Journal Of the Iraqia University (77-2) 31 October (2026)

ISSN(Print): 1813-4521 OnIline ISSN:2663-7502
Journal Of the Iraqia University
available online at
https://iasj.rdd.edu.iq/journals/journal/view/247

Translating Iraqi Cultural Identity in Kachachi's The Dispersal and The American Granddaughter: A Skopos Study

Lect. Dr. Hamdiyah Tomas Jasim Al Hatemi PH1
Al-Iraqia University, College of Media, TV & Radio Dept.
Email : hamdiyah.t.jasim@aliraqia.edu.iq

ترجمة الهوية الثقافية العراقية في روايتي كجه جه «الشتات» و«الحفيدة الأمريكية»: دراسة الهدف

المدرس الدكتور حمدية توماس جاسم الحاتمي
الجامعة العراقية كلية الأعلام قسم الصحافة الأذاعية والتلفزيونية

Abstract

This research concerns the translation of elements of Iraqi culture into English in Inaam Kachachi's The Dispersal and The American Granddaughter. The categories of analysis are based on Aixelá's culture-specific-item model and the terminology of translation techniques used by Molina and Hurtado Albir, and the evaluation model is Skopos Theory. In this research the comparison strategy is small scale and evidence controlled, as it is not the intention to attribute to the books the unverified instances. Dispersal data come from the approved Chapter 25 excerpt and the published English version, with examples from The American Granddaughter limited to source-target pairings replicated with page references in a peer-reviewed translation study. It does not pretend to know what the translator's purpose was, as there is no translator's brief in the sources studied, but it assesses a reconstructed Skopos. Functional sufficiency is assessed by four criteria, namely semantic correctness, target-reader accessibility, preservation of culturally significant difference and literary-pragmatic function. The research indicates that normalization may improve readability but reduce dialectal identity, while retention is especially successful when context or succinct explicitation aids understanding. Maintained forms like Tashari and aba'a, maintain Iraqi texture inside the story. The English title The Dispersal shows target-oriented semantic access. The research concludes that the process of deliberate translation choices is a matter of selective redistribution of Iraqi cultural identity and it neither preserves nor loses it.

Keywords: Skopos Theory, Tashari , Iraqi Arabic, literary translation , Inaam Kachachi

ملخص البحث :

يقدم البحث موضوع ترجمة عناصر ومفردات الثقافة العراقية إلى الإنكليزية في روايتي أنعام كجه جي "طشاري " او "الشتات " و"الحفيدة الأمريكية". حيث تناولت الدراسة فئات تحليل أستندت إلى نموذج من المصطلحات المحددة" المعينة " حسب تعريف الباحث خافيير فرانكو أكسيلا وايضا المصطلحات الخاصة بتقنيات الترجمة المستخدمة من قبل مولينا وهورتادو ألبير، أضافة الى تطبيق نظرية الهدف (سكوبوس)في هذا البحث استراتيجية المقارنة محدودة النطاق وتتحكم في الأدلة ايضا ، لأنه ليس الهدف نسب أمثلة غير موثقة إلى الكتب . تناول البحث مصطلحات وبيانات من رواية "الشتات" من المقطع المعتمد في الفصل ٢٥ – النسخة الإنجليزية المنشورة، مع أمثلة محدودة مستلة من رواية "الحفيدة الأمريكية" مع الإشارة إلى الصفحات في الدراسة الترجمية التي تمت تناولها ومراجعتها من قبل .البحث المقدم لا يدعي معرفة ما كان هدف المترجم ، حيث لا يوجد موجز للمترجم في المصادر التي تم تناولها، لكنه يقدم تقييماً لهدف معاد إنشاؤه ، حيث يتم تقييم الاكتفاء الوظيفي بأربعة معايير، وهي الدقة الدلالية، وسهولة الوصول للقارئ المستهدف، والحفاظ على الاختلافات ذات الأهمية الثقافية، والوظيفة الأدبية–العملية .. .

يشير البحث إلى أن التطابق اوالتماثل قد يحسن من سهولة القراءة لكنه يقلل من الهوية اللهجية، بينما يكون الاحتفاظ باللهجة نموذجا ناجحًا بشكل خاص عندما يساعد السياق أو التوضيح الموجز على الفهم. مشيراً الى مفردات متداولة مثل " طشاري " و"عباية " هذه المفردات توحي لك ان الطابع العراقي مهيمن داخل الرواية . ويوضح البحث ان العنوان الإنجليزي 'The Dispersal' استخدم لغرض الوصول الدلالي الموجه

نحو الهدف . واخيرا يستنتج البحث إلى أن عملية طريقة ونظرية الترجمة المتعمدة هي مسألة إعادة توزيع انتقائية للهوية الثقافية العراقية، فهي لا تحافظ عليها ولا تفقدها.**الكلمات المفتاحية :** نظرية الهدف ، طشاري ، العربية العراقية ، الترجمة الادبية ، أنعام كجه جه .

1. Introduction

Literary translation is more than just denotative meaning. It also mediates the linguistic and cultural signs that define fictional communities, such as dialect, modes of address, food, clothing, religious allusions, local metaphors, historical memories and the common vocabulary forged by political developments. The problem of the translation of literary works from Arabic into English is not so much that of the absence of a dictionary equivalent as that of the uneven distribution of cultural knowledge between source and target audiences. A strongly source-oriented approach may preserve difference but at the expense of unnecessary opacity (Baker, 2018; Dickins et al., 2017; Katan, 2004). A lexical solution may be semantically transparent but loses social register, local flavor or cultural connection.Inaam Kachachi's literature offers a useful framework for analyzing this issue because displacement and divided belonging are embedded in both the subject matter and the language. Kachachi's (2008, 2010) The American Granddaughter, first published in Arabic in 2008 and translated into English by Nariman Youssef, is about an Iraqi-American translator who returns to Iraq and discovers conflicting linguistic, familial and political ties. Inam Jaber's translation of the Dispersal (2013), based on the original Arabic title Tashari, narrates the geographical dispersion of an Iraqi Christian family and often links migration with memory, language and identity (Kachachi, 2013, 2022). Thus, critical work on Kachachi has foregrounded identity, diaspora, gender, conflict, marginality and transnational link (Alqahtani, 2023; AlTalafeeh & Abu Amrieh, 2024; Alkrenawi & Peled-Shapira, 2025; Mohammed & Vafa, 2024).But the similarity of the English text to the Arabic text is not the only main issue for translation studies. That is how a translation choice works for a reader who may not be familiar with Iraqi Arabic or the social connotations of a regional phrase . Skopos Theory is helpful in this case because it moves the focus from mere formal correspondence to the aim and function of the translational activity (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014; Nord, 2018). Skopos Theory, however, does not offer a sufficiently detailed taxonomy of processes at the level of the item. In this sense, the present work combines the concept of culture-specific objects (CSIs) as described by Aixelá (1996) with some categories of Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) and a functionalist evaluation.Four questions are posed in the article: (1) Which elements of Iraqi culture are present in the verified sample taken from the two translations? (2) What do they look like? (3) How functionally adequate are those decisions against a reconstructed literary Skopos? and (4) How do the English texts accentuate, explain, normalize, or subvert Iraqi cultural identity? The goal is intentionally modest. The research provides a repeatable comparative case analysis with verifiable evidence, rather than a comprehensive corpus-based description of both works. This evidentiary restriction is important because the use of instances where reliable access to their source and target settings is not available makes translation criticism methodologically unsound.

2. Literature Review and Research Gap

The Cultural Turn broadened Translation Studies beyond the narrow search for equivalency at the sentence level. Toury (2012) considers translated texts as realities of the target culture, hence products built according to target-side norms, while Bassnett (2014) places translation within the context of cultural systems. Baker (2018) indicates that non-equivalence can exist in the lexical, idiomatic, pragmatic, and discourse levels. Dickins et al. (2017) observe that Arabic-English translation often requires cultural transposition and register-sensitive decision making. A common key consequence of both methods is that the translated item needs to be evaluated in context and function and not in isolation.The present research is based on the concept of the culture-specific item, as proposed by Aixelá (1996). Since source and target cultures organize information in different ways, a CSI is a translation problem when its textual function or implications cannot be directly transferred. Aixelá makes a wide distinction between substitution-oriented techniques, which render the target text more generally accessible, and conservation-oriented processes, which preserve the presence of the source culture. This approach is complemented by Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) who describe observable strategies such as borrowing, amplification, description, generalization, established equivalence and language compression. Venuti's (2018) distinction between domestication and foreignization is too general to guide research at the item level, but it is useful on the macro level. Leppihalme's (1997) concept of the "culture bump" is also relevant: if the surrounding text provides readers with enough context to understand foreign cultural content, it does not always mean that the translation has failed.Functionalist theory gives a second level of analysis. Nord (2018) provides a more explicitly relational model of the goal purpose that has to be considered together with accountability to the source text and its actors. For Reiss and Vermeer (2014) translation is an act of intentional activity. This is even more important in literary translation, when accessibility is not always the only goal. In a

culturally rich book, alterity, voice, comedy, social positioning and esthetic impact can be preserved as well. House (2015) also emphasizes the necessity of functional-pragmatic correspondence, warning critics that a fluent target phrase may distort the communicative value of the source.Research on the author demonstrates that cultural identity is structurally important in Kachachi's novels. Alqahtani (2023) examines The American Granddaughter from the perspective of the ethically troubled post-9/11 world. AlTalafeeh, and Abu Amrieh (2024) illustrate the ways The Dispersal negotiates diaspora and transformed notions of home through digital communication. Alkrenawi and Peled-Shapira (2025) concentrate on language, nationality, and gender as central to identity issues in Kachachi's works.The closest previous work is Al-Sari (2023) which considers culturally distinctive terms in Youssef's English translation of The American Granddaughter. It identifies cases where dialectal or idiomatic meaning is compromised and registers transliteration, literal translation, domestication, foreignization, omission and other processes. Its value when this article is empirical, as it replicates many source-target combinations with page references. However, it has one novel as its focus, and lacks a systematic distinction between Skopos-based functional assessment and methodology identification. Thus, the research gap does not come from a lack of study of Kachachi or cultural translation. The problem is the absence of a focused comparison of the functional treatment of Iraqi cultural identifiers in these two English translations in a different two-level paradigm: technique first, functional adequacy second.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Skopos Theory and the Reconstructed Translation Purpose

Skopos Theory claims that the motive for translational activity is intention. As per the standard functionalist formulation, the target text is not required to reproduce every formal element of the source text if a different approach serves the stated purpose of the translation better (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014). However, Nord (2018) cautions against equating purpose with unlimited freedom. However, the functional choices are dependent on the relations between the participants, the context of the translation and the original text.A methodological problem arises when critics look at literary translations that have been previously published without the benefit of a formal translation brief. Youssef or Jaber do not provide a specific brief that includes a hierarchy of translation aims in the sources studied in this research. Hence there is no claim in the essay to understand the motivations of the translators. Instead, it constructs a plausible Skopos from observable conditions of publishing: both are literary translations into English for an Anglophone audience, and their paratexts convey Iraqi stories to readers who are not presumed to know Iraqi Arabic. The reconstructed Skopos, selected here, has two simultaneous aims to preserve the Iraqi social and literary world of the original: (a) sufficient readability and semantic accessibility for the target reader and (b) sufficient retention of culturally significant difference. This phrase is not an attributable statement of translator intention, but an analytical hypothesis.

3.2 Culture-Specific Items and Translation Techniques

Item-level analysis continues with Aixelá (1996). In practical terms, the research asks whether the marked culture item is retained, elucidated, generalized, substituted, condensed, or deleted. The observable method is presented in the terminology of Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) without translating the technique labels into quality assessments. For example, retention or borrowing can be of quite a benefit in one situation and of a detriment in another situation. Generalization may be a useful functional adaptation in rapidly moving passage, but it may be excessive neutralization in situations where dialectal identity matters.Venuti (2018) says that the terms "domestication" and "foreignization" are only used as interpretative tendencies. Both are found in a same book. The same translator reasonably switches between them. Therefore, the study avoids labeling a translation as simply domesticating or foreignizing by citing a few examples.

3.3 Operationalizing Functional Adequacy

Each case is assessed according to four criteria in an effort to minimize impressionistic assessment. Semantic correctness is whether the correct solution reflects the meaning of the source item in its context. Target-reader accessibility problems whether the answer can be understood without requiring undue cultural knowledge. Cultural representation is the study of how far a socially or historically important Iraqi difference can be seen or recovered. The literary-pragmatic function asks if the item's role in characterization, comedy, rhythm, tone or interaction is maintained. A situation is highly adequate when these requirements are met simultaneously; partly adequate when one function is achieved at a major cost of another; weak when the intended solution misconstrues the source meaning or weakens the relevant textual function. They are qualitative labels that apply to a particular case, not statistical ratings.

4. Methodology

This investigation uses a qualitative comparative case-study approach. The primary bibliographic corpus consists of Kachachi's Arabic Al-Hafidah al-Amrikiyyah (2008) and Tashari (2013), and Youssef's The

American Granddaughter (2010) and Jaber's The Dispersal (2022). The present article is not a complete concordance of CSIs as it is limited to under 5,000 words and full searchable parallel texts were not available in the sources used for verification. Rather, it uses an evidence-controlled sample in which every phrase of the studied case can be linked to a published or approved source.Target-text forms for The Dispersal (Kachachi, 2023) were verified against the metadata of the published edition and the approved excerpt of Chapter 25 published by The Markaz Review under an agreement with Interlink Publishing. Here the forms Tashari, aba'a and 'Azrael, the Angel of Death' are given a setting of an ongoing narrative. Both the approved extract and the publisher determine the English title and its relation to the Iraqi phrase Tashari (Kachachi, 2022, 2023). The source-target examples of The American Granddaughter are limited to those replicated from Al-Sari's peer-reviewed research (2023) with page references. These include some Iraqi pragmatic phrases, the name Khannas, the Mosul form saandaweylat, dialectal sound patterns, terminology of warfare, the idiom mithl al-ward. And these reproduced instances are not quietly turned into primary-text quotations in this article; rather, page pairings that depend on Al-Sari are made clear.The process involves four steps. Each item is first assigned a functional-cultural category (e.g., title/metaphor, dialect/phonology, material culture, religious reference, wartime vocabulary, idiom). Second, the observable translation approach is identified by Aixelá (1996) and Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002). Third, the target rendering is evaluated using the four sufficiency criteria mentioned above. Fourth, the two books are compared only on the basis permitted by the sample. Therefore, rather than making frequency claims for the whole books, the article uses phrases such as "the selected cases suggest." Here, the methodology is focused on repeatability and clarity of evidence, rather than statistical breadth.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Titles as Functional and Cultural Thresholds

The difference in the two English titles highlights why functional assessment and translation approach have to be kept separate. al-Amrikiyyah al-Hafidah The American Granddaughter Its two key identifying words are still completely legible, and the English wording is a direct semantic reproduction. "American" underscores the protagonist's newly acquired national identity, and "granddaughter" retains the familial connection that makes her return to Iraq emotionally and ethically problematic. The conceptual opposition is easily understood in English; the translation requires no further explanation. With the re-built Skopos this is quite enough: the theme function, accessibility and semantic meaning are combined.Tashari presents a different problem. The book's title is Arabic, an Iraqi term for a form of hunting shot that spreads its bullets in many directions, a metaphor for the scattering of Iraqis around the world (Kachachi, 2023). The English version uses the Dispersal. It's a goal-oriented semantic representation that makes the ruling metaphor immediately available while keeping Tashari's unique Iraqi sound and lexical opacity. Literary titles can include translators, editors and publishers, so it would be methodologically risky to attribute this title choice solely to Jaber. Hence Tashari should be translated into English as The Dispersal.According to Skopos, the title is culturally selected and also useful. The source culture is not visible at the paratextual level but it is visible at the semantic and thematic levels. But the story continues in Chapter 25 in the form of Tashari (Kachachi, 2023). This redistribution is significant. The English translation does not simply erase the Iraqi phrase, but re-introduces cultural marking once the context is established, and adds semantic accessibility on the cover. The data as laid out here points more to a scattershot approach across title and story rather than a straightforward, worldwide act of domestication.

5.2 Retention and Supported Foreignness in The Dispersal

The approved excerpt from The Dispersal is an especially good illustration of two aspects of source-cultural preservation. The Arabic garment name aba'a is replaced with its English translation, rather than the general equivalent, cloak or robe (Kachachi, 2023). The method is either to keep or borrow. Context is significant to its functional effectiveness. Women fold, wear or discard the garment, thereby enabling a target reader to infer that the garment is a piece of clothing without a disruptive explanation. So the decision preserves the scene's intelligibility while preserving material-culture distinctiveness. Aixelá claims it is conservation-oriented; it is very sufficient as cultural representation is obtained cheaply in terms of readability according to current standards.A second pattern combines retention and explicitation. In the English passage, the identifying gloss "the Angel of Death" is following the name Azrael (Kachachi, 2023). If only the functional designation were kept, a culturally identifiable proper name would be lost, and some readers would be confused if only Azrael were kept.Tashari's reappearance in the story performs a similar function, but without the appositive gloss. Title and discussion is on dispersion. The Iraqi signifier, then, may remain inexplicable. In this way, the Dispersal reestablishes meaning through narrative context, so that no explanation is immediately attached to the alien item.

5.3 Dialect, Sound, and Cultural Performance in The American Granddaughter

The American Granddaughter offers a new challenge because Iraqi identity is expressed through music. Al-Sari (2023, p. 232) repeats a passage in which the melodic phrase mawwal, lengthened vowels, qaf and ghayn sounds are family discourse, with Ammaaa and Khalaaa. Transliteration is not simply about keeping vocabulary. It suggests intimacy, prosodic overstatement, and narrator intimacy with Iraqi family speech. Translating all the kinship terms into English would destroy the soundscape of the description. This method works because the literary-pragmatic impact relies on the audibility of foreignness.More complicated is the Mosul form saandaweylat which Al-Sari (2023, p. 233) purposefully modifies as sandwilat. Phonological similarity There is miscommunication. Translating the food term into semantic English would kill the humor and the character's confusion. Thus, phonetic preservation is a matter of narrative machinery, not cosmetic exoticism. It's ok to be momentarily unfamiliar as the explanation gives enough information to understand. This is what Leppihalme (1997) calls a fruitful "culture bump," where the reader encounters difference, but the text offers a way to overcome it.Another example of a modest nature is the religious-cultural name Khannas. Al-Sari (2023, p. 233) repeats the target form Khannas in a statement identifying the referent as a jinnī. The translation retains the culturally marked name and contextual information provides a category-level meaning. Like Azrael in The Dispersal, the outcome benefits basic target-reader understanding and awareness of cultural differences. So the chosen data from the two books shows that retention is especially effective when contextual help is affordable and cultural relevance is strong.

5.4 Normalization, Dialectal Loss, and Idiomatic Accuracy

Not all culturally distinctive expressions need to be retained. In a short list of facts about post-invasion Iraq, Al-Sari (2023, p. 230) reproduces a wartime section, in which Iraqi vernacular expressions are translated into short labels in English, such as "Power cut" and "Water shortage." The target version preserves the total sociohistorical field: the broken infrastructure, violence, occupation, rationing, abduction, political change. Iraqi morphology and local pragmatic coloring are reduced. The list's primary literary functions are speed and accumulation, so normalization is partly extremely appropriate in this case. A very polished version would break that rhythm. The sociolinguistic cost is that the reader is confronted with the socioeconomic realities in a more direct way than the Iraqi dialect used to convey them.Iraqi pragmatic statements made the trade off more visible. Al-Sari (2023, p. 236) showed that locally unique interrogatives are reduced to standard English queries. Dialectal difference is diminished, but propositional function is maintained. This is only partially adequate in terms of the four criteria: pragmatic force is simplified, cultural representation is reduced, and semantic access is high. This is crucially not to be taken as a domesticating label for the whole translation, In other sections phonological elongation, mawwal and regionally distinctive forms still exist. Instead the findings support local alternation on the basis of textual function.Functionalism also has its limits. You cannot decide to translate just because it sounds natural. The most obvious negative example is the Iraqi term mithl al-ward (Al-Sari 2023, p. 237). The English translation uses the image of smelling like roses, but the reported context shows a spouse who has returned safe and sound . The meaning of the idiom in context has changed, but the connection with roses can be identified lexically. This is poor functional adequacy as semantic interpretation fails before the problems of domestication or foreignization even get a chance to arise. Therefore, a Skopos oriented analysis has to be based on the semantics of the source text. While purpose may justify formal change, it cannot cure a contextual misreading.This situation additionally emphasizes the need to separate method and assessment. Just because borrowing is not always good does not make a literal or image-based representation inherently bad. The question relevant is whether the method reproduces the important function in that particular context. This difference is supported by Baker's (2018) discussion of idiomatic non-equivalence and House's (2015) functional-pragmatic focus.**Table 1. Evidence-controlled cases and Skopos-based evaluation**

Novel / case	**Source-cultural item**	**English rendering**	**Technique**	**Functional evaluation**	**Traceable evidence**
Tashari / title	Tashari	The Dispersal	Semantic rendering / target orientation	High access; partial reduction of Iraqi lexical markedness	Kachachi, 2022, 2023
The Dispersal / narrative	Tashari	Tashari	Retention	Restores source-cultural visibility	Kachachi, 2023

Novel / case	Source-cultural item	English rendering	Technique	Functional evaluation	Traceable evidence
				after title-level semantic access	
The Dispersal	عباءة	aba'a	Borrowing / retention	High: context supports inference while preserving material culture	Kachachi, 2023
The Dispersal	عزرائيل	Azrael + functional gloss	Retention + explicitation	High: cultural name and target comprehension are both maintained	Kachachi, 2023
American Granddaughter	موال / elongated kinship forms	mawwal; retained sound pattern	Retention / transliteration	High for phonological and familial texture	Al-Sari, 2023, p. 232
American Granddaughter	Mosul regional food term	saandaweylat / sandwilat	Phonetic retention	High: preserves misunderstanding and wordplay	Al-Sari, 2023, p. 233
American Granddaughter	خناس	Khannas + contextual category	Retention + contextual explanation	High: cultural marker remains interpretable	Al-Sari, 2023, p. 233
American Granddaughter	Iraqi wartime colloquial items	normalized English crisis vocabulary	Generalization / normalization	Partial-high: documentary force retained; dialect reduced	Al-Sari, 2023, p. 230
American Granddaughter	الورد مثل	rose-based literal image	Over-literal rendering	Low: contextual idiomatic meaning is displaced	Al-Sari, 2023, p. 237

5.5 Comparative Synthesis

The comparison yields four tentative findings. First, neither translation can be classified as consistently foreignizing or consistently domesticating, given the chosen circumstances. Each use distinct methods at certain textual places. Second, retention is most persuasive when the item contains literary or cultural information that would be lost in a neutral English equivalent and when opacity is avoided through context or brief explanation. The examples of Aba'a, Azrael, Mawwal, and the Mosul sound-play demonstrate this idea. Third, semantic normalization may block sociolinguistic identification if the source phrase itself is an identifier of Iraqi speech, but it is functionally justified if a paragraph emphasizes fast accumulation of documentation.The way titles are handled makes any binary account more difficult. The Dispersal diminishes lexical foreignness and offers immediate semantic access to an Iraqi metaphor, while The American Granddaughter is operationally transparent and formally near. But then Tashari reappears in the English story. It implies that cultural knowledge may be spread across a number of literary contexts.The international worlds portrayed in Kachachi's novels correspond to these trends. The novels themselves depict movement between Iraq and other national places, and critical analyzes characterize identity as negotiated through language, memory, migration, and split allegiance (Alqahtani, 2023; AlTalafeeh & Abu Amrieh, 2024; Alkrenawi & Peled-Shapira, 2025). Language complicates that bargaining. For readers who are not part of the original linguistic group, the English writings re-constitute the visibility of the Iraqi identity rather than merely transporting it.

6. Findings

From the evidence-controlled sample we can draw five conclusions. First, functional adequacy is not a binary but a multidimensional concept. A target item may be culturally marked but accessible (as in assisted retention) or semantically obvious but sociolinguistically thinner (as in normalized Iraqi inquiries). Second, cultural

retention is very successful when context takes some of the explanatory burden. Thirdly, phonological retention becomes operationally necessary when sound produces comedy, intimacy, miscommunication or characterization. Fourth, title translation can spread cultural and semantic information over paratext and narrative instead of satisfying all the purposes in one form. Fifth, Skopos Theory is most compelling not as a replacement for textual analysis but in its application to an existing method.The research therefore exploits selective visibility to address the identification problem. In the selected texts, Iraqi cultural identity is neither totally lost nor totally maintained. Some marks are clarified, generalized or normalized, while others are clearly Iraqi. The resulting English writings are a compromise between legibility and variety. They therefore allow cultural access. If that balance is built on proper interpretation of sources, it can be operationally useful. Functional adequacy fails when the meaning of the source is misunderstood.

7. Conclusion

This essay has reexamined the translation of the Iraqi culture-specific elements in The Dispersal and The American Granddaughter by means of a two-level methodology. The fate of a culturally marked item is governed by Aixelá's CSI framework and Molina and Hurtado Albir's method terminology, which are then tested by Skopos Theory for their ability to satisfy a reconstructed literary objective consisting of target-reader access and significant cultural representation. This prevents one theory from doing two separate analytic jobs.The examples chosen demonstrate that the most effective answers are context-sensitive rather than ideologically homogeneous. This is followed, however, by a preservation of Tashari which reinstates source-cultural presence, but the shift from Tashari to The Dispersal in the English edition privileges rapid thematic access at title level. Azrael is retained with a brief gloss. Aba'a is retained because the scenario allows readers to infer its function. Thus, while normalized wartime language privileges speed and referential clarity, mawwal, extended kinship forms, and Mosul phonology preserve sound-based cultural performance in The American Granddaughter. Mithl al-ward stresses the opposite limit: when contextual meaning is misunderstood, fluency can not save the functional outcome.The main drawback of the research is a methodological precaution as well. Its analysis is restricted to what can be traced. It does not claim statistical supremacy, nor does it claim full-corpus coverage. Further research should develop a complete aligned Arabic–English corpus of both books, classify all CSIs, annotate source and target page numbers from specific editions, and compute inter-coder agreement for categorization of methods.

References

Aixelá, J. F. (1996). Culture-specific items in translation. In R. Álvarez & M. C.-Á. Vidal (Eds.), Translation, power, subversion (pp. 52–78). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.33169489.7

Alkrenawi, F., & Peled-Shapira, H. (2025). Language, nationality and gender: Identity struggles in three novels by Inaam Kachachi. The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies, 11(1). https://doi.org/10.26351/JIMES/11-1/2

Alqahtani, N. K. S. (2023). Beyond victims and perpetrators of September 11: The implicated subject in Inaam Kachachi's The American Granddaughter. Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies, 7(2), 31–43. https://doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol7no2.3

Al-Sari, F. H. H. (2023). Translation of cultural-specific phrases of Kachachi's novel: The American Granddaughter. Misan Journal of Academic Studies, 22(46), 228–238.

AlTalafeeh, A., & Abu Amrieh, Y. (2024). Virtual bonds and transformed homes: Diaspora and ICT in Inaam Kachachi's The Dispersal. An-Najah University Journal for Research - B (Humanities), 38(10), 2003–2028. https://doi.org/10.35552/0247.38.10.2269

Baker, M. (2018). In other words: A coursebook on translation (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Bassnett, S. (2014). Translation studies (4th ed.). Routledge.

Dickins, J., Hervey, S., & Higgins, I. (2017). Thinking Arabic translation: A course in translation method: Arabic to English (2nd ed.). Routledge.

House, J. (2015). Translation quality assessment: Past and present. Routledge.

Kachachi, I. (2008). Al-Hafidah al-Amrikiyyah [The American granddaughter]. Dar al-Jadid.

Kachachi, I. (2010). The American granddaughter (N. Youssef, Trans.). Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing.

Kachachi, I. (2013). Tashari. Dar al-Jadid.

Kachachi, I. (2022). The dispersal (I. Jaber, Trans.). Interlink Books.

Kachachi, I. (2023, February 5). Fiction: Inaam Kachachi's The Dispersal, or Tashari (I. Jaber, Trans.). The Markaz Review. https://themarkaz.org/fiction-inaam-kachachis-the-dispersal-or-tashari/

Katan, D. (2004). Translating cultures: An introduction for translators, interpreters and mediators (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Leppihalme, R. (1997). Culture bumps: An empirical approach to the translation of allusions. Multilingual Matters.
Molina, L., & Hurtado Albir, A. (2002). Translation techniques revisited: A dynamic and functionalist approach. Meta, 47(4), 498–512. https://doi.org/10.7202/008033ar
Mohammed, E. Y., & Vafa, A. (2024). Marginalized voices in Iraqi fiction: A textual reading of Inaam Kachachi's The Dispersal. Anaphora: Journal of Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies, 7(2), 60–78. https://doi.org/10.30996/anaphora.v7i2.11570
Nord, C. (2018). Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Reiss, K., & Vermeer, H. J. (2014). Towards a general theory of translational action: Skopos theory explained (C. Nord, Trans.). Routledge.
Toury, G. (2012). Descriptive translation studies—and beyond (Rev. ed.). John Benjamins.
Venuti, L. (2018). The translator's invisibility: A history of translation (3rd ed.). Routledge.