

Assessing the Translation of Conceptual and Cultural-Specific Expressions in Contemporary Iraqi Fiction*

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating meaning loss in the English translation of Iraqi postcolonial literature, with a particular focus on Hassan Blasim's *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*, translated by Jonathan Wright, in light of postcolonial theory. It attempts to explore the types of losses in the translated version and how can these losses affect the transmission of original meaning. It hypothesizes that the English translation of the source text indicates significant linguistic and cultural losses that hinder the acceptable representation of the Iraqi social identity. To validate such a hypothesis, a set of concepts are selected from the source texts and are compared to their equivalents in the target texts, then these are analyzed in terms of Al-Masri's (2004) model of linguistic and cultural losses. Moreover, the study adopts a qualitative-quantitative approach, categorizing the types of losses and evaluating their frequency and impact. The findings show that there are two main kinds of losses: semantic and cultural where the former is more frequent than latter ones, yet both contribute to a distortion of the source message and a misrepresentation of the reality of Iraqi society depicted in the original stories. Moreover, the translator's ideological and cultural background seem to influence his translation choices by contributing to an adaptation that aligns with the culture of Western societies. Accordingly, to minimize these losses, translators are recommended to preserve the full linguistic and cultural meaning of the source text by using contextual clarification and incorporating footnotes where necessary.

Keywords: Iraqi postcolonial literature, linguistic and cultural losses, Iraqi social Identity, *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*.

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تقييم ترجمة التعابير المفاهيمية والثقافية الخاصة في الأدب العراقي المعاصر

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي فقدان المعنى في الترجمة الإنجليزية للأدب العراقي ما بعد الاستعمار، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على رواية حسن بلاسم "معرض الجثث وقصص أخرى من العراق"، التي ترجمها جوناثان رايت. وتحاول الدراسة بالأخص استكشاف أنواع الخسائر في النسخة المترجمة وكيف يمكن أن تؤثر هذه الخسائر على نقل المعنى الأصلي حيث تفترض أن الترجمة الإنجليزية لقصص بلاسم القصيرة تحتوي على خسائر لغوية وثقافية كبيرة تعيق التمثيل المقبول للهوية الاجتماعية العراقية. وللتحقق من صحة هذه الفرضية، تم اختيار مجموعة من المفاهيم من النص المصدر ومقارنتها بنظيراتها في النص الهدف، ثم تم تحليلها طبقاً لنموذج المصري (٢٠٠٤) للخسائر اللغوية والثقافية. علاوة على ذلك، تتبنى الدراسة نهجاً نوعياً كمياً، حيث تصنف أنواع الخسائر وتقيم تواترها وتأثيرها. وتُظهر النتائج وجود نوعين رئيسيين من الخسائر: الخسائر الدلالية والخسائر الثقافية، حيث تكون الأولى أكثر شيوعاً من الثانية، إلا أن كليهما يُسهم في تشويه الرسالة الأصلية و واقع المجتمع العراقي المُصوّر في القصص الأصلية. كما يبدو أن الخلفية الأيديولوجية والثقافية للمترجم تؤثر على خياراته في الترجمة، إذ تُسهم في تكييف النص بما يتماشى مع ثقافة المجتمعات الغربية. لذلك، وللحد من هذه الخسائر، يُنصح المترجمون بالحفاظ على المعنى اللغوي والثقافي الكامل للنص الأصلي من خلال توضيح السياق وإضافة الحواشي عند الضرورة.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأدب العراقي ما بعد الاستعمار، الخسائر اللغوية والثقافية، الهوية الاجتماعية العراقية، معرض الجثث وقصص أخرى من العراق.

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1.Introduction

Language and translation have long been fundamental to human communication. While language enables individuals to convey ideas through words, translation facilitates the transfer of these ideas across linguistic boundaries. One significant area where translation plays a crucial role is in postcolonial literature, which engages with “the various modalities of power, identity, and subjectivity” (Nayar, 2008, p.13). Translated literature, in particular, serves as a repository of a society’s cultural, historical, and ideological dimensions. Through literary expression, language reflects the norms, values, and customs of specific civilizations. Thus, language is not merely a set of grammatical rules but a dynamic entity deeply intertwined with social contexts. This complexity makes translation a delicate task, requiring sensitivity to these aspects. Translators do not merely deal with words; they “engage with the exploration of situations constituted by an intense interaction of linguistic, psychological, anthropological, and cultural phenomena” (Schulte, 1987, p. 2). The task of the translator, therefore, is not only to bridge languages but also to mediate worlds, with full transmission of the linguistic, cultural, and ideological dimensions embedded in the ST. Hence, the process of translation is fundamentally a form of interlingual reading and communication. With a sense of responsibility and human nobility, the translator summons himself or is summoned up to mediate between or link a reader to his author (Al-Ali, 2007, p. 2).

Moreover, variations in the semantic, syntactic, and phonetic structures of languages can significantly influence the intended message, often introducing additional layers of meaning to a text. When translating Arabic postcolonial literature into English, a gap frequently arises between the source and target languages due to differences in linguistic systems and cultural contexts. Arabic is deeply rooted in the cultural background of its speakers—encompassing idioms, metaphors, and cultural references—that often lack direct equivalents in other languages. This gap poses a risk of meaning loss, as it dilutes or omits linguistic and cultural nuances. The problem of linguistic and cultural loss becomes particularly evident when foreign translators, seeking to make the text more accessible to target audiences, simplify or modify the

original content, thereby compromising its authenticity and depth. Ultimately, this process can erase the distinct identities and cultural markers embedded in the original text, thereby obscuring its richness and depth. Such loss not only prevents readers from understanding the society portrayed but also diminishes the work's overall literary impact.

Rendering Iraqi literary works into English requires a nuanced sensitivity to identity representation and cultural specificity—especially in works written after the 2003 invasion. Postcolonial literary works are often shaped by the author's personal experiences and are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural environment of their community. In this context, Blasim's short story collection vividly reflects Iraqi traditions, beliefs, values, and expressions, all of which are central to the characters, themes, and emotional tone of the narratives. However, when translated into English, much of this cultural richness is often lost due to linguistic differences and the translator's efforts to adapt the source text (ST) to align with the norms of the target culture. As a result, *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* in English includes omissions, adjustments, and simplifications that significantly alter the original meaning. By overlooking the cultural and ideological dimensions of the ST, the translation offers target readers a skewed perception of Iraq's cultural, social, religious, and political heritage. This disconnect obscures the narrative's original reflection of Iraqi identity and undermines its authenticity. Therefore, such exclusions render the English version inadequate from a source-language perspective, highlighting the need for additional contextual explanations to convey the intended meaning more faithfully.

This study hypothesizes that Jonathan Wright's English translation of Hassan Blasim's *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* incurs substantial linguistic and cultural losses, which not only distort the original portrayal of Iraqi social identity but also lead target readers to a significantly altered understanding of the text's cultural and ideological context. It follows a structured set of procedures. Key concepts from the ST—including culturally specific words, idioms, expressions, metaphors, and proverbs central to representing Iraqi social identity—are identified. These elements are then compared with their equivalents in

the TT using Hanada Al-Masri's (2004) model of linguistic and cultural loss. A source-oriented analysis examines how the translator's lexical and stylistic choices affect the depiction of Iraqi culture and society, with alternative translations proposed and critically evaluated for their accuracy in preserving meaning. These alternatives are reviewed by five university faculty members with relevant expertise to assess their cultural fidelity. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the findings, along with recommendations for translating postcolonial Iraqi literature.

1. Theoretical Background

1.1. Meaning of Loss in Translation

Translation inevitably involves a tension between loss and gain. Punga (2012) defines gain as instances where the TT performs equally or even more effectively than the ST, whereas loss occurs when the ST communicates more effectively than the TT. Bassnett (1980, p. 30) highlights that because no two languages are identical, loss and gain are unavoidable in translation. Similarly, Hervey and Higgins (1992, p. 24) describe loss as "any failure to replicate the ST exactly", while Dickins et al. (2002, p. 21) characterize it as the incomplete replication of the ST in the TT. Scholars such as Bermann & Wood (2005) emphasize that many cultural and linguistic concepts have no direct equivalents in the target language, making some degree of semantic and cultural loss inevitable. Similarly, Tiwiyanti and Bandu (2017) find that using a more general word throughout the translation process causes a loss in translation, for example the use of a neutral or less expressive word or a cultural substitution. Additionally, Baker (1992, p. 21) underlines that translators customarily encounter challenges posed by notions that are unfamiliar or do not have an equivalent in the target language: "[t]he source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or even a type of food".

From another perspective, meaning loss is often linked to translation errors caused by insufficient equivalence between the ST and TT. Nord (1997) notes that such errors occur when the translation fails to achieve its intended function for the target audience, while Hatim and

Mason (1997) associate them with mismatches at grammatical, lexical, or pragmatic levels. “Any piece of language is meant to convey some information to the targeted readers. It is seldom to find some words in a linguistic structure (small or large) that are not informative” (Abdullah, 2023, p.56). In this sense, translation is not simply about reproducing linguistic forms but about capturing the thought, cultural depth, and intent of the original (Martono & Ngadiso, 1995). As Gandin (2009) observes, there is “always something missing” in translation, even when the translator has done a remarkable job.

Various approaches have been developed to address the complexity of loss in translation. Nida (1964) distinguishes between formal equivalence, which emphasizes fidelity to form, and dynamic equivalence, which seeks to reproduce the effect of the ST on the target audience. Catford (1965) similarly identifies formal correspondence and textual equivalence as ways of conceptualizing translation. Newmark (1988) expands this discussion by outlining strategies ranging from literal and semantic translation to communicative and idiomatic translation, showing how different approaches can either preserve or obscure meaning. Baker (1992) further offers a typology of equivalence—at word, grammatical, textual, and pragmatic levels—that illustrates how meaning loss may occur systematically.

From an ideological perspective, Venuti (1995) distinguishes between domestication and foreignization. The former reduces the foreign text to align with target cultural values, while the latter resists assimilation and preserves the foreign elements. Bassnett (2002) emphasizes textual analysis as a way to examine how translators handle idioms and culturally bound metaphors, while Pym (2010) highlights the cross-cultural and ethical dimensions of translation, situating the translator’s work within broader social contexts.

Moving ahead, since the data of the present study stems from postcolonial literature, postcolonial theory is the most relevant here because it offers a comprehensive framework to tackle loss in translation. The following sub-section will delve deeper into this topic.

1.2. Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory or postcolonialism is defined “as that branch of

contemporary theory that investigates and develops propositions about the cultural and political impact of European conquest upon colonized societies, and the nature of those societies' responses" (Ashcroft, 2012, p.xv). Epstein (2014) asserts that the postcolonial perspective is inherently historical, or more accurately genealogical, since it concentrates on two primary aspects: first, the process by which particular actions come to be regarded as "normal," or the creation of norms, and second, it concentrates the power dynamics that define the limits between what is normal and abnormal or inappropriate. Similarly, Elam (2019) states that "postcolonial theory is a body of thought primarily concerned with accounting for the political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social impact of European colonial rule around the world in the 18th through the 20th century". Furthermore, Ivison (2023) hypothesizes that "the term can also be used to describe the concurrent project to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under various forms of imperialism". Postcolonial theory, therefore, examines the impact of colonialism on every aspect of the lives of colonized people (their cultural, literature, political, social, economic, etc.) through a colonial lens, highlighting the consequences of uprooting individuals from their homeland and cultural heritage by tackling diverse issues such as identity, discourse, history, authority, race, gender, religion, authenticity, justice, traditions, and colonial legacies.

After the end of colonialism and the withdrawal of the occupying colonial forces, post-colonial studies arose and gained importance as a result of the tremendous and significant transformations and events that the world witnessed. As Delanty (2000, p. 130) states, "the older ideologies of modernity—capitalist liberal democracy and state socialism—and their geopolitical foundations in east versus west appear to have dissolved into new kinds of binary opposites, such as those of self and other." In a similar vein, Chakravarty (2017) asserts that: Beyond the conventional binaries of colonizer / colonized, First and Third Worlds, or the global North and South, there lies a spectrum of other issues that postcolonial theory needs to address, if it is to survive as a relevant mode of transformative thought and practice (p. 39).

Postcolonialism appeared in several different fields, such as literature, social sciences, philosophy, anthropology, and the humanities. The systematic study of this term appeared first in the 1960s, when scholars from colonized countries began to write about the legacy of colonialism. It was viewed a new perspective that received worldwide attention. Accordingly, Gandhi (1998, p. 5) describes as “a celebrated moment of arrival—charged with the rhetoric of independence and the creative euphoria of self-invention.” The central concepts postcolonial theory revolves around are notions of dependence, inequality, and injustice, which are essential in comprehending and addressing the influence of power dynamics and their aftermath across various aspects of life.

Said (1978) offers a remarkable contribution in understanding hidden ideologies, the power dynamics and biases that exist in representations of different cultures and societies. He outlines western perspectives of the East, as an attempt to challenge the conventional Western ideas about the Orient and the Arab and Islamic worlds. He emphasizes that the conventional form and culturally stereotyped depictions of the Orient still have a heavy impact on the various organizations such as educational institutions, political groups, and the mainstream media in the West, which has enhanced and strengthened the hold of the nineteenth-century intellectual and innovative demonology of “the mysterious Orient” (p.26). He further describes orientalism as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”. In addition, he claims that Western authors, poets, novelists, theologians, political scientists, economics, and imperial governments have consistently depicted the Orient as the primitive, uncivilized, and as an opposite of the advanced and civilized West. This discourse in Said’s opinion has been employed to serve two primary dimensions, which are: either as an excuse for invasions and military operations against the Orient, or as a justification for the calamities and horrors that go along with them. Furthermore, he believes that when the occupying countries withdrew their military powers, they ensured to put another force in position or, in other words, a more powerful weapon that facilitates and

supports the continuation of their invasion operations, i.e., the occupying armies never totally withdrew, but, instead, they used other strategies represented by the colonial legacies such as chaos, dictatorships, corruption, civil conflicts, and bloodshed to ensure the survival of their domination. Correspondingly, Said maintains that the colonizer establishes a language and a culture, while the cultures, histories, beliefs, and languages of the Oriental citizens are disregarded and even misrepresented by the colonialists in their efforts to control these indigenous populations and to take advantage of their wealth under the cover of enlightening, civilizing, and humanizing them.

Expanding on this, Said (1978, p.17) proposes that all what has been written about the East contains misleading presumptions that served as a foundation for Western perceptions of the East, i.e., as an instrument for supporting and legitimizing European and American colonial and imperial practices against the Arab-Islamic peoples and their traditions. He declares that these writings are explicitly biased, portraying the Orient as absurd, weird, weak, feminized "Other", in contrast with the sensible, familiar, powerful, masculine "West". Overall, Said (1978, p.5) insists that "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony".

2. Research Methodology

2.1. The Adopted Model

Since the current study addresses losses in translation between two different languages, i.e., Arabic and English, Hanada Al-Masri's (2004) model of linguistic and cultural losses is the chosen model for analyzing meaning loss in translation. Where The type of loss is determined according to the amount of information that is present in the ST but not preserved or transferred well in the TT. According to Al-Masri (2004, pp. 74–137) the classification of meaning loss in literary translation can be divided into two main categories: linguistic losses and cultural losses. Linguistic losses refer to the omission or alteration of verbal cues during the translation process and can be further classified into three types. Tolerable losses affect the portrayal of the text but do not severely distort its meaning, as in the translation of the ST (مسألة الحلال والحرام وأمر)

(الشريعة) into “Questions of Islamic law”. Serious losses result in substantial changes to the original message by omitting pragmatic implications or altering connotative meanings, such as rendering (المركب) simply as “Ship”. Complete losses occur when verbal signs from the source text are entirely omitted or excluded in the translation.

Cultural losses concern the extent to which cultural information embedded in the source language is diminished or erased in the target language. These can be grouped into four types. Explicit losses arise from literal translation, where linguistic equivalence is prioritized over cultural meaning, as in translating (جربوع) directly as “Gerbil”. Implicit losses involve the erosion of the cultural essence reflected in the literary heritage of the ST, such as translating (بالعباس) into “I swear”. Modified losses occur when cultural expressions in the ST are replaced with culturally similar expressions in the TT, as in rendering (راح تبلعني مصيبة) as “I will run out of luck”. Finally, complete cultural losses happen when the translator entirely omits cultural information present in the ST.

The following figure outlines the above mention model:

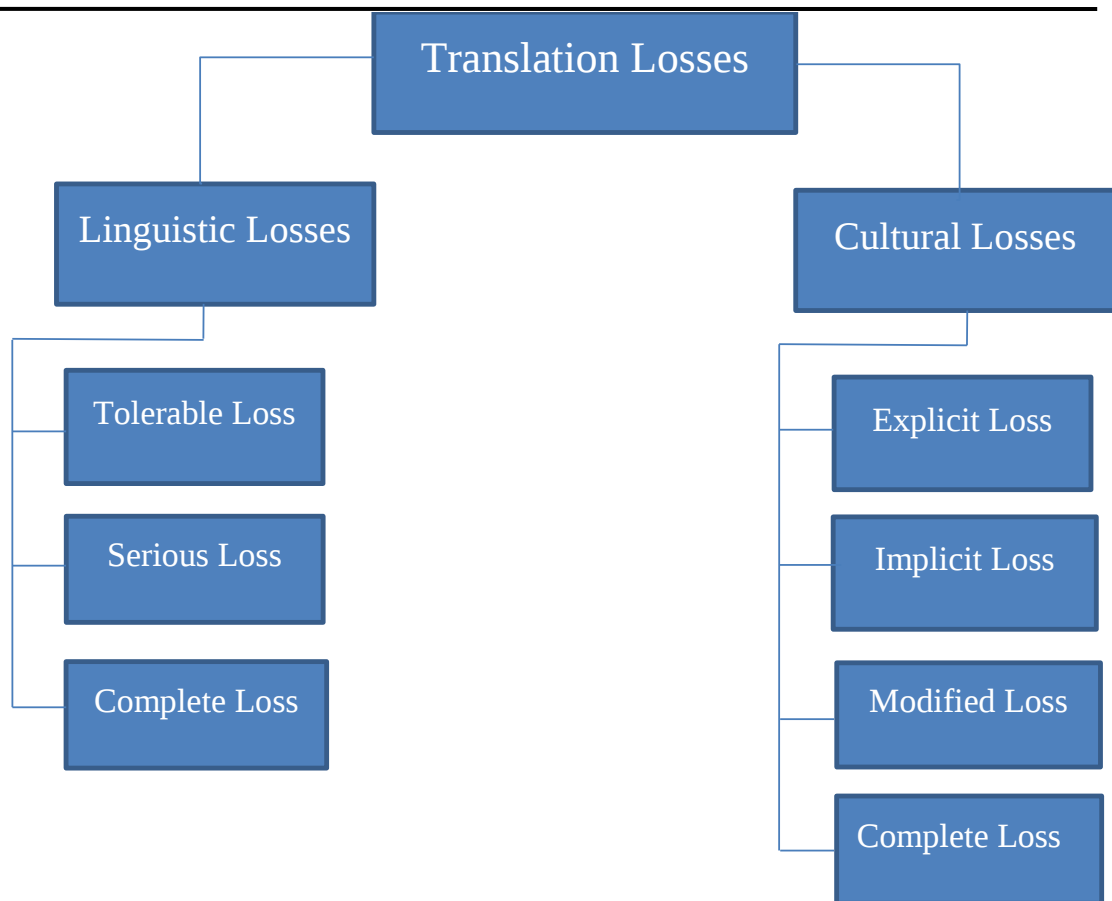


Figure (1): Al-Masri's (2004) Taxonomy of linguistic and cultural loss

2.2. Data Collection

The selection of data in this study is guided by the purpose of the present research, which is to assess the linguistic and cultural losses in the translation of postcolonial Iraqi literature. Therefore, the chosen data comprises a diverse range of culturally and semantically specific items that were extracted from Hassan Blasim's *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* and their English translations provided by Jonathan Wright. The researchers have focused on the neglected aspect of meaning in the TT through collecting the data. The data include textual passages that demonstrate losses at various levels: lexical, grammatical,

pragmatic, and cultural. These excerpts were collected and categorized in tables according to their types of losses, i.e., tolerable, serious, complete, explicit, implicit, and modified. This dataset served as the basis for both the quantitative counting of loss occurrences and the subsequent qualitative analysis.

2.3. Data Analysis

Every academic investigation must be grounded in a clear methodological approach to ensure the validity of its findings. Therefore, after collecting the data from the source and target texts of *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*, the analysis was carried out depending on Al-Masri's (2004) model of linguistic and cultural losses using a mixed-method approach. The researchers adopt the quantitative method initially, which deals with data that contains numbers, in order to collect the cases of meaning loss from the translated text and represent them numerically. Each type was counted and organized in tables that display the number of occurrences, percentages, and loss types. After quantifying the data, the study proceeds with a qualitative method that involves a detailed analysis of selected excerpts from the ST and TT.

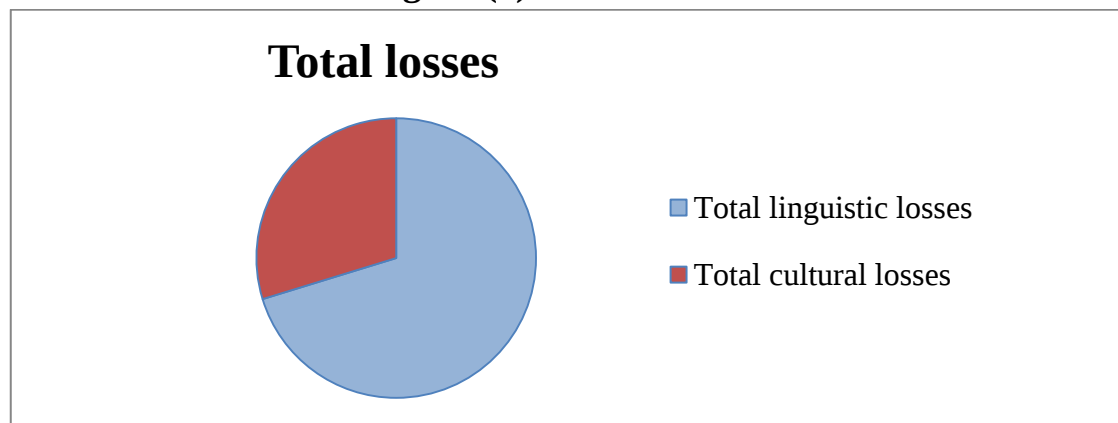
2.4. Results

The obtained results indicate that the translator's selection of equivalents during the meaning transfer process influences the source text in multiple ways, leading to various kinds of losses. These losses are divided into linguistic and cultural as can be seen in Table (3.4.1) and Figure (3.4.1) below:

Table (1): Classification of Losses

Loss Type		Number	Percentage
Linguistic	Tolerable	32	17%
	Serious	64	34%
	Complete	40	21%
	Explicit	9	4%

Cultural	Implicit	19	9%
	Modified	26	15%
	Complete	0	0%

Figure (2): Total Losses

Linguistic losses, on the one hand, form (72%), with (136) instances categorized into three sub-types: tolerable losses, which compose (32) instances and represent (17%) of total losses; serious losses include (64) cases, which stand for (34%) of losses; and finally complete linguistic losses, which involve (40) instances that form (21%) of all losses identified. Cultural losses, on the other hand, stand for (28%) of the total percentage of losses, with (54) instances divided among three sub-types: explicit losses which are observed in (9) occasions, which compose (4%) of losses; implicit losses stand for (19) instances, which represent (9%); and modified losses which are (26) cases, and represent (15%) of the total losses. It is worth mentioning here that there are no complete cultural losses. Overall, the data can clearly illustrate that linguistic losses, especially serious and complete losses, are the most predominant types identified in the data.

2.5. Discussion

As already hinted, the model currently used is Al-Masri's (2004) taxonomy of losses which consists two primary categories, which are linguistic and cultural losses. Each of these two categories includes

specific subtypes: linguistic loss is divided into tolerable, serious, and complete, whereas cultural loss includes explicit, implicit, modified, and complete losses. Here, it is noteworthy to mention that the following discussion of examples focuses on six subcategories only, as the last one, i.e., complete cultural loss, which is supposed to involve the complete omission of the source cultural information does not exist in the translation. This could be attributed to the translator's use of communicative translation, which preserves the original idea or message rather than allowing a full loss of cultural ingredients. Hence, the following commentary will underline the remaining six types of loss. However, and due to the time and space constraints, only three important examples from each subcategory are discussed.

In the analysis, the word in question will be bolded to draw the reader's attention. Since the meaning of words cannot be separated from their context, the context of each identified word will be given in both the source and target languages. In addition, information such as parentheses involving the page number of each text will be provided. The commentary will illustrate the original and the conveyed meaning, and then the neglected aspect of meaning through translation will be elaborated. After addressing the various losses, a more acceptable translation will be provided whenever it is necessary to capture the overlooked part of the original meaning.

2.5.1. Linguistic Losses

This sort of loss is dominant as it consists of (136) cases. These are primarily resulted from modification, mistranslation, omission, and ostensible interpretation of the semantic and pragmatic counterparts. Following this, the analysis will start with a breakdown of the three types of linguistic losses, which are as follows:

3.5.1.1. Tolerable Losses: they occur when there is an impact on the aesthetic values of the text. They are viewed as 'tolerable' because they do not significantly affect the content of the message. Yet, they involve modifications of or exclusions from the original text leading to influence its aesthetic features. The total number in the translated version is (32) which have led to losses in the author's distinctive style such as exaggeration, iteration, rhythm, acoustic effects, rhetorical patterns, and

discourse markers, and losses in the semantic relations between translated words, such as synonymy, all of which are listed in the following table:

Table (2): Tolerable Losses

Page No.	ST	Page No.	TT	Suggested Translation
13	أتمنى احتضارا داخل مركبة فضائية	160	I would like to have my death in a spaceship	I wish for an end within a space vehicle
14	عزائي و سلوتي	161	My solace and my comfort	My solace and my peace
19	يسلط أحد رجال المقاومة سكيناً على رأسه	168	A resistance fighter holding a knife to my neck	One of the resistance fighters points a knife over his head
30	مخيلة قتالية لا تكل ولا تمل	40	Indefatigable imagination in the art of combat	Tireless and relentless fighting imagination
57	اخذت العافية تدب في جسم الحي	87	The neighborhood acquired a new vitality and prosperity	Vitality began to flow back into the neighborhood
62	قال بصوت مسموع	189	He said to himself	He said in a loud voice
63	منحورهم خبزهم وبيوتهم	190	Fed and housed them	Offered them their bread and houses
73	العالم اليوم متصل بعضه ببعض بأكثر من نفق ودهليز	9	The world today is linked together by more than a tunnel and a corridor.	The world today is linked piece by piece by more than a tunnels and corridors
74	فتأتي أنت لا غيرك	10	Then you come, just you	Then you come, no one but you
93	يمكنني أن أحدثك اليوم عن نهايته	129	I can tell you about how he died	I can tell you today about his ending
94	قصائد فسق وكفر قصيرة	131	Depraved poems	Blasphemous and immoral short poems

99	ولد طيب ومسالم لا أهدش ولا أنش	134	Peaceful boy who wouldn't hurt a fly	A good and peaceful boy, not assertive or proactive
111	مع مطلع النهار	175	As the day proceeds	The first light of day
113	طفله الرضيع بين يديه	178	His baby in front of his eyes	His infant baby between his arms
126	مسألة الحلال والحرام وأمور الشريعة	150	Questions of Islamic law	The matters of what is permissible and prohibited, and the issues of Sharia
131	كانت بشرته داكنة وخشنة	70	His face was dark and rough	His skin was dark and rough
149	وسامه ملفتة للنظر	98	He was actually quite handsome	his handsomeness was eye-catching
153	أختار تفصيلاً معيناً وأبدأ في البحث عن أشكاله ومضامينه الأخرى في دهاليز الكتب	29	I would latch onto one particular detail and start looking for references and other versions of it in other writings.	I choose a specific detail and begin searching for its forms and other meanings in the alcoves of books
156	تكشف أوراق القتلة المأجورين	34	Hand over hired killers	Reveal the details about the hired killers
160	أصبحت ومروان روحاً واحدة	52	Marwan and I were like a single spirit	Marwan and I became one soul
163	صرخة في وجه الوادي	56	Yell that filled the valley	let out a shout toward the valley
163	آه يا فيلسوف	56	What a philosopher	Oh, what a philosopher
167	ألا تستمع إلى القرآن	62	Don't you Read the Quran	Don't you listen to the Quran
168	تقول في ما تكتبه: الحدود هي جهلنا	62	When you write, you can choose the limits and call the rest our ignorance	You convey in your words: boundaries represent our ignorance.
168	كان يتكلم بصورة مؤثرة جداً	63	His voice full of emotion	He spoke in a deeply moving way

169	احتفينا بإفراط بذكرياتنا من أيام الإعدادية	64	We had a wild time that night raising a toast to our memories of high school.	We celebrated excessively our memories from high school.
169	قادتنا ذكرياتنا إلى الوصول إلى المسمى ب (العقري)	64	Somebody brought up that boy at school called "the genius."	Our memories led us to remember the so-called (The Genius)
182	شفت أنواع وأشكال المشاكل بحياتي	13	I've seen all kinds of problems in my life	I have seen all kinds of problems and challenges in my life
183	ادنى فمه من فمي	13	He put his face close to mine	He leaned his mouth near to mine
188	اسم الله ونبيه	20	Allah and Muhammad	The name of Allah and His Prophet Muhammad
189	صارت البوصلة بمثابة قطعة من جسده	21	The compass then became inseparable from his person.	The compass became like an integral part of his body
233	نحن أصبحنا مثل قناع واحد، مادته الوجع والعذاب	123	And we all wore the same face , a face shaped by pain and torment	We have become like one mask made of pain and torment

3.5.1.2. Serious Losses: these occur in two situations. The first is when the pragmatic impact of words and expressions is overlooked and the second is when the connotative meanings of the above are not fully understood. The overall identified instances are (64), which are primarily focusing on pragmatic aspects, mistranslations, and social deixis as can be observed in the table below. As mentioned earlier only three examples will be elaborated.

Table (3): Serious Losses

Page No.	ST	Page No.	TT	Suggested Translation
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11	محاولة عبثية	157	Impossible	Futile attempt
15	المذاهب	162	Religious denominations	Sects
15	السقوط	162	Invasion	The fall
16	تفضل	164	Off you go	Go ahead
18	ذباح	167	Killer	Slaughter
29	الشمسة	39	Golden	Sunny
29	المصطبة	39	The platform	The bench
30	حماسية	40	Upbeat	Enthusiastic
31	مسالمين	41	Reluctant	Peaceful
34	المتعفنة	45	Decayed	Decomposed
54	بشرات متفحمة	82	Swarthy complexions	Charred complexions
55	ومرت الأيام... كان جدي يطلق حسرة عميقة وهو يمد حرف الألف في كلمة الأيام.	84	The days passed." My grandfather gave a deep sigh and prolonged the a of "passed."	And the days passed... My grandfather sighed deeply as he stretched the letter 'a' of passed days .
56	أمراض مستعصية	86	Chronic diseases	Incurable diseases
58	فهمنا	88	Heard	Understood
59	مسوخ	90	Stooges	Freak
64	يجهد	190	Tried hard	Struggling
65	الأعدادية	192	Middle school	High school
66	يفجر	191	Planted	Blowing up
69	دراسة	3	Review	Study
69	نبذة	3	Note	Overview
69	المتعاونين	4	Volunteers	Collaborators
69	اجور	3	Salary	Wages
70	سفاحين	4	Killers	Thugs
70	الأرعن	5	lightweight	Foolish

72	ربما تماديت كثيرا في الحديث معك	7	Perhaps I've told you too much	Perhaps I have gone too far in talking with you
72	أشفق	7	Worried	Pity
72	المركب	8	The ship	The boat
73	مرمم الجثث	9	Mortician	Body Restorer
94	نواب الضباط في الجيش	130	Junior army officers	Deputy officers in the army
95	الواقع	133	Event	Reality
100	رجال الدولة	32	Politicians	Statesmen
100	المقدس	33	Bloody	Secret
110	كلاسيكية	175	Ancient	Classic
110	عود تنظيف الأسنان	175	Toothbrush	Toothpick
115	الحن	180	Song	Melodies
119	الشجار	140	Argument	Fight
121	بالوعة	142	Tank	Sewer manhole
124	صرت ساق أبي وذراعيه	147	Acted as my father's drudge	I became my father's strength
127	قصفنا	150	Invaded	Bombed
134	الضياع	72	Violence	Loss
137	جنون	76	So seriously	Insanity
145	السماء	93	space	Sky
145	اخذ بطانيته وفرشها بعيدا	93	Picked up his blanket and other bedding	He picked up his blanket and spread it away
145	نسمة هواء عذبة	93	Force of nature	Breath of fresh air
145	المتوسطة	94	High school	Intermediate school

149	بمحبة إلهية كبيرة	98	Extraordinary selfless love	With great divine love
149	مجاملة	98	Politely	Thankfulness
151	صارمة	28	Sophisticated	Strict
155	مسعور	32	Madman	Rabid
160	حافة الطريق العام	53	The turn off the main road	Public Road Edge
160	بيت المقتول	53	The dead man's house	The murdered man's house
162	تافهة	55	Pathetic	Trivial
164	الأرق	57	Sweat	Insomnia
168	بالغ القلق	63	Uneasy	Extremely anxious
170	الله يخليك	65	God keep you	For God's sake
183	ليلاً	14	Evening	Night
184	الريف	15	Country	Countryside
186	أمره	17	Told him	Ordered him
189	اهمية	21	Powers	Important
219	السبع	105	Al-saba	The lion
221	مقهى الشعب	107	Shaab coffee	People coffee
222	الكنبة	108	The bench	The couch
222	بابا علاوي قم واقعد على الكنبه	108	Hey , Allawi, come and sit on the bench	Allawi, sweetheart get up and sit on the couch
231	الهلع	120	Alarmed	Panic

3.5.1.3. Complete Losses: This subcategory involves the complete exclusion of verbal signs from the ST. It can be referred to as tolerable when the loss is not central to the essence of the original message and merely influences the artistic quality of the text. But when the original text is taken out from its specific usage and pragmatic context, the loss is

serious. The sum number of complete linguistic losses is (40) which primarily focus on adjectives, emotion verbs, discourse markers, and cultural terms that are all included in the following table below followed by the three discussed examples.

Table (4): Complete Losses

Page No.	ST	Page No.	TT	Suggested Translation
11	رجل نحيل في نهاية الثلاثين من العمر	157	He was in his late thirties.	A skinny man in his late thirties.
11	سد بالطابوق حديثا	157	which had recently been blocked up	which had recently been bricked up
18	على كل حال, أظن إن ما أقوله لا علاقة له بطلب اللجوء	166	What I'm saying has nothing to do with my asylum request.	However , I think what I'm saying has nothing to do with my asylum request
18	القدرة على الوقوف في وجه الإنسان حين يوجه إنسانيته, أو حتى الشعر المتطرف, صوب الهاوية	166	The capacity to stand in the face of a man when he is pushing his own humanity toward the abyss	The capacity to stand in the face of a man when he is directing his humanity or even extreme poetry towards the abyss
69	لا تقلق, ففي كل الاحوال ستتلقى اجورك كاملة	3	In all phases you will receive your salary in full	Don't worry , in all cases you will receive your full wages
70	تفضل, هذه هي الهدية الأولى	4	This is your first present	Here you go , this is the first present

71	في الواقع أنا أحب الإيجاز والبساطة والصورة الصادمة	5	I like concision, simplicity, and the striking image.	Actually , I like concision, simplicity, and the striking image.
72	الذي سار بنفسه صوب حتفه	8	Omission	The one who is marching to his own doom
97	الهاربين من الجيش أوالمتهمين بمساعدة ميليشيات البيشمركة	135	Deserting the army or for helping the Peshmerga militias	Deserting the army or being accused of helping the Peshmerga militias
109	معلمتان	173	Teachers	Two female teachers
112	غارقة بدموعها التي شوّهت مكياجها	177	Omission	She was crying her eyes out and her tears smudged all her makeup.
119	جائزة مالية ثمينة	139	Valuable prizes	Precious cash prize
129	كنت فريسة الاثنين: الألم والرعب	152	I was in pain and frightened	I was the victim of both : pain and terror .
137	صورة لخلية ميتة تخيلت	77	I imagined a dead cell	I imagined a picture of a dead cell.
147	مقر الضباط	95	Headquarters building	Officers headquarters
149	لم تمنع من تخمين عمره	149	Omission	Did not prevent guessing his age
154	الحيوانات الطوطمية	31	The animals	Totem animals

155	مهمة الأختيال	32	The mission	The assassination mission
160	كنا أطفالاً نسرقة الحلويات من الدكاكين	52	We would steal sweets from shops	We were kids stealing sweets from shops.
161	زميلته	54	His colleague	His female colleague
163	طفلتين	57	Children	Two baby girls
164	أنت تشبه الجنود حين تعلق خوذة اللامبالاة	57	Omission	You look like a soldier when you wear the helmet of indifference.
169	واضح أنها تراجيديا تافهة!	64	It was all a bit of a tragedy!	Obviously , it's a bit of a tragedy
183	بس هذا مو هو المهم	13	Omission	But, that's beside the point
183	صبرها الصخري	14	Her endurance	Her steadfast endurance
185	أشبع أبنه ضربا	16	Beat up his son	Beat up his son severely
187	اسمع مهدي أخويه	19	Listen, Mahdi	Listen, Mahdi my brother
187	قلادة ذهب ثمينة	19	A golden pendant	A precious golden pendant
187	غارة الأمن الإيراني على بيت المهربين	19	Iranian security raided the house	The Iranian security raided on the Smugglers house

188	لم تخذش جثة شيخ المجاهدين، بمقدرة من الله	20	Azzam's body was seemingly untouched.	The body of Sheikh Al- Mujahideen remained unscathed, by God's Power
190	أجلسه مراد حربة على ركبتيه على حافة الحفرة	23	Omission	Murad Harba (Bayonet) made him sit on his knees on the edge of the hole
219	خوش ولد ابن عائلة وزلما	106	A good lad	A good lad, from a respectable family, and a reliable man
220	حين يصعب اللحاق بهم وتكون الكرة بعيدة في الطرف الثاني من الساحة، يستخدم جعفر الحكم منظاره لمتابعة المباراة	107	Omission	When it's hard to catch up with them and the ball's away at the second end of the yard, Jafar uses his binoculars to follow the match.
223	طوال سنوات	109	Omission	Throughout the years
223	طوال سنوات تقلبت أحوالنا	110	Omission	Things change with the seasons
224	لكن ما هي قيمتها!! وما الذي يمكن لمجاز أن يفعله في هذا العالم؟!	111	Omission	But what is its value!! And what can a metaphor do in this world?!

227	تَلْبِي شَغَفَهَا بِهِذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ	115	Omission	That gives her a sense of fulfillment toward her passion in life.
228	لَكِنِّهَا بَدَتْ لِي مَجْرَدَ أَفْكَارٍ كَارْتُونِيَّةٍ مَثِيرَةٍ لِلسَّخَرِيَّةِ	116	They struck me as just laughable.	But it seemed to me as just cartoonish, laughable thoughts
231	كَانَ زَوْجُهَا يُرِيدُ التَّطَوُّعَ لِلشَّرْطَةِ بَعْدَ أَنْ يَأْسَ مِنَ الْعَثُورِ عَلَى عَمَلٍ	120	Omission	Her husband wanted to volunteer for the police after he lost hope of finding a job.
234	ضَبَاطُ شَرْطَةٍ وَجُنُودٍ	124	Policemen	Police officers and soldiers

2.5.2. Cultural Losses

As already hinted, this category is less than linguistic ones as it consists (54) cases which are associated with cultural information loss in the original language. They include:

3.5.2.1.Explicit Losses: they take place when cultural information is lost in literal translation which influences verbal signs that represent deep cultural elements. There are (9) instances of explicit losses in the whole translation as summarized in the table below:

Table (5): Explicit Losses

Page No.	ST	Page No.	TT	Suggested Translation
54	العربنجية	83	Arbanjiy	footnote
56	بركة	85	Baraka or spiritual power	transliteration/footnote

63	ساحة باب الشرقي	189	Eastern Gate Square	footnote
116	عباءة	182	Shawl	Abaya
117	افاعي الحصار الطائرة	182	Flying vipers of economic sanctions	(U.S. military aircraft)
167	حرام	61	Wrong	Sinful
185	جربوع	16	Gerbil	footnote
223	بالعباس أبو فاضل	109	Ali's son Abbas	footnote
226	عمامة	114	Turban	Amama

3.5.2.2. Implicit Losses: these are tied to the heart of the source culture as embodied in its literary heritage. The sample indicated (19) examples of implicit losses including those of idioms, social practices, historical events, lifestyles as represented through metaphors, and proverbs. They are shown in the following table.

Table (6): Implicit Losses

Page No.	ST	Page No.	TT	Suggested Translation
69	إشهار	3	Display	Public display
96	مثلوا بجثث البعثيين	133	Strung up the bodies of the Baathists	Mutilated the bodies of Baathists
97	الزوري	135	Carp	Zoori Fish
109	طاحونة المستقبل	174	Powerhouse	The engine of the future
126	صليتك ركعتين	149	Perform your prayers	Pray the morning prayer

134	جماعات الإيمان الجديدة ستصل إلى دفة الحكم وتصبح البلاد معابد ظلامية	73	the new faith- based groups would come to power and impose their obscurantist ideology.	The new faith groups will come to power and the country will become temples of darkness
148	تشريب	98	Stew	Tashreeb
148	يابسة	98	Beans	White dry beans stew
153	فرن للصمون	30	Bakery	Samoon Bakery
154	انخلت روحي من مكانها	31	I was completely devastated	My spirit was completely crushed
154	أقلب في البوم سنوات حياتي	31	Reminisce a little about the events of my life	I leaf through the album of my life's memories.
160	تلطم	53	Slapping her face	Beating herself in grief with the others
163	كأن عالماً نحن كان واقعياً أليفاً مصنوعاً من صوامل!	56	As if our own world weren't strange and incoherent enough.	As if our own world was a familiar reality made from pieces that integrate smoothly together.
183	هاي الدنيا كلاوات	13	In this world you need to be street-smart	This world is full of tricks
184	ينهض أبي ويجلدها بلا انقطاع بعقاله	14	My father stand up, take the cord out of his headdress and whip her	My father stand up, take the cord out of his head which worn over the ghutra and whip her

184	صب ماء الوضوء على يدي الدعوتي أبيها	15	Pouring water over the hands of her Daawa party father before he prayd	Pouring ablution water over the hands of her Daawa party father
185	كان صيته كشقاوة لا يقهر ذائعا في كل أنحاء المدينة	17	His reputation for ruthless delinquency spread throughout the city.	His reputation as invincible thug spread throughout the city.
220	بالعباس	107	I swear	Footnote
226	ابنكم مخلوي الجن	114	Your son is in league with the jinn	your son connected with Jinn in a special relationship

3.5.2.3. Modified Losses: these losses arise when ST cultural terms are substituted with their corresponding TT. The sample consists of (26) instances which include proverbs and culturally significant expressions tied to the original environment. These are mentioned in the table below.

Table (7): Modified Losses

Page No.	ST	Page No.	TT
13	70 كيلو	160	155 pounds
15	الرجل الأعور	157	Man with one eye
17	اليوم الأسود	164	Rainy day
18	دراسته المتوسطة	166	Intermediate education
29	سيدي القاضي	19	Your Honor
57	فانوس	87	Lantern
64	90 كيلو	190	Two hundred pounds
73	دهليز	9	Corridor
100	أحذرك من أن تلعب معي	32	You'd better not be pulling my leg
125	غراب البين	149	The bird of ill omen
121	ثلاثة دنانير	142	Ten dollars

124	بساط من السكاكين	146	A bed of nails
124	القلم والبندقية فوهة واحدة	146	The pen can shoot bullets as deadly as the rifle
126	سأذبحك من الوريد إلى الوريد	148	I'll slit your throat
147	كوسج	96	Shark
150	تنحج	100	Cleared his throat
156	اسم مستعار	33	Pseudonym
159	الله يخليك	51	For God's sake
160	10 دولار	52	Fifteen thousand
160	تنانير الطين	52	Clayovens
183	راح تبلعني مصيبة	13	I will run out of luck
185	الفيترجي	16	Car mechanic
190	مسحاة وقرمة	22	Pick and shovel
190	ختم من نار	23	Branding iron
219	ما زال ابن البارحة	105	Still young at heart
224	صيدلية الرحمة	111	The angel of mercy.

2.6. Validity

To assess the validity of the proposed translations in this study, it has been introduced to five experts in the field of translation. Their comments were positive regarding the majority of the translations provided by the researchers for original texts. It is worth noting that before initiating the analysis process, the selected data with their classifications and alternative translations were shared with the jury, whose insights played a crucial role throughout the analysis. Additionally, they provided valuable suggestions that were taken into consideration to enhance the quality of the study's results. The jury members consist of five experts:

- 1- Prof. Dr. Alaa Hussein Oda from the University of Basrah, College of Education, Department of English.
- 2- Assist. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Abdul-Zahra Oraibi from the University of Basrah, College of Arts, Department of Translation.

- 3- Assist. Prof. Dr. Ahmed Manea Hoshan from the University of Basrah, College of Arts, Department of English.
- 4- Assist. Prof. Dr. Ali Madhlloom Hussein from Al-Ma'aqal University, College of Arts.
- 5- Assist. Prof. Hashim Qatea Lazim from Shatt Al-Arab University.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

In light of analyzing the translated version of Hassan Blasim's *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*, several conclusions can now be drawn regarding the translator's choices, the underlying ideological and cultural influences, and the extent of the losses that occur during the translation process:

1. The analysis revealed that there were two primary types of losses: linguistic and cultural, which highly affect the identity of the original text. The most common sub-types of linguistic losses are the serious and complete losses, which affect the semantic values of the ST. On the other hand, the dominant sub-types of cultural losses include implicit and modified losses, which affect the cultural experience of the ST. Overall, linguistic losses are more predominant, making up 72% of the total losses, while cultural losses account for 28%. Such calculations show that the task of the translator was to reshape the ST with the TT cultural background as he restricts the text within the boundaries of the target culture, making the reflection of Iraqi identity in the narrative unavailable to the target audience.
2. The primary causes of linguistic and cultural losses can be attributed to the translator's shifts of the original meaning, such as omitting words or expressions, ignoring cultural references, misrepresenting original terms, and adapting the original text according to the standards of the target language. These losses are at several levels (words, phrases, and sentences), and alter the original sentence structure, tone, and context. Linguistic losses range from tolerable alterations in style to serious obstacles that prevent the message's transmission. On the other hand, cultural losses range from modified losses in the original cultural settings

to explicit losses that obscure the source cultural connotations. Such losses may lead the target readers to misinterpret the motivations and behaviours of the characters, i.e., making the TT less representative of the source culture's realities. Consequently, both linguistic and cultural losses affect the authenticity of the original translated work.

3. The translator's cultural background and ideological perspectives influence the final output of translation, which prevents rendering the ST without losing the essence of the source meaning as he changes the source material to align with foreign norms by selecting certain equivalents over others. This results in either the simplification, omission, or alteration of the original meaning. His choices of more straightforward phrases affect the ST's artistic quality, which reduces the effectiveness of rhetorical and figurative language. Furthermore, political, historical, and religious references are frequently modified to align with Western literary expectations, while the culturally embedded expressions that carry social and cultural weight are replaced with Western equivalents. These adaptations might enhance readability for English-speaking audiences, but they also alter the ideological and cultural perspective of the ST and separate the TT from its original context. Accordingly, the unsuitable equivalents to the ST contribute to the losses observed in TT and cause undervaluation of the original literary piece as it sacrifices much of the aesthetic value and pragmatic depth that characterize the original text. Thus, the translation does not fully transmit Blasim's authentic voice but rather presents a version shaped by the translator's cultural and ideological influences.
4. These losses hindered a full understanding of the specific meanings embedded in the ST, which contribute to the misrepresentation of Iraqi social identity by reducing its linguistic and cultural richness and altering the original social realities, i.e., when cultural markers, idiomatic expressions, and social customs are softened or replaced with generic equivalents, the distinctiveness of Iraqi identity diminishes. To sum up, the

translator's decision to focus primarily on simplicity in the translation constrains the ST within the framework of the target culture, stripping it of its uniqueness and reshaping it as a subordinate culture in the TT.

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Iraqi native translators should take responsibility for providing suitable translations of Iraqi literature, particularly postcolonial works, with a greater focus on the cultural and linguistic aspects of the texts. In doing so, they can offer a more accurate representation of Iraqi culture and identity to a global audience, fostering a deeper appreciation of its literary heritage.
2. In translating postcolonial literature, a source-focused approach is crucial. Translators should use methods such as footnotes, expanded meanings, and contextual explanations to accurately convey the full meaning of culturally loaded terms or concepts, while maintaining readability and minimizing cultural and linguistic losses.
3. Increasing awareness of how the ideological bias of foreign translators influences the full transmission of the original work's identity is important. This can be achieved by encouraging translators to participate in seminars, workshops, and training courses that focus on the ethical responsibility of representing marginalized cultures in postcolonial translation. Additionally, such initiatives can highlight the impact of a translator's ideology on the audience's reception of the work.
4. Foreign translators should recognize that they have to strike a balance between preserving the richness of the source text (ST) and adapting it to the norms of the target language, without simplifying the original work. They must maintain the linguistic and cultural aspects, especially when dealing with postcolonial narratives.
5. To ensure a balanced transfer of meaning and an accurate representation of the source identity, foreign translators should collaborate with cultural specialists, native speakers, or Iraqi

expatriate translators who have extensive knowledge of both Iraqi and English cultures—especially when translating idioms, metaphors, and cultural expressions.

The study also suggests the below topics that may require investigation:

1. Further studies on the representation of Iraqi identity in a culturally appropriate manner should be conducted by researchers in the field of postcolonial literature translation. These studies should apply various translation theories and models, alongside empirical methods such as questionnaires and interviews. Additionally, research on the reception of translated Iraqi literature by foreign audiences could reveal how target readers perceive texts with significant linguistic and cultural losses, and whether this affects their ability to fully engage with the society's struggles, memories, and cultural essence as presented in the original work.
2. Given that the translator Jonathan Wright has translated many works of original Arabic literature, his translations may lack cultural appropriateness in conveying the intended meaning of the original authors. Therefore, studies examining his translations are necessary.
3. Future studies may focus on examining the differences between two translations of the same postcolonial Iraqi literary work—one by a native speaker and the other by a non-native speaker of the source language. Such an analysis could explore how linguistic and cultural differences influence the translation outcomes and, in turn, affect the representation of the original text's identity.

Note:

* This study is based on an MA thesis with the same title “Assessing the Translation of Conceptual and Cultural- Specific Expressions in Contemporary Iraqi Fiction” ,in 2025, written by the first researcher Zainab Jamal Hassan, under the supervision of the second researcher Prof. Dr. Jasim Khalifah Sultan Al-Maryani

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