Fonun was Dr. Johan Louis Schlimmer, the Dutch physician and medical professor, whose works were translated into Persian by Iranian translators. He also co-authored a French-Persian medical dictionary with Mirza Ali Akbar Khan Nafisi entitled *Terminologie Medico-Pharmaceutique et Anthropologique Francais-Persane* in 1875; many contemporary Persian medical terms owe their origin to the efforts of Dr. Schlemmer (Afkhami, 2013).

It must be noted that translation in Dar al-Fonun had a great "influence on the spread of simplified Persian prose writing, because at that time, practical and rapid translation was necessary according to the needs of the country". (Kianfar, 1373/ 1994, p. 258). In the prose of the period as Rypka (1968) mentions:

one finds a flowery, dallying, bombastic, often superfluously garrulous style, trifling and often even empty in substance. This causes an increase in the use of Arabic words in Persian to the utmost possible limits. So that only professional beaux-esprits were capable of understanding such literature. No regard is paid to the necessities of everyday life. (pp. 312-313)

Therefore, the translators of the era paid special attention to the necessities of everyday life. They used simple structures and words in their translations and paved the way for simple style of writing. According to Aryanpur (as cited in Mohseni & Khachatourian Saradehi, 1390/2011, p. 795), their use of everyday words “not only affected the Persian prose but also influenced the literary taste and the reading habits of Iranians”, which led to the emergence of modern literature in the country.

4.3. The Third Solution

The third solution concerned the instructors themselves. Some of Dar al-Fonun instructors later learned Persian and as a result they were able to translate and teach in Persian. Of those instructors, Dr. Polak can be mentioned here particularly who decided to learn Persian. Apparently, according to Atefmehr and Farahzad (2021), the reason was that his class interpreter Muhammad Hossein Khan Qajar was not proficient in French. In his itinerary, Polak (1361/1982, cited in Atefmehr & Farahzad, 2021, p. 93), depicts that:

at the beginning he thought the translator works well; however, after a while he realized that the translator did not understand him at all and instead of translating his words repeats the wrong content of Persian books for students (pp. 209-210). Therefore, Polak decided to learn Persian and in the meantime he used drawings and gestures to teach medicine to his students.

The content of the translated works in Dar al-Fonun school was in some way in conflict with the traditional thoughts and the prevailing atmosphere in Iran. Consequently, those books promoted modern thoughts in the fields of medicine, military affairs, and so on. Dar al-Fonun made a significant contribution to the introduction of new sciences and the doubting of the foundations of traditional sciences.

Dar al-Fonun was also engaged in literary and drama translation, which in turn influenced Persian drama writing as well as the Iranian dramatic performances of that era. In 1885, a small theatre was established in Dar al-Fonun and in order to perform Western dramas, some dramatic works were translated into Persian including *Misanthrope* by Moliere. Probably, some teachers of Dar al-Fonun had direct involvement in the translation of those works, or cooperated in their translations (Azarang, 1395/2015).

4.4. The Fourth Solution

The fourth solution was offering foreign language instructions. As stated earlier, French was the official language of Dar al-Fonun. Therefore, teaching and learning the French language was compulsory. The foreign language curriculum of the school consisted of “reading European texts, grammar exercises, vocabulary, writing composition, dictation and translation” (Ekhtiar, 1994, p. 249). As can be noted, translation again played an important role and was formally included in the foreign language program. However; for teaching French, some textbooks were needed. The first French teacher in Dar al-Fonun was Jules Richard or Rishar Khan who was originally from France. His authored books according to Kianfar (1384/2005) were in fact both authored and translated. His first book entitled *Dialogue*

began with the French alphabet, then came the numbers. In each section, the words were in two columns: the left column in French and the right column in Persian. Grammatical materials were summarized in each section. The book was organized into 6 chapters and included special sentences at the end. Some pages had short footnotes. (p. 92)

His second book, entitled *A New Practical and Easy Way to Learn French*, printed in the printing house of Dar al-Fonun, also consisted of 6 chapters (Kianfar, 1384/2005).

Mirza Ali Akbar Khan Naghash Bashi, known by the title of Mazin al-Dawleh, translated and authored a book for students of Dar al-Fonun entitled *Correct Pronunciation of the French Language* which contains fifty instructions some of which include brief grammatical points; the book – organized as a glossary – had three columns on each page: the first column contained the French words, the second column contained the Persian words, and the third column contained the Persian to French phonetic transcription (Kianfar, 1384/2005).

It must be noted that in addition to French, later other languages such as English, Arabic, and Russian were also taught in foreign language courses (see Khosrobeigi & Khaled Feyzi, 1391/2012) and the students were free to choose one or all of them; however, learning French was compulsory and this language received more significance and attention as it was mainly used in scientific courses (see Pazouki, 1395/2016).

4.5. The Fifth Solution

Finally, the graduates of Dar al-Fonun, who had already become familiar with foreign languages especially French, translated different technical books and papers into Persian. They had a significant impact on the spread of modern sciences. So Dar al-Fonun school “was influential in training many translators, authors and researchers who transmitted their knowledge in translation, one way or another” (Farahzad & Adili, 2019, p. 13). As Azarang (1394/2015) puts it:

Dar al-Fonun was the first Iranian educational institution in the new era wherein translation was one of its main tasks. [...] Some of the graduated students of Dar al-Fonun joined the translators of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or worked in foreign embassies; some others cooperated with governmental institutions and newspapers, or went to other countries to continue their education and returned to Iran as experts. They formed a generation who were influential in training translators and authors during and after the Iranian Constitutional Movement. (pp. 253-254)

Of those graduated students, Mirza Kazem Mahallati can be named who “was a pharmacist, chemist, translator, natural sciences teacher, mineralogist, poet, and journalist of the Nasser era, and one of the most prolific Iranian teachers at Dar al-Fonun” (Saqafi, 1391/2012, p. 86).

In addition to French, Mirza Kazem Mahallati studied pharmacy and natural sciences at Dar al-Fonun with the Italian teacher called Monsieur Focckette. After his graduation, he was dispatched to France by the Qajar government to continue his education, then he returned to Iran and was employed in Dar al-Fonun as a teacher and taught pharmacy and natural sciences instead of his teacher Monsieur Focckette following his departure from Iran (Saqafi, 1391/2012). He taught at Dar al-Fonun alongside foreign teachers for many years; his influence on the spread of pharmacy was greater than European teachers at Dar al-Fonun because he taught in Persian, while those teachers taught in French (Saqafi, 1391/2012).

Mirza Kazem Mahallati wrote a book entitled *Tazkare-ye Adviye-ye Nasser* [Nasser Drug Tezkire] and taught to his pupils how to translate it; in addition, of his valuable works, the compilation of chemistry textbooks and articles can be mentioned, in authoring which he used French sources as he had access to new French scientific books and journals and compiled his works based as much as possible on contemporary European scientific knowledge (see Saqafi, 1391/2012). His “up-to-date knowledge was highly beneficial as a pharmacy instructor at Dar al-Fonun, and he played an active role in transferring scientific knowledge to the students in this discipline” (Saqafi, 1391/2012, p. 98).

5. The Decline of Dar al-Fonun

In addition to pedagogical influences, Dar al-Fonun was also influential in the enlightenment of Iranians. Initially, the pupils of this school were the children of the elite; however, gradually students belonging to other classes of the society were admitted, who enjoyed the benefits of modern education (Qasemi Puya, 1377/1998, pp. 136-137).

At the outset, according to Pazouki (1395/2016), the number of Dar al-Fonun students who studied in different fields were 114 distributed as follows: engineering (12 students), artillery (26 students), infantry (39 students), cavalry (5 students), medicine and surgery (20 students), physics, chemistry and pharmacy (7 students) and mineralogy (5 students); gradually, the number of the students increased and, according to the yearbook of 1300 AH /1882, the number of the students reached 262 (pp. 22-25).

The Shah and “all the courtiers were proud of this school in so far as education was to matter. In order to acquire a good reputation at home and abroad, the Shah visited the school regularly and praised the students and teachers” (Qasemi Puya, 1377/1998, p. 137). However, as stated by Pazouki (1395/2016, p. 23),

beyond the Shah’s attention and care, there was another hand at work. The same power which eliminated Amir Kabir before the opening of Dar al-Fonun knew that if a modern school was established in a country, intelligent students would be emerged, and consequently that country could not be turned into a colony or semi-colony. Therefore, two ways were chosen to neutralize the school: First, the recruitment of Italian rebel officers alongside Austrian teachers, prevented the Austrians from doing their duties properly from the very beginning, and as a result nullified all the caution Amir Kabir had exercised about the nationality and political orientations of Dar al-Fonun instructors. Second, integrating politics into education; in other words, discouraging the Shah from supporting the school. This action was followed by political orientation aimed at the school’s students.

Hence, when Nasser al-Din Shah and his courtiers noticed that the students of Dar al-Fonun whispered voices of liberalism and the rule of law, and passed Shabnamehs and other papers of protest to enlighten the public, Dar al-Fonun lost its royal support and patronage (Qasemi Puya, 1377/1998). In the late Nasser period, especially in the years after the victory of the tobacco movement, Nasser al-Din Shah “ended the growth of Dar al-Fonun [and] forbade the opening of new schools” (Abrahamian, 1979, p. 400). Therefore, Dar al-Fonun fell into decline. According to Pazouki (1395/2016, p. 23),

The Shah would hear the name of the school with disgust and was just satisfied with preserving the school’s appearance [...]. As a result, Dar al-Fonun became a place where a number of princes and sons of nobles and officials were gathered and taught so that in the future they would be just literate servants (employees), rather than people who would meet the scientific and technical needs of the country and advance Iran alongside other countries. In short, instead of educating scholars, the school was converted into a factory for the production of educated servants because it was diverted from its founder’s original purpose. However, people were very fond of the school.

Thus, Dar al-Fonun school lost its primary function, fell into decline and later it turned into a common school. This period ended in 1896 when Nasser al-Din Shah was assassinated by Mirza Reza Kermani, the Iranian pan-Islamic revolutionary.

6. Conclusions

Dar al-Fonun was the first modern educational institution in Iran to train specialized individuals. It had a great role in promotion of modern sciences in the country through training talented Iranian students. After they were graduated, they started to serve their country in various ways. A part of this promotion was related to translation and interpretation, which had several fundamental effects on the Dar al-Fonun, it included the translation of plenty of books in different scientific fields, expansion of simultaneous interpretation, teaching foreign languages, compilation and translation of numerous textbooks as well as authoring a plenty of books in Persian. Moreover, translation in Dar al-Fonun contributed to simplified Persian prose writing the effect of which remains to this day.

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

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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

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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 *دلِق* /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 *مصطفى* /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 *درم* /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), بریط سراى (barbaṭsorāy), مُريد (morid), مطرب (moṭreb), شوریده (shūrīdeh)
Location	حجره (hojreh), طاق ايوان (ṭāqe eyvān), طور (ṭūr), غرفه (ghorfeh), جوسق (jusaq)
Garments	دببقي (dabiqi), دلِق (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	Procedures						
	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.

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