

Applying Lefevre's Strategies to Persian Translations of Shakespeare's Sonnets

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Abstract

Rendering Shakespeare's sonnets into Persian is notably difficult because their complex language, rich metaphors, and rigid iambic pentameter often conflict with the unique rhythmic patterns and stylistic norms of Persian poetry. This study examines how three Persian translators (Behnam Moghadam, Taghi Tafazoli, and Omid Tabibzadeh) addressed these complexities. A corpus of 77 sonnets, translated across different decades in the 20th century, was analyzed to determine the frequency and application of Lefevre's (1975) seven strategies for poetry translation. Results revealed that literal translation was the most prevalent strategy, with two translators favoring word-for-word accuracy to preserve semantic fidelity, while one prioritized metrical adaptation to align with Persian poetic forms. These findings highlight varied approaches to balancing textual fidelity with cultural and poetic norms, shedding light on the translators' negotiation of linguistic and aesthetic constraints. The study contributes to translation studies by offering insights into effective strategies for translating complex literary works and fostering cross-cultural literary understanding, with practical implications for translators and scholars of comparative literature.

Keywords: Shakespeare's sonnets, Lefevre's seven strategies, literal translation, metrical translation, poetry translation

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1. Introduction

Translating Shakespeare's sonnets into Persian is a complex task due to their intricate wordplay, dense metaphors, and strict iambic pentameter, which often conflict with Persian poetic conventions (Ghahremani, 2015). Despite extensive translations of Shakespeare's plays, his sonnets have received limited attention in Persian, with early partial efforts by Masoud Farzad in the 1930s and selective renditions by Behnam Moghadam and Taghi Tafazoli covering only a fraction of the 154 sonnets (Hosseini & Yenkimaleki, 2024). A complete translation emerged only in 2017 by Omid Tabibzadeh, accompanied by detailed commentary.

Equally, while numerous translations of Shakespeare's plays exist in Persian, the sonnets have received considerably less attention. As Hosseini and Yenkimaleki (2024) observe, Persian translations of Shakespeare's sonnets remained scarce and fragmentary for decades, with early attempts such as Masoud Farzad's partial translations in the 1930s and selective renditions by Tafazoli (1993) and Moghadam (2000) covering only a limited number of sonnets. The first complete Persian translation of all 154 sonnets was not published until 2017 by Tabibzadeh, who accompanied the text with detailed commentary and an introduction.

Prior research, such as Khatib (2023) and Horri (2025), has focused on lexical or rhetorical elements like puns in a small number of sonnets, often without applying a systematic framework like André Lefevere's (1975) seven poetry translation strategies. This reveals a significant research gap, as no comparative study has yet examined Persian translations of the sonnets through the lens of Lefevere's full model, leaving the strategic approaches of translators underexplored (Ghahremani, 2015). In many cases, only a few sonnets are analyzed, and the broader translational strategies remain insufficiently addressed. This research, therefore, aims to analyze how three prominent translations of the sonnets (by Moghadam, Tafazoli, and Tabibzadeh) correspond with or deviate from Lefevere's proposed strategies, thereby filling an important methodological gap in the literature.

This study postulates that Persian translators' strategies vary across decades due to shifts in linguistic and cultural contexts. It aims to identify the most frequently used translation strategies in a corpus of 77 sonnets by Moghadam, Tafazoli, and Tabibzadeh, and to analyze their temporal variations. By employing Lefevere's framework, this research addresses

methodological limitations in prior studies, offering a structured analysis of how Persian translators negotiate the poetic and linguistic challenges inherent in rendering Shakespeare's sonnets (Hosseini & Yenkimaleki, 2024). The findings contribute to translation theory, foster cross-cultural literary dialogue, and provide guidance for future translators, scholars, and artists engaging with Shakespeare's sonnets in Persian (Tavakoli & Zare, 2024). Moreover, translating Shakespeare's sonnets facilitates cultural exchange by making their profound themes such as love, beauty, time, and mortality accessible to non-English-speaking Persian audiences, enriching both the source and target cultures (Jarkinova, 2024; Shurbanov, 2018).

The significance of this undertaking extends beyond Persian literary studies. As Tavakoli and Zare (2024) note, translating Shakespeare's sonnets bridges cultural gaps and makes universal themes such as love, beauty, and the passage of time available to non-English-speaking audiences. Jarkinova (2024) highlights how translations foster cultural exchange, enrich global literary appreciation, and challenge translators to adapt complex poetic features such as rhyme and symbolism into the target culture. Similarly, Anoo (2022) emphasizes the importance of accessibility, suggesting that reimagining Shakespeare through inclusive approaches enables broader contemporary engagement. Ibrahim (2024) adds that translations extend Shakespeare's resonance to multilingual audiences, while Mayasari (2018) further stresses their educational value, noting that translations not only preserve Shakespeare's legacy but also serve as tools in linguistics, cultural studies, and literary theory.

From a cross-cultural perspective, Shenishen (2020) argues that translations act as cultural bridges, preserving the artistic and societal elements of the sonnets while promoting intercultural understanding. Shurbanov (2018) also highlights their importance for enriching target languages with Shakespeare's poetic innovation and testing their capacity to convey complex ideas. Similarly, Rassokhina (2017) demonstrates how Russian translations preserve Shakespeare's global significance while reflecting cultural and ideological shifts, and Shabani et al. (2019) show how translations of Forough Farrokhzad's works serve comparable purposes in broadening cultural communication. Following Venuti's (2011) call for "better and better" translators, translating Shakespeare's sonnets is not only a literary act but also a cultural necessity that sustains global dialogue.

Ultimately, translating Shakespeare's sonnets promotes intercultural understanding, preserves the beauty and depth of the original poems, and ensures their ongoing relevance for diverse audiences worldwide (Mayasari, 2018).

2. Literature Review

Poetry translation strategies refer to the different methods and procedures that translators use to translate poems from one language into another. Many theorists have elaborated on strategies used for poetry translation. A popular framework developed by Lefevere (1975) has been used to analyze the translation of poetry. In his influential work on translation theory, Lefevere outlined seven strategies (Literal Translation, Metrical Translation, Rhymed Translation, Interpretative Translation, Adaptation, Free Translation, and Creative Translation) that translators might use when translating poetry. These strategies help explain how a translator approaches a text, and how different choices can affect the resulting translation.

2.1. Poetry Translation: Translatability vs. Untranslatability

The translation of poetry has long sparked debate over whether translators should prioritize a poem's content or its form. Historically, writers often engaged with foreign texts in their original languages for inspiration. Poetry translation, however, emerged as a distinct practice centuries ago. Notable examples include Edward FitzGerald, who translated *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who was inspired by Persian poet Hafez in creating *West-Eastern Divan* (Hadadi, 2021).

Fani (2021) examined the challenges of translating Persian poetry, focusing on Hafez and the concept of untranslatability. Drawing on Shafi'i-Kadkani (2002, 2011), Fani highlights the cultural and aesthetic depth of Persian poems, which can make them difficult to render in European languages. Shafi'i-Kadkani (2002, 2011) emphasizes understanding culturally specific concepts, such as the sacred and impure status of wine in Perso-Islamic culture, and symbols like the prayer rug, noting tensions with Christian interpretations. However, his views are criticized for being subjective and lacking analysis of actual translations (Fani, 2021). Fani contrasts this with examples of translators like Wilberforce Clarke and Geoffrey Squires, who attempt to preserve both the aesthetic and mystical qualities of Hafez's poetry. Fani (2021)

argues that, despite linguistic and cultural challenges, Persian poetry can be translated effectively, advocating for a nuanced approach that considers both cultural and linguistic differences.

2.2. Translating Shakespeare's Sonnets into Different Languages

Ibrahim (2024) explored the challenges of translating poetry across cultures, focusing on Arabic versions of Shakespeare's sonnets and English versions of Salah Jahin's quatrains. Using Hervey and Higgins's (1992) model of compensation, her study demonstrated how translators employ techniques such as modulation and adaptation to mitigate cultural and linguistic losses. While translations such as Enani's (2016) preserve tone and meaning, rhyme, rhythm, and cultural references often shift, reflecting the translator's cultural and religious background. Ibrahim (2024) concludes that full equivalence is impossible, but compensation strategies help maintain emotional and aesthetic integrity.

Jarkinova (2024) examined the translation of Shakespeare's sonnets into Uzbek, focusing on the works of Yusuf Shomansur and Jamal Kamal. The study highlights the artistic and cultural challenges of preserving poetic essence, emotional resonance, and structural integrity while adapting language to the Uzbek literary context. It emphasizes the role of translation in fostering cultural exchange and enriching national literature, positioning translators as mediators between traditions.

Similarly, Shenishen (2020) examined the translation of Shakespeare's sonnets into Arabic, analyzing works by Mohamed Enani and Abdul Sattar Jawad through Polysystem Theory and Norm-Governed Translation Theory. The research underscores how cultural and linguistic norms shape translators' choices, stressing the need to balance fidelity to the original text with cultural acceptability. It highlights the functional role of translation in the target culture and its importance in promoting intercultural reciprocity.

2.3. Related Studies

Many scholars have examined different dimensions of poetry translation, analyzing the works of various poets across multiple languages. Some have drawn on Lefevere's strategies as their primary framework, while others have investigated Shakespeare's sonnets from alternative

perspectives. Tavakoli and Zare (2024), for instance, studied the translation strategies of two Persian translators of Shakespeare's sonnets—Omid Tabibzadeh and Behnam Moghadam—using Vinay and Darbelnet's model alongside Even-Zohar's polysystem theory. Through a line-by-line analysis of seven sonnets, they compared the translators' choice of equivalence, noting differences such as Moghadam's rendering of "heaven" as "universe" and Tabibzadeh's choice of "sky." Their findings revealed a predominance of oblique strategies over direct ones, reflecting a tendency toward domestication and indicating that both translations occupy a secondary position within the Persian literary polysystem. Unlike their study, which is based on Vinay and Darbelnet's general translation theory, the present research adopts Lefevere's model, specifically designed for poetry translation.

Other works employing Lefevere's framework include Sarparast et al. (2018), who analyzed Muhammad Alforati's translation of Hafez's ghazals. Their study found that Alforati mostly relied on literal translation (Lefevere's second strategy), occasionally adding explanations for clarity. Similarly, Bashiri and Mohammadi (2018) examined translations of Omar Khayyam's poems into Arabic and Mahmood Darvish's poems into Persian, concluding that all of Lefevere's strategies proved useful except for blank verse translation. In another study, Emamian Shiraz (2012) investigated English translations of Sepehri's poetry, observing that literal translation was the most frequently applied strategy. Beyond Lefevere's framework, several researchers have addressed Shakespeare's sonnets directly.

More recently, Hosseini and Yenkimaleki (2024) traced the reception and translation of Shakespeare's sonnets in Iran from the 19th century to the present, highlighting the dominance of French and Russian poetry translations and the strength of Persian poetic traditions, which reduced the demand for Shakespeare's sonnets. Their historical survey divides Persian translations into scattered and book-length works, noting contributions by translators such as Masoud Farzad, Majid Movaghar, Shojaeddin Shafa, Jerome Clinton, Eslami Nodooshan, Amrollah Abjadian, Fathollah Mojtabaei, Tahere Saghafi, Saeed Saeedpour, Elahi Ghomshei, Taghi Tafazoli, Behnam Moghadam, Nematollah Shomosi, Kazem Maskani, Omid Tabibzadeh, and Pouya Shahriyari Rad. They concluded that while

Shakespeare's plays enjoy widespread translation, the sonnets have had limited impact on Persian literature, with Tabibzadeh's (2017) complete translation standing out as a milestone.

Building on these previous studies, the current research distinguishes itself by comparing selected Shakespeare's sonnets with their Persian translations, focusing on the strategies employed by three translators in Iran. Using Lefevere's model for poetry translation, it seeks to identify the application of the seven strategies within the translated lines, reaffirming the model's relevance not only to English poetry but also to cross-cultural contexts such as Persian literary translation.

3. Method

This study is qualitative in that it investigates the strategies used by Persian translators in rendering Shakespeare's sonnets, with a focus on Lefevere's (1975) seven strategies for poetry translation. To do so, William Shakespeare's sonnets (2016) were freely downloaded via the Folger Shakespeare Library website. Next, three major Persian translators belonging to three different decades were selected: Taghi Tafazoli, who translated 100 sonnets in 1993 (analyzed using the 2016 sixth edition), Behnam Moghadam, who translated 79 sonnets into the Persian ghazal form in 2001, and Omid Tabibzadeh, who completed a full translation of all 154 sonnets in 2017 in prose. From these, 77 sonnets common to all three translators were chosen through purposive sampling, providing a robust basis for comparative analysis.

The data collection process involved extracting texts from print editions and converting them into digital texts using specialized tools, ensuring precise alignment of each translation with the source text. The translations were then prepared line by line for comparison, enabling the identification of strategies applied in each verse. Following Lefevere's (1975) framework, each translation choice was categorized under one of the seven strategies: phonemic translation, literal translation, metrical translation, poetry into prose, rhymed translation, blank verse translation, or interpretation.

It is worth mentioning that a small-scale pilot analysis on this topic was initially conducted, during which two experts provided feedback on the procedures and some aspects were refined to be presented more thoroughly in this study. To ensure the reliability of the

categories (i.e., labelings of strategies), the analyses were independently repeated at two different times, and discrepancies were resolved by referring to Lefevere's theory. About 10 percent of the analysis was conducted by both researchers, and an inter-coder reliability of 0.67 was obtained, indicating an acceptable correlation between the two coders (Mackey & Gass, 2015).

Next, a systematic two-step procedure was followed for data analysis. First, the frequency of each strategy was recorded for every translator at the micro-textual (verse) level. Then, aggregate totals and percentages were calculated to reveal overall tendencies both for each translator individually and across the corpus as a whole. This process allowed for both numerical measurement of strategy usage and qualitative interpretation of how translators negotiated cultural, linguistic, and poetic challenges. The study's methodology ensures replicability and rigor, combining detailed textual analysis with quantitative assessment in line with best practices in translation studies (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013).

4. Results

In this section, the results obtained from the analysis of the translation of 77 of Shakespeare's sonnets by three Persian translators are presented. The following figures display the percentages of the use of Lefevere's strategies for poetry translation, respectively, first across the three translators and then for each translator compared with others.

4.1. Overall Summary of Translation Strategies

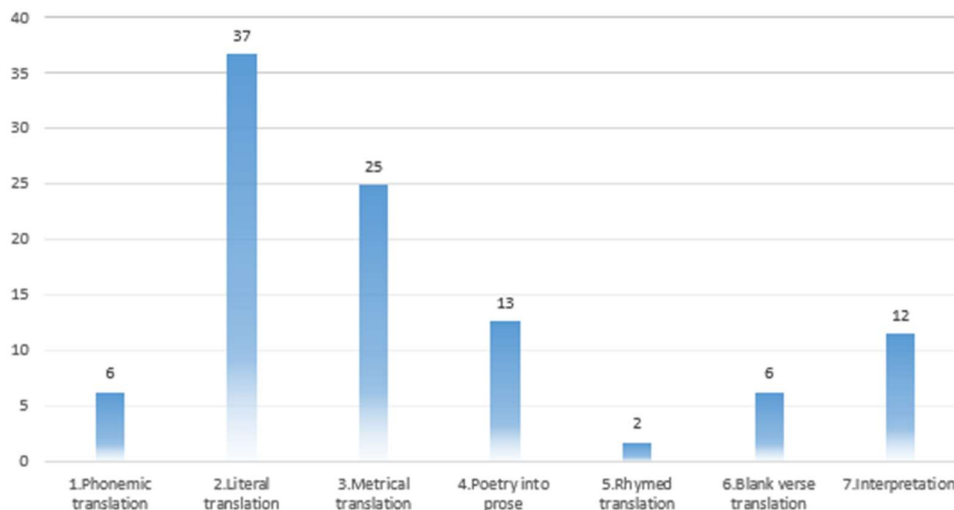
Figure 1 provides an overview of the percentages of the seven translation strategies—phonemic translation, literal translation, metrical translation, poetry into prose, rhymed translation, blank verse translation, and interpretation—across all translations analyzed in the study.

The analysis revealed that literal translation is the most prevalent strategy at 37%, indicating a strong emphasis on semantic fidelity and word-for-word accuracy, potentially at the expense of poetic form and rhythm. Metrical translation follows at 25%, reflecting significant efforts to preserve the original poem's rhythmic structure, while poetry into prose (13%) and interpretation (12%) serve as notable secondary strategies, prioritizing clarity and

cultural relevance, respectively. In contrast, phonemic translation (6%), blank verse translation (6%), and rhymed translation (2%) are less utilized, highlighting the challenges of replicating sound patterns and rhyme across languages, with rhymed translation being the least applied due to its linguistic constraints.

Figure 1

Distribution of Strategies Across the Three Translations



Lefevere's theoretical framework underscores the trade-offs inherent in these choices, noting that while literal and metrical translations maintain meaning and form, they may compromise aesthetic qualities, whereas poetry into prose and interpretation adapt the text for accessibility and cultural resonance.

The low usage of phonemic (6%) and rhymed (2%) translations aligns with Lefevere's observations on the difficulty of preserving phonological and rhyming elements across different linguistic systems. Blank verse (6%) emerges as a balanced approach, retaining meter without the burden of rhyme, suggesting a moderate preference for formal integrity with flexibility.

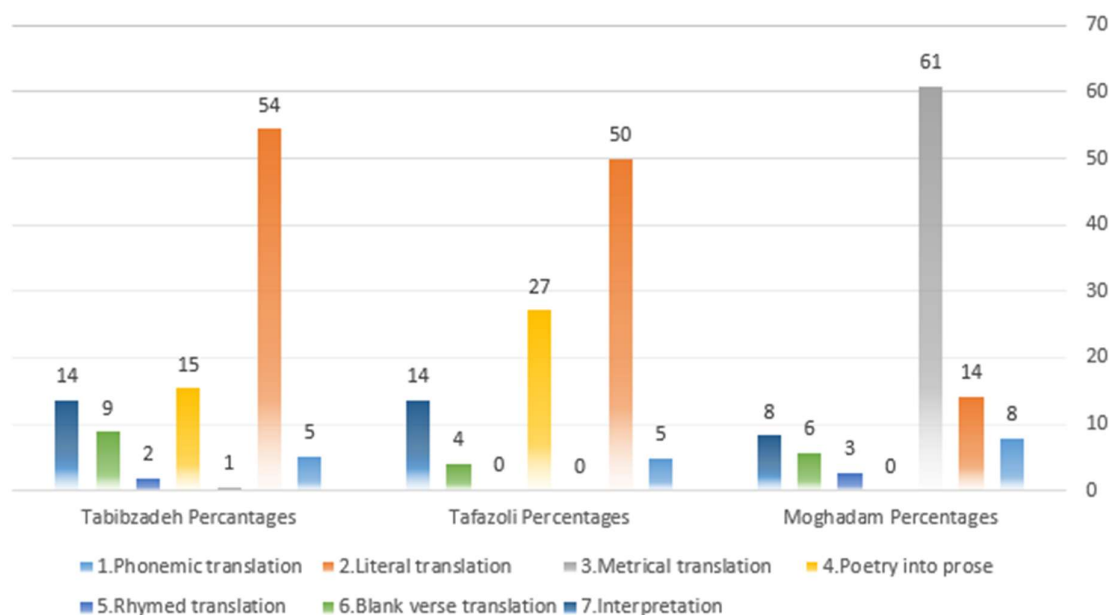
These patterns suggest that translators prioritize semantic content and rhythmic structure over exact sound reproduction or strict rhyme, with contextual and cultural factors likely influencing these strategic decisions.

4.2. Comparative Analysis of Translation Method Preferences

In this section, we present a comparison of the approaches of the three translators individually and with respect to others, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Percentage Distribution of Translation Strategies Across the Three Translators



4.2.1. Distribution of Translation Strategies in Moghadam's Translation

Based on Figure 2, Moghadam's approach to translation strongly prioritizes the preservation of poetic form, with metrical translation dominating at 61%. This significant emphasis on rhythm and structure aligns closely with Lefevere's theoretical framework, which underscores the importance of maintaining literary and cultural context in translation.

This recreative strategy is designed to replicate the aesthetic impact of the original Persian poetry in English, despite the inherent linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages. The high reliance on metrical translation suggests a deliberate effort to ensure that the translated work retains its musicality and formal integrity as key elements of Persian poetic tradition.

Following metrical translation, literal translation accounts for 14%, phonemic translation for 8%, and interpretation also for 8% of the strategies. These procedures indicate a balanced approach where lexical accuracy is not entirely sacrificed. Phonemic translation focuses on preserving the sound patterns of the original, while interpretation allows for adaptive techniques to maintain poetic coherence. Together, these methods complement the dominant metrical approach by addressing both the auditory and semantic layers of the text, ensuring a holistic translation that respects the essence of the source material.

Less frequently employed are blank verse translation at 6% and rhymed translation at 3%. These techniques serve as hybrid options, likely utilized when achieving metrical fidelity proves challenging due to structural or linguistic constraints in English. They offer flexibility, allowing translators to approximate the original form while adapting to the target language's conventions. Notably, poetry into prose is almost absent, recorded at about 0% with only two instances. This near-complete avoidance highlights a strong resistance to abandoning the poetic form, reflecting a cultural and aesthetic priority to uphold the metrical and rhythmic qualities that define the original Persian works.

Overall, the data from Figure 2 reveal a clear focus on preserving the meter and poetic essence of the source text. This approach is driven by a deep commitment to cultural and aesthetic priorities, ensuring that the translated poetry resonates with its intended artistic impact while navigating the complexities of English-Persian linguistic differences.

4.2.2. Distribution of Translation Strategies in Tafazoli's Translation

Figure 2 highlights Tafazoli's translation strategies for Shakespeare's sonnets into Persian, with literal translation leading at 50%, reflecting a strong focus on semantic fidelity and original wording. This dominant use of literal translation suggests a meticulous effort to preserve the meaning and phrasing of Shakespeare's original English text as closely as possible, ensuring that the core intent and vocabulary remain intact in the Persian rendition. This approach likely stems from a desire to maintain the intellectual and emotional depth of the sonnets, making it a cornerstone of Tafazoli's methodology.

Poetry into prose follows at 27%, indicating a preference for clarity and accessibility over poetic form, often paired with literal translation for enhanced meaning. This substantial allocation to prose translation implies that Tafazoli values making the sonnets comprehensible to a broader Persian-speaking audience, even if it means sacrificing the rhythmic and structural elements typical of poetry. The combination with literal translation further enhances the semantic richness, ensuring that the prose versions retain the narrative and thematic essence while prioritizing readability over metrical consistency.

Interpretation ranks third at 14%, showing flexibility to incorporate cultural nuances when needed. This moderate use of interpretation allows Tafazoli to adapt the sonnets to Persian cultural contexts, adjusting idioms, references, or stylistic elements that might otherwise lose their impact. This flexibility highlights a pragmatic approach, enabling the translator to bridge cultural gaps and ensure the work resonates with Persian readers, particularly where direct translation might fall short.

Phonemic translation (5%) and blank verse (4%) are used sparingly, suggesting minimal emphasis on sound or verse structure. The low percentages indicate that Tafazoli places little priority on replicating the sonic qualities or formal verse patterns of the original sonnets, such as their iambic pentameter or rhyming schemes. These methods are likely employed only in specific instances where sound or a loose poetic structure might enhance the translation, but they do not form a significant part of his overall strategy.

Rhymed and metrical translations are virtually absent (0%), underscoring a deliberate neglect of traditional poetic meter and rhyme. This complete avoidance of rhymed and metrical techniques reinforces Tafazoli's focus on content over form, suggesting a conscious decision to move away from the structural constraints of Shakespeare's original poetic framework. This choice may reflect the challenges of adapting English metrical patterns to Persian prosody or a belief that such forms are less critical for the sonnets' appreciation in the target language.

This distribution reveals a content-driven approach, prioritizing comprehension and semantic accuracy over formal replication. Tafazoli's strategy contrasts sharply with form-focused translators like Moghadam, who emphasize metrical fidelity and poetic structure, as seen in his 61% use of metrical translation. Tafazoli's unique interpretive priorities instead

center on delivering the meaning and accessibility of the sonnets, tailoring his methods to suit the linguistic and cultural needs of Persian readers rather than adhering strictly to the original's formal characteristics. This distinction underscores the diverse approaches within translation studies, reflecting individual translator philosophies and the varying demands of target audiences.

4.2.3. Distribution of Translation Strategies in Tabibzadeh's Translation

Figure 2 shows Tabibzadeh's translation strategies for Shakespeare's sonnets into Persian, with literal translation leading at 54%, emphasizing semantic accuracy and fidelity to the original text. This substantial reliance on literal translation underscores Tabibzadeh's commitment to preserving the meaning and wording of Shakespeare's English sonnets as closely as possible in Persian. By prioritizing semantic accuracy, he ensures that the thematic depth, emotional resonance, and intellectual content of the original are conveyed with minimal deviation, making this method a foundational element of his translation philosophy.

Poetry into prose follows at 15%, reflecting a pragmatic shift to enhance comprehension when literal translation falls short, similar to Tafazoli's approach. This moderate use of prose translation suggests that Tabibzadeh recognizes instances where strict adherence to the original form might obscure meaning for Persian readers. By converting poetry into prose, he facilitates greater accessibility and clarity, particularly in complex passages, aligning with Tafazoli's strategy of prioritizing reader understanding over formal poetic structure. This pragmatic shift likely serves to bridge linguistic gaps and ensure the sonnets remain engaging and intelligible.

Interpretation ranks third at 14%, indicating a nuanced balance of contextual clarity with fidelity. This approach allows Tabibzadeh to adapt the sonnets to the cultural and linguistic context of Persian readers, adjusting elements such as metaphors or historical references that might not translate directly. The balanced use of interpretation reflects a thoughtful compromise, maintaining fidelity to the source text while enhancing its relevance and clarity for the target audience, showcasing his sensitivity to both the original and the receiving culture.

Blank verse (9%) and phonemic translation (5%) show moderate attention to sound and structure, with Tabibzadeh uniquely prioritizing blank verse among the three translators to retain poetic elements. The inclusion of phonemic translation highlights a minor focus on preserving the sound patterns of the original, such as assonance or alliteration, though it remains a secondary concern. More notably, the 9% allocation to blank verse sets Tabibzadeh apart from Moghadam and Tafazoli, indicating a deliberate effort to retain a loose poetic structure without strict adherence to rhyme or meter. This choice likely reflects an attempt to preserve the sonnets' lyrical quality in a form that suits Persian poetic traditions more naturally.

Rhymed (2%) and metrical (1%) translations are minimally used, highlighting challenges in preserving rhyme and meter across languages. The low percentages suggest that Tabibzadeh encounters significant difficulties in adapting the iambic pentameter and rhyming schemes of Shakespeare's sonnets to Persian, where prosodic patterns differ. This minimal usage indicates a practical acknowledgment of these linguistic barriers, leading him to favor methods that prioritize meaning over formal replication in these areas.

Tabibzadeh's extensive notes and line numbering further support his focus on semantic transparency, aligning with functionalist theories that prioritize reader comprehension over stylistic imitation. The inclusion of detailed notes likely provides additional context, explanations, or glossaries to aid readers, while line numbering ensures precise reference to the original text, facilitating a deeper understanding. This approach resonates with functionalist translation theories, which emphasize the translator's role in adapting the text to meet the needs and expectations of the target audience, valuing comprehension and utility over a slavish imitation of the source's stylistic features. This methodical strategy reinforces Tabibzadeh's commitment to making Shakespeare's sonnets accessible and meaningful to Persian readers.

5. Discussion

The analysis of translation strategies in this study reveals that literal (word-for-word) translation is the most commonly employed approach, accounting for 37% of the total strategies. This indicates a clear priority on preserving the original meaning and conceptual content, even when this requires compromising some poetic or stylistic features. Metrical translation is the second most frequent strategy (25%), reflecting efforts to maintain the

rhythmic and aesthetic qualities of the source text, particularly in poetic material. Other strategies, such as poetry into prose (13%) and interpretation (12%), were used moderately, suggesting selective adaptation depending on text complexity or audience needs, while rhymed translation (2%) was rarely used, likely due to the difficulty of balancing rhyme with semantic fidelity.

The above results are consistent with previous research. Sarparast et al. (2018) found that Muhammad Alforati relied primarily on literal translation in rendering Hafez's ghazals, emphasizing faithful conveyance of meaning even when the form diverged from the original. Similarly, Emamian Shiraz (2012) reported that English translations of Sohrab Sepehri's poetry predominantly used literal translation, often in blank verse, highlighting a focus on word-for-word accuracy. However, in terms of the comparative historical impact and the role of cultural and contextual aspects, our study provided more interesting aspects.

Tafazoli's (1993) translation emerged during a period when semantic fidelity and accessibility were paramount. His dominant use of literal translation and prose reflects a pragmatic approach, likely influenced by the academic and cultural climate of the early 1990s in Iran, which emphasized comprehension and educational value over aesthetic replication. He favored content over form, aiming to educate and inform. Tafazoli translated during a time when the English literary canon was initially introduced to Persian readers. His emphasis on prose and literal translation suggests a didactic intent—making Shakespeare's sonnets intellectually accessible to a Persian audience unfamiliar with Elizabethan poetic conventions.

Moghadam (2001), translating in a slightly later period, aligns with Lefevere's recreative translation theory, emphasizing form preservation and aesthetic fidelity. His metrical-heavy strategy reflects a growing interest in literary authenticity and cultural resonance, possibly influenced by post-revolutionary efforts to preserve Persian poetic aesthetics. He prioritized form over content, aiming to recreate poetic experience. Moghadam's strategy reflects a cultural reverence for Persian poetic tradition. His metrical translation prioritizes the musicality and rhythm intrinsic to Persian poetry, suggesting a desire to elevate the translated work to the aesthetic standards of the Persian literary canon.

Tabibzadeh's (2017) translation represents a more functionalist and reader-oriented era. His balanced use of literal translation, prose, and interpretation reflects contemporary translation theory's emphasis on target audience comprehension, cultural adaptation, and textual transparency. His use of blank verse and extensive annotations suggests a hybrid strategy that respects both source and target cultures. He sought a middle ground, balancing meaning, form, and reader engagement. Tabibzadeh, translating in a more globalized and digitally connected era, probably adopts a reader-centric approach. His use of interpretation and blank verse, along with detailed annotations, reflects a sensitivity to modern Persian readers' expectations, who may seek both literary beauty and clarity in translated texts.

The current research suggests a broader tendency among translators of literary and poetic texts to prioritize content fidelity while employing metrical or adaptive strategies selectively to preserve form or enhance readability. Overall, the findings underscore a cultural and methodological preference for literal translation, with form-based strategies playing a secondary but significant role, pointing to what Shenishen (2020) states: translators need to strike a balance between fidelity to the original text and cultural acceptability.

6. Conclusion

This study examined three Persian translations of William Shakespeare's sonnets using Lefevere's seven strategies for poetry translation. Among the three translators, one produced a complete translation of all 154 sonnets, while the other two rendered only selected works. The dataset consisted of 77 sonnets translated by all three, allowing for comparative analysis. Results revealed that literal translation was the most frequently used strategy across all translators, followed by metrical translation, poetry into prose, and other methods such as phonemic translation, interpretation, and rhymed translation. These findings shed light on how the studied Persian translators handled complex poetic texts, demonstrating a tendency to prioritize semantic accuracy while occasionally preserving formal poetic features. This research addresses a significant gap in Persian literary translation, offering valuable insights for both translators and scholars interested in the challenges of rendering poetry with intricate linguistic and cultural dimensions, such as Shakespeare's sonnets.

Despite its contributions, the study faces several limitations. The analysis was restricted to three translators, two of whom produced only partial translations, limiting the dataset and reducing the transferability of the results to similar cases or contexts. Additionally, other potential translations may exist but were excluded due to resources and time constraints. The personal style and preferences of each translator may also have influenced the results, a variable that could not be controlled. Moreover, the exclusive use of Lefevere's framework constrained the scope of analysis by overlooking other poetic features such as metaphor and simile. Finally, the extended duration of data analysis may have introduced minor shifts in the researchers' interpretive perspective over time, though these are unlikely to have affected the statistical outcomes significantly.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial connections to any organization or entity that could influence the subject matter or materials addressed in this research. This includes, but is not limited to, financial ties such as honoraria, educational grants, paid speaking engagements, memberships, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, equity interests, expert testimony, or patent-licensing agreements, as well as non-financial associations such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge, or beliefs.

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