

A Proposed Code of Ethics for Professional Translation in Saudi Arabia: A Survey of Translators' Perceptions

Eisa Ahmad S Asiri¹ and Amal Abdelsattar Metwally²

¹Assistant Professor, Translation Department, and ²Assistant Professor, Translation Department, College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, KSA

ealeisa@kku.edu.sa

Abstract. This study explores translation ethics in the context of Saudi Arabia's professional translation industry; a subject that has recently received substantial scholarly attention. The study aims to investigate the views of translators with respect to the ethical principles that should be included in the final code of ethics applied to professional translation in Saudi Arabia. Three influential professional codes of ethics (the Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT), the Code of Ethics and Professional Practice of the American Translators Association (ATA), and the Translator's Charter of the International Federation of Translators (FIT)) were reviewed and examined with reference to their different views on translation ethics. Moreover, personal, professional, and other relevant ethics among the target group were investigated, while the field of translation in Saudi Arabia was also reviewed more generally to confirm the need for the development of a professional code of ethics for translation. A questionnaire survey was developed to collect data from a representative sample of translators in order to gain information about those translators' opinions about the appropriate content for a code of ethics for professional translation in Saudi Arabia. The data from the survey, which reflected translators' perceptions of translation ethics as practiced in Saudi Arabia, were then analyzed using quantitative methods. The resulting findings provide empirical support in favor of including 11 dimensions in any future code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Code of ethics, Professional translation, Saudi Arabia, Quantitative study, Translators' perceptions.

1. Introduction

The translation sector in Saudi Arabia is rapidly expanding. This study seeks to explore viewpoints on the ethics of written translation in order to propose a unified code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia. Many translation theorists, including Chesterman (2001), Pym (2001, 2012), Cronin (2003), Hermans (2009), and Kruger and Crots (2014), have examined the ethics and responsibilities of translators as the translator's position has changed from that of a message communicator, with ethical responsibilities confined to the professional context of translation, to that of an active agent who should seek to significantly advance social justice during the translation process. This reevaluation, however, conflicts with professional ethical perspectives reflected in the codes of ethics of some professional organizations for translation. Some translation scholars have started to focus on the importance of a translator's personal ethics, which undoubtedly affect the decisions the translator makes during the translation process, but which are almost entirely ignored in most professional perspectives on translation ethics (Kruger & Crots, 2014; Robinson, 2003). These conflicts between various ethical perspectives (professional, personal, and activist or sociopolitical) strongly imply a need for scientific examination of translators' perceptions of the various functions of any and all of forms of ethics.

1.1 Research Question

In order to offer an empirical basis for the creation of a professional code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia, this study examines the following research question:

What are the most important ethical principles that should form a Code of Ethics for translation from the perspective of professional translators in the Saudi translation market?

This question was designed to allow for the investigation of translators' conceptions of various abstract ethical norms, and to achieve this, a relevant sample of professional translators in the Saudi translation market professional translators was given an online survey to complete.

2. Literature Review

This section provides a brief summary of the three main perspectives on translation ethics: personal ethics, professional ethics, and the ethics of activism and engagement. Initially, the discussion focuses in particular on the conflicts between these three categories of ethics. The emphasis then shifts to three existing professional codes of ethics for translation, which are assessed to determine if and how they accurately represent various viewpoints on the ethical duties and privileges of the translator.

Numerous translation theorists have examined the diverse ethical obligations, privileges, and roles of translators, including Chesterman (2001), Pym (2001, 2012), Baker (2006, 2011), Cronin (2003), and Tymoczko (2007). The nature of the ethical roles and responsibilities of translators remains, however, an area of significant debate, as shown by a critical review of such contributions, as the ongoing reevaluation of the roles that translators assume during the translation process has led to strong dispute on the boundaries of their responsibilities.

According to Chesterman (2001) and Pym (2012), a more condensed perspective of professional ethics suggests that any ethical obligations are presumed to be restricted to the immediate professional environment in which the translation is commissioned and produced. However, various other translation researchers, including Cronin (2003) and Tymoczko (2007), have examined the responsibilities of translators in broader socio-cultural and political contexts, outside of their immediate professional environments. According to Robinson (2003) and Kruger and Crots (2014), expanding thought on this complicated issue has also led to examination of personal ethics as a further aspect of translation ethics. Meanwhile, the formula proposed by Inghilleri (2009, p. 100), which suggests that "ethical responsibility, social activism, and personal integrity" are aspects of translation ethics that must be thoroughly investigated within the translation field, reflects all three conceptualizations of translation ethics.

Over the last ten years, there has been a growing understanding of the ethical implications of translation. This has resulted in a deeper comprehension of the many ethical issues raised by translation practice and a stronger focus on encouraging ethical conduct among translators.

Recent research on translation ethics has revealed the importance of the existence of a code of ethics that translators should adhere to. Asiri et al. (2023) noted that ethics, as a complex concept that depends on a variety of understandings and motivations, cannot be distilled to a single, overarching motive. Thus, the survey respondents in that study did not view ethics only from a professional standpoint. Rather than relying on societal ethics, they tended to lean more

on their own personal ethics. Additionally, different ethical circumstances elicited different motivations, highlighting the fluidity of the forces that underly ethical responses.

Li (2023) offered a synopsis of Chinese translation ethics research alongside a thorough examination of translation ethics from the standpoint of the ecological model of translation. The author thus illustrated how negligent translation practices resulting from misplaced ethical views and values can cause translations to be inaccurate. The results of the study also supported the theoretical conclusion that a positive cycle translation ecology should be formed to enhance the ethical and value components of the ecological model of translation in order to address issues of inaccurate translation.

According to Yi (2023), in addition to having various personal ethical traits that form a component of their professional ethics, legal interpreters and translators must be expected to uphold a more formal code of ethics in the course of their work. In addition to following set conventions, professional ethics may also be demonstrated by interpreters and translators contextualizing ethical concepts and applying them as a framework within which to perform their specific translation and interpretation tasks, however.

Pym (2021) expounded on this by discussing the notions of cooperation, risk, and trust, all of which serve complementary roles within the broader framework of translation ethics. Cooperation refers in this instance to the accomplishment of mutual benefits as the planned outcome of an encounter, making it the foundation of social life. Long-term intercultural cooperation is thus a major goal of translator ethics. By employing the concept of risk, the possibility that this objective will not be accomplished can thus be taken into account, allowing the development of strategies and actions that might be employed to boost the benefits to all parties and avert a negative outcome. Lack of trust, however, might make it more difficult for translators to contribute to cooperation, which is essential to their interactions with others around them.

Within the framework of academic and professional training institutes, Koskinen and Pokorn, (2020) addressed various ethical issues in translation and interpreter education by placing an emphasis on the key pedagogical components of the teaching of ethics. They examined the historical significance of various institutions as well as discussing various major issues regarding the theories of ethics that should be taught to aspiring professionals, the best ways to critically examine what constitutes "ethical" behavior in terms of subjects and techniques, and the theoretical and methodological instruments most useful for directing ethical decision-making.

Another important recent study examined the relationship between client and interpreter. According to Lee and Yun (2020), building client trust is one of the most important components of an ethical code. However, as with most human endeavors, translation is a social act that impacts the community in which the translator works, despite translation being the work of an individual; the individual must therefore seek to advance those ethical goals that improve social cohesiveness. Lee and Yun (2020) thus offered a final suggestion that translator codes of ethics should represent collections of moral principles and values that are integral to the communities in which translators work.

2.1 Ethics in Translation

2.1.1 Professional codes of ethics in translation

Many associations for translation and interpretation have created mandatory codes of ethics to control their members' professional behaviors during translation or interpretation transactions. Such professional codes of ethics are established largely to aid translators and interpreters in recognizing and effectively resolving the ethical conundrums that may arise throughout the translation and interpretation process (Drugan, 2013, pp. 111–112).

Many translation theorists have argued for a separation of the rights and obligations of translators from the immediate professional environment in which translation is created and used. The four basic theories of translation ethics are the ethics of representation, the ethics of service, the ethics of communication, and norm-based ethics, as presented by Chesterman (2001). The process of faithfully reproducing a source text's (ST) original message without making any additions, deletions, or changes is determined by representation ethics (Chesterman 2001, p. 139). Yet, according to the ethics of service, translation is a for-profit industry, and the foundation of any ethical framework must thus be "Skopostheorie," which holds that translators must, as an imperative, follow the guidelines provided by their client (Pym, 2001, p. 131). The translator is thus viewed as a "mediator", working to promote cross-cultural understanding in accordance with communication ethics (Pym, 2001, p. 141). The term "norm-based ethics" in turn alludes to those standards that "state what acceptable translation products should look like, and how they vary from period to period and from culture to culture" (Pym, 2001, p. 141).

According to Chesterman (2001, p. 152), promoting understanding is the highest priority for translators: his perspective on the ethical obligations of translators is thus that they are clearly limited to the professional setting. Based on this perspective, the ultimate professional duty of translators is to ensure that their translations prioritize understanding over all other relevant professional values, even important factors such as truth, clarity, and loyalty. However, this assumes that the translator cannot be held accountable for any possible negative outcomes of the understanding they facilitate. Pym (2012) affirmed this, stating that "there is no need for translators to claim (or to be attributed with) any commitment to the content of what they are translating" (p. 67). The ethical role of the translator was further expanded upon by Pym (p. 134) within a broader framework of "cooperation", however, and enhancing communication amongst parties involved in the translation process is among the responsibilities of the ethical translator (Chesterman, 2001, p. 141).

Pym (2012, pp. 166–67) also offered five fundamental ethical guidelines for translators. The first of these focuses on the translator's accountability for their translation output, suggesting that a translator's ethical duty begins with the choice to accept a translation commission; thus, ethical choices can also encompass choosing not to translate a particular piece. The second principle states that translators are responsible for any potential consequences of their work. This raises the question of whether translators are actually responsible for the larger socio-cultural or political repercussions of their translations. Pym contends that, as a result of accepting the translation task at hand, translators are indeed accountable for all issues pertaining to the translation's immediate professional context, including any costs and savings, ease of use or difficulty, suitability for the particular purpose, and effects on cooperation. It is made plain, however, that "the translator is not personally responsible for the substance

translated. According to the third principle, translators should refrain from choosing one culture over another because "translator ethics need not involve deciding between two cultures" (Pym, 2012, p. 167). The fourth principle, which is primarily economic in nature, states that the expenses of translation should not outweigh the advantages of intercultural cooperation, while the final principle proposed by Pym reflects the broader responsibility of the translator to take the chance to be more than a simple communicator of textual content, focusing on the potential of the translated message to contribute to ongoing cross-cultural cooperation. Pym's methodology thus expressly takes "interculturality" and "professionalism" into consideration based on the application of specific moral precepts (Koskinen, 2000, p. 81).

2.1.2 Personal codes of ethics in translation

As part of defining specific ethical choices during the translation process, some translation scholars have also shed light on the significance of translators' personal ethics. As stated by Robinson (2003, p. 26), personal ethics might be characterized as "one's own political and moral beliefs". The personal ethics of translators were similarly expanded upon by Kruger and Crots (2014, p. 158) to consider translators' intuitions, religion, values, morality, and beliefs. According to Kruger and Crots (2014, p. 154), and supported by the arguments proposed by Chesterman (2001) and Pym (2012), professional ethics may be strictly limited to those ethical issues arising from the immediate professional contexts in which the translation process is contracted and the translation is produced. However, the translation profession and its rules serve as an external source to create an objective foundation for and validation of a translator's ethical decisions (Kruger & Crots, 2014, p. 154). In contrast, personal ethics are founded in a translator's subjective viewpoints, making the translator's ethical decisions personal creations connected to the translator's unique beliefs.

2.1.3 The ethics of activism and engagement in translation

Saudi Arabia holds a prominent role in both the Arab and global arenas. Based on this, numerous events are commonly held in Saudi Arabia that require translators to be prepared to cover all sectors. For this reason, any translator's ethical code in this area must include information on all areas of specialization including the ethics of activism and engagement in translation.

Several translation scholars, including Baker (2006) and Inghilleri (2008), have also evaluated and investigated the more specific moral obligations and tasks expected of translators in times of conflict. According to Baker (2011, p. 274), translation and interpretation professionals must seek to develop the necessary skills to help them make the right ethical choices as they work on translation projects rather than simply blindly adhering to established codes of ethics created by relevant translation or interpretation associations. In this regard, translators have the autonomy to make various ethical choices as they proceed with their work and, as a result, they must be held accountable for those choices and their results in the wider setting that Hermans (2009) refers to as the "socio-cultural context" (p. 93). Similarly, Gouanvic (2001, p. 209) contends that, from a sociological standpoint, translators are responsible for the effects of their translations in the society which the translations are intended for. Another viewpoint on the ethics of translation that could be viewed as more generally activist is that of Venuti (2008), as according to Munday (2012), Venuti's ideas of domestication and foreignization may be regarded as ethical positions with respect to translation.

Further, according to Tymoczko (2007, pp. 317–318), it is important to be conscious of any biases and allegiances translators may have that could affect how they decide to proceed with a translation. Translators must thus seek to extend their ethical decisions beyond the confines of their personal opinions and take activist considerations into account in order to perform translation in a morally upright manner (p. 317).

2.2 The Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)

Eight ethical standards, related respectively to professional conduct, confidentiality, competence, impartiality, accuracy, employment, professional development, and professional solidarity, were developed as part of AUSIT when it was founded in 1987 (AUSIT, 2012, p. 3; Ozolins, 2014, p. 348). The original AUSIT code of ethics was then formally reconstructed in 2012 as a result of advancements in the translation and interpretation profession (AUSIT, 2012, p. 3) to incorporate nine principles: professional conduct, confidentiality, competence, impartiality, accuracy, clarity of role boundaries, maintaining professional relationships, professional development, and professional solidarity (pp. 4–7).

Members of AUSIT are required to “act at all times in accordance with the standards of conduct and decorum appropriate to the aims of AUSIT...”, according to the principle of professional conduct (AUSIT, 2012, p. 4). The requirement of confidentiality requires AUSIT members to keep all information acquired in translation confidential (p. 5), and, according to the principle of competence, members are required to “only undertake work they are competent to perform in the languages for which they are professionally qualified through training and credentials” (p. 5). AUSIT members are expected to maintain impartiality in all translation and interpretation assignments (p. 5), and the accompanying expectation of accuracy stipulates that AUSIT members must accurately and faithfully convey the meanings and messages intended in the source language (p. 5). Members of AUSIT are required to “maintain clear boundaries between their task as facilitators of communication through message transfer and any other tasks that may be undertaken by other parties involved in the assignment” (p. 5), according to the principle of clarity of role boundaries and the requirement to maintain professional relationships also obliges AUSIT members to take responsibility for the quality of their translations or interpretations and to conduct themselves with professionalism and integrity while dealing with clients (p. 6). The expectation of professional development requires AUSIT members to “develop their professional knowledge and skills” (p. 6) on an ongoing basis. Finally, AUSIT members must be devoted to their profession and their fellow professionals in accordance with the principle of professional solidarity (p. 7).

2.3 The Code of Ethics and Professional Practice of the American Translators Association (ATA)

Eight ethical principles govern the choices that translators and interpreters make in the field according to the ATA's code of ethics (ATA, 2010). The first ethical stipulation refers to the process of faithfully, accurately, and impartially translating the meaning from the (ST) to the target text (TT). In accordance with the second ethical principle, which focuses on confidentiality, ATA professionals are required “to hold in confidence any privileged and/or confidential information entrusted ... in the course of ... work”. The third ethical requirement, which requires ATA members to “show their qualifications, capabilities and responsibilities

honestly and to work always within them", is based on truthfulness, while the continuous improvement of skills is mandated by the fourth principle. Furthering and sharing knowledge is the basis of the fifth principle. The sixth principle, which is contractual in nature, calls for professional members to abide by a contract outlining the conditions of the service. The seventh principle states that professional members must seek recognition for their translation or interpretation work, and that resolution of disputes that arise in the context of translation as a profession is then discussed. Members of the ATA are thus required to "resolve their differences as they would resolve any other business dispute".

2.4 The Translator's Charter of the International Federation of Translators (FIT)

The general responsibilities of translators, translators' rights, translators' economic and social status, translators' societies and unions, and national organizations are the five components of the translator's charter. These five parts collectively contain 40 clauses, numbered consecutively (FIT, 1994).

The section titled "General obligations of the translator," outlines specific obligations that translators must uphold while the work is being done, such as accurately converting the ST message into the TT, developing competence in the languages of both the ST and TT, and maintaining the confidentiality of the information entrusted to the translator. Section 2 discusses the rights that should be granted to translators, including the translator's right to authorship recognition and the exclusive right to permit the publication or presentation of translation on the basis that translation is considered to be "a creation of the intellect" (FIT, 1994). Section 3 examines the economic and social position of the translator by focusing on matters pertaining to the translator's status, such as living conditions and the advantages granted to intellectual workers (FIT, 1994). The freedom to form a professional translation union is another of the ethical guidelines, set forth in Section 4 of the FIT (FIT, 1994), and section 5 is concerned with the principles pertaining to the relationship between national organizations for translators and the FIT.

2.5 An Analysis of AUSIT, ATA, and FIT Ethical Principles

The three codes of ethics of AUSIT, ATA, and FIT share several ethical stipulations, creating a shared core set of ethical principles. These are confidentiality, accuracy, competence, maintaining professional relationships, and professional solidarity. The codes show contrasting emphasis when it comes to various other ethical principles, however. For instance, the "clarity of role boundaries" Ethical Principle in the AUSIT code of ethics, which is distinct from anything in the ATA Code of Ethics and the Translators' Charter, states that translators and interpreters must concentrate on conveying the original message to the target audience. AUSIT practitioners are therefore not allowed to "engage in other tasks such as advocacy, guidance or advice" within a translation or interpretation assignment (AUSIT, 2012, p. 6). This highlights the AUSIT's Code of Ethics' strong emphasis on impartiality in the professional context of translation.

Table 1 demonstrates the central principles in the AUSIT, ATA, and FIT codes of ethics, illustrating the degree to which each ethical principle is emphasized.

Table 1. Central ethical principles in the AUSIT, ATA, and FIT codes of ethics.

	Ethical principles	AUSIT	ATA	FIT
1	Confidentiality	✓	✓	✓
2	Accuracy	✓	✓	✓
3	Competence	✓	✓	✓
4	Maintaining professional relationships	✓	✓	✓
5	Professional solidarity	✓	✓	✓
6	Impartiality	✓	✓	
7	Professional development	✓	✓	
8	Clarity of role boundaries	✓		
9	Translator's rights			✓

2.6 The Field of Translation in Saudi Arabia

The recent economic growth in Saudi Arabia has led to a surge in demand for translation and interpreting services across various sectors. This increased demand has created opportunities for professional translators and interpreters to cater to the needs of businesses, government agencies, healthcare facilities, legal institutions, and other organizations requiring language services.

To meet this growing demand and ensure the availability of qualified language professionals, academic institutions in Saudi Arabia have played a crucial role by establishing colleges of languages and translation. These institutions offer specialized programs that provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in the field of translation and interpreting. The curriculum typically includes courses on translation theory, linguistic analysis, cultural studies, specialized translation techniques, and practical training in translation and interpreting. By offering comprehensive training programs, academic institutions not only equip students with the technical skills required for translation work but also help them develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills essential for success in the industry. As such, graduates from these programs are well-prepared to meet the diverse and complex language needs of clients in a rapidly evolving global market. Furthermore, the establishment of translation centers within academic institutions has promoted further research and development in the field of translation and interpreting in Saudi Arabia. These centers serve as hubs for collaboration between academia, industry professionals, and government agencies, fostering innovation and excellence in language services.

Prior to the establishment of the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission in 2020, Saudi universities have established academic translation programs to ensure that qualified translators are available to work in various sectors in Saudi Arabia, including government ministries, hospitals, courts, and community centers. Moreover, some academic institutions have set up translation centers to encourage even wider translation production in Saudi Arabia, while the many translation agencies located throughout the country offer a wide range of translation services (Al-Faifi, 2000, pp. 7-8).

The limited research on professional translation in Saudi Arabia, as highlighted by Salamah (2022), Abu-ghararah (2017), Al-Faifi (2000), Fatani (2009), Bostanji (2010), and

Alkhamis (2012), underscores the lack of comprehensive understanding of the foundational principles and practices of translation in the country. This gap in research indicates a need for further exploration of the norms, standards, and ethical considerations that govern the translation industry in Saudi Arabia.

One notable consequence of this dearth of research is the absence of a formal translation code of ethics in the country. This lack of oversight raises concerns about quality control, consistency, and adherence to ethical standards in translation practices. In this context, the reliance on multilingual employees and freelance translators to provide translation services becomes a common practice among organizations in Saudi Arabia, such as banks. As noted by Fatani (2009), these institutions often leverage their bilingual staff to translate documents, particularly those that involve Arabic and English languages. This approach, while pragmatic in addressing immediate translation needs, may not ensure the same level of accuracy, consistency, and professionalism that could be expected from trained and certified translators.

The growing demand for a translation code of ethics in Saudi Arabia reflects the industry's recognition of the importance of establishing guidelines and standards to uphold professionalism, accuracy, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity in translation practices. As the field continues to evolve and expand in response to globalization and increased cross-cultural interactions, efforts to formalize ethical norms and best practices in translation are essential to enhance the quality and credibility of language services in the country.

In light of these considerations, there is a compelling case for the development of regulatory mechanisms, professional associations, and educational initiatives to promote ethical conduct, professional development, and quality assurance in the translation industry in Saudi Arabia. By addressing these challenges and fostering a culture of excellence and accountability, the sector can further elevate its standards and reputation both domestically and internationally.

Recently, in alignment with Vision 2030 and the Saudi National Culture Strategy, the Ministry of Culture in Saudi Arabia established the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission in February 2020 to enhance the literature, publishing, and translation sectors. Through the "*Tarjim*" initiative, it provides translation grants to enrich Arabic content and support Saudi publishers and translators, ensuring high-quality translations. Additionally, the First Saudi Translation Forum in December 2021 underscored the country's commitment to the translation industry, featuring workshops, discussions, and challenges to address industry challenges and promote cultural exchange. These efforts signify Saudi Arabia's dedication to fostering the translation sector, enhancing cultural exchange, and supporting economic growth through content production.

In general, the proactive efforts of academic institutions in Saudi Arabia along with the creative endeavors of the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission to support the translation industry and regulate this field to nurture a new generation of skilled translators and interpreters have significantly contributed to the growth and professionalism of the translation industry in the country.

3. Methodology

This section gives a thorough explanation of the methodology used to examine the ethical principles that may be written into a code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia.

3.1 Instrument for Data Collection

3.1.1 Study design: Quantitative online survey research

In order to collect the data necessary to answer the research question, an online, self-completion questionnaire survey was designed using the Qualtrics online survey program (Qualtrics, 2023), and an Excel spreadsheet was created to serve as a database for the population of the study.

3.1.2 Survey design

The questionnaire survey for this study was designed to investigate translators' perceptions regarding the ethical principles that should be included in a code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia. The data retrieved from this survey were then utilized to offer response to the research question:

What are the most important ethical principles that should form a Code of Ethics for translation from the perspective of professional translators in the Saudi translation market?

Developing an answer to this research question was intended to make it possible to investigate how professional translators in the Saudi translation market feel about the significance of creating a set of general ethical principles. To achieve this, 36 potential code of ethics statements were offered to the responders, based on the literature assessment. These statements were matched to the 11 basic ethical aspects uncovered in the review, namely confidentiality, accuracy, competence, maintaining professional relationships, professional solidarity, impartiality, professional development, translators' rights, clarity of role boundaries, ethics of activism and engagement, and personal ethics. The respondents were then asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed that the statements should be included in a code of ethics using a five-point Likert scale. The statements provided in the survey were distributed at random to ensure that respondents did not receive them in any particular order. Additionally, in order to obtain rich qualitative data about additional ethical principles that might be included in a code of ethics, open-ended questions were also included at the end of the survey to allow respondents the opportunity to list additional concepts they believe ought to be included in the code of ethics and to provide additional comments.

3.2 Respondents

Translators working in Saudi Arabia formed the population for the study, being chosen on the basis of their background and level of competence in translation. The rationale for selecting the population in this manner included ensuring that the perspectives gathered came from individuals with a deep understanding of the ethical considerations specific to translation in the Saudi Arabian context. Currently, there is no professional association for translation that certifies translators and maintains records of translators in the region, Fatani (2009, p. 2) claims that it is challenging to estimate the number of translators and interpreters working in Saudi Arabia based on the lack of official statistics.

A non-probability purposive sampling approach was chosen for this investigation. To accurately represent the population of translators in Saudi Arabia a sample technique was created that selected respondents across three categories, representing the three subsectors of the translation market:

- Translators working in **academic translation centers or universities** in cities such as Riyadh, Jeddah, Al Damam, and Abha.
- Translators working for or collaborating with **publishing houses**.
- Translators working in **translation agencies** operating in cities such as Riyadh, Jeddah, AL Damam, and Abha.

To enable recruitment of translators and translation specialists, the websites of academic translation centers and institutions were used, which indicated the existence of 120 translators and translation specialists in academic translation centers or institutions with established academic translation departments. The websites of three renowned publishing houses in Saudi Arabia, namely, Obeikan Bookshop, Mars Publishing House, and Jarir Bookstore, were also searched for the public e-mail addresses of their translators. This yielded the details of 110 translators in total, who were added to the Excel spreadsheet containing the full translator panel. Finally, a total of 12 additional translators were added based on an examination of the websites of translation agencies.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected using the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. A detailed discussion of the quantitative analysis is presented in the next paragraph. In the qualitative analysis, however, the survey responses were classified and analyzed to determine any recurring themes and patterns pertaining to the ethical principles that should be covered in a Saudi Arabian code of ethics for translators. This methodology was selected due to its ability to facilitate extensive investigation of the viewpoints of the participants and to offer a range of significant perspectives on the ethical issues pertinent to the translation industry in Saudi Arabia.

The relevant Qualtrics online survey account was used to generate quantitative data by downloading the obtained data as an Excel file. The information was then organized in the proper format for the study of the research question. The collected responses were coded across the 36 ethical principles on the basis of how strongly the respondent agreed that each principle should be included in a code of ethics. The coding used was: 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly disagree. Three to four statements of ethical principles for each of the underlying 11 ethical aspects were included to gauge respondents' opinions about the moral standards that professional translators in the Saudi translation market believed they should uphold. The scores for the statements for each underlying ethical component were then averaged during the processing step. To truly ascertain the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed that various ethical principles should be included in a code of ethics for professional translation in Saudi Arabia, a descriptive analysis was then conducted; the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the 11 underlying dimensions served as the foundation for this section of the research.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section provides a thorough explanation of the conclusions drawn from an examination of the questionnaire survey data by examining responses to questions regarding the ethical standards to be incorporated into a professional translation code of ethics in Saudi

Arabia. About half of the respondents had extensive experience (six or more years, 47.50%) of translation work, while a significant portion of participants were highly experienced (more than 10 years, 27.50%), as shown in Figure 1; this allowed for the assumption that most respondents had some prior knowledge of ethical principles relevant to the translation process.

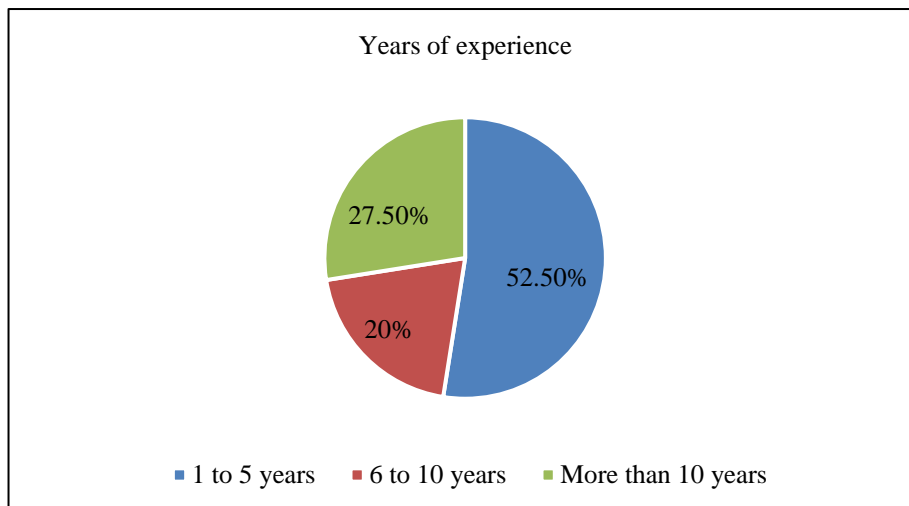


Fig. 1. Respondents' years of experience in the translation sector.

The descriptive statistics for the questionnaire data are presented in Table 2. Generally, all 11 underlying dimensions' related items were regarded as important by survey respondents. Across a majority of dimensions, there was also strong agreement among responders, as shown by the generally low standard deviations. The results of this study thus offer empirical justification for including all 11 dimensions in any future code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia. Consistently high importance rankings were also found across items that focused on concrete ethical scenarios and abstract ethical principles.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics: importance ratings for potential items to be included in any new code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia, by underlying dimension.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional development	40	1.00	3.00	1.63	0.48
Maintaining professional relationships	40	1.00	3.00	1.69	0.51
Competence	40	1.00	3.00	1.71	0.54
Professional solidarity	40	1.00	3.00	1.75	0.55
Translators' rights	40	1.00	3.00	1.78	0.46
Confidentiality	40	1.00	3.50	2.01	0.62
Accuracy	40	1.00	3.67	2.06	0.67
Activism and engagement	40	1.00	3.75	2.36	0.64
Impartiality	40	1.00	3.50	2.38	0.52
Personal ethics	40	1.00	4.50	2.44	0.75
Clarity of role boundaries	40	1.00	4.00	2.46	0.75

With a mean score of 1.63 (SD=0.48), statements related to professional development found the highest level of agreement. This outcome reflects strong agreement among respondents that an ethical code should contain provisions requiring various types of professional development, such as the requirement for familiarity with new trends and

advancements in translation and the improvement of the translator's capabilities through continuing education and professional development. It is striking that this dimension was rated most highly by the participants in this study as most existing codes of ethics do include this dimension. It is often regarded as ancillary to the main ethical obligations expected from the translator (e.g., accuracy and confidentiality). This finding can potentially be attributed to the translators' perceived need for further professional training and support in translation in Saudi Arabia.

The mean score of 1.69 (SD=0.51) suggests that responses to statements concerning maintaining professional relationships also evoked high levels of agreement. Obtaining satisfactory working conditions, maintaining good professional relationships with clients, concluding contracts and agreements, and informing clients of any issues pertaining to their translations honestly and transparently were all issues that respondents felt positively about in terms of maintaining professional relationships. Emphasizing the importance of professional relationships, one respondent suggested that "translators must acquire various skills related to public relations, marketing, negotiation, computer programs, time management, etc."

The respondents also strongly agreed with the underlying dimension of competence, which is commonly mentioned in existing codes of ethics, with a mean score of 1.71 (SD=0.54). The fact that the respondents have a positive attitude about this suggests that they believe it is part of their ethical responsibility to only work in languages in which they are professionally qualified, to exit a project if they discover it is outside of their area of expertise, and to only take on translation work that they are qualified to handle.

Professional solidarity was also viewed as important by respondents, with a mean score of 1.75 (SD=0.55). Overall, the respondents placed a great deal of value on those components of ethics that included dedication to the profession, mirroring the significance they placed on professional development. This is most likely indicative of the respondents' support for greater regulation of the profession of translation in Saudi Arabia, which leads to an emphasis on professional support and development. The components of the professional solidarity dimension stressed the value of sharing expertise with colleagues, and respecting fellow translators, exchanging knowledge with colleagues, resolving disagreements in a professional and cooperative manner, and becoming a member of a professional translation organization.

Underscoring the importance that the respondents attach to issues of professionalism, the dimension of translators' rights was also rated as important, with a mean score of 1.78 (SD=0.46). This finding shows that translators believed that a code of ethics should also support a variety of translators' rights, including the right to form a professional association, the right to take legal action against unauthorized changes to translations, the right to receive fair remuneration, and the right to be clearly identified as the translator of a text, and thus offered just compensation. One respondent clearly underlined the significance of establishing a professional association for translators in Saudi Arabia: "It is of a great importance that translators have an association than can offer development, protection and awareness of the profession".

Respondents also agreed with ethical principles relating to the concept of confidentiality, which is another standard component of most codes of ethics, reflecting the need for professional responsibility towards the client, with a mean score of 2.01 (SD=0.62). This

positive attitude toward confidentiality suggests that respondents agree that translators should uphold strict confidentiality during translation and refrain from profiting from information obtained during translation. However, most respondents suggested that information obtained during translation can be made public if withholding it could endanger the safety of individuals, social groupings, or society as a whole. Respondents also concurred that they would share information acquired through translation with a client's consent or when such disclosures were mandated by law.

Ethical statements referring to accuracy, reflecting professional responsibilities towards the text, author, and reader, were rated positively, with a mean score of 2.06 (SD=0.67). According to the respondents, it is the translator's duty to fix any flaws or errors so that the target audience can easily understand the translation. The respondents also demonstrated agreement with the ethical principles underlying the faithful and correct rendering of the ST message in the TT. One respondent suggested adding another ethical statement, focusing on normativity: "Translators should use Modern Standard Arabic in their translations and try to avoid using conversational Arabic."

As far as the ethics of activism and engagement were concerned, respondents generally agreed with the related ethical statements, with a mean score of 2.36 (SD=0.64). This relatively strong agreement demonstrates that the respondents believe that translators have a role to play beyond rendering professional services to a client. This result implies that respondents perceive a potential for activist roles for translators, such as promoting intercultural understanding and cooperation, declining to interpret materials that promote any form of prejudice, and acting in the audience's best interests. One respondent explicitly suggested an activist role for translators by adding this ethical statement: "Translators should refuse the mission when it comes to harm others and ask the author to edit it, or they withdraw." Another respondent clearly indicated that translators have to be activist agents in a given society: "The translator is one of the holders of light and enlightenment, if he or she walks the right path." These perspectives are very different from those in current codes of ethics, such as those of AUSIT, ATA, and FIT, which primarily concentrate on issues strictly relating to the more limited perspective of translation ethics, particularly professional ethics.

Overall, respondents agreed with the ethical statements referring to impartiality, with a mean score of 2.38 (SD=0.52). Respondents particularly agreed that it is necessary to decline a translation project where maintaining objectivity may be challenging. Moreover, respondents generally agreed that translators should aim to translate with complete objectivity and impartiality, benefiting neither the author nor the audience, and without prejudice in favor of the client. One respondent stated this in very strict terms: "If there is no objectivity and impartiality, there will be no future for translation." This strongly emphasizes the professional view of ethics, yet the fact that respondents identify both activism and impartiality as elements of the ethical responsibilities of a translator and rank these as almost equally significant suggests a certain tension in the ways in which translation ethics may be conceptualized.

The two dimensions ranked least important for inclusion in a code of ethics, which were nevertheless still rated as important, were personal ethics, and clarity of role boundaries. Both of these dimensions also showed the highest standard deviations among all 11 dimensions, indicating less consistent agreement among respondents about their inclusion in any proposed

code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia. Respondents rated the ethical statements pertaining to personal ethics in a largely positive way, however, with a mean score of 2.44 (SD=0.75). This result indicates that respondents think that personal and professional ethics cannot be separated in the act of translation. Further, the respondents acknowledged that translators' personal beliefs may affect their decisions in translation, a view that is not consistent with the principles laid out in existing codes of ethics such as those of AUSIT, ATA, and FIT, which do not highlight the role of personal ethics in translation. These findings suggest that it is important that a code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia should take some account of the important role of personal ethics, albeit in a minor way, as the respondents not only indicated that it should be included in a code of ethics, but also implied that it plays an important role in their decision-making.

Finally, the respondents rated the ethical statements relating to distinct role boundaries with a mean score of 2.46 (SD=0.75), suggesting that these are somewhat less significant than other ethical aspects. While this finding still suggests that the respondents are to some extent in agreement that a clause in a code of ethics should exist to require translators to refrain from taking on additional tasks such as advocacy, direction, or counseling, there was some significant disagreement, as indicated by the relatively higher SD, making this is a fairly contested dimension. The fact that this dimension was only relatively recently included in the AUSIT code of ethics, in the review in 2012, indicates that it has only lately become a concern, in contrast with the ethics of activism and involvement (Ozolins, 2014, p. 357).

Upon examination of the results, it is evident that the translators who took part in this study value each of the 11 dimensions of ethics and believe overall that they should all be included in a future code of ethics. The fact that some of these desired dimensions seem to be superficially contradictory also highlights the complexity of ethics and the need for further research in this field. Based on this analysis, the respondents deemed it crucial for such a code of ethics to cover all ethical principles assigned to the 11 dimensions; these translators also did not confine their opinions to the requirements of the majority of professional codes of ethics, instead the expanded their purview to cover ethical principles relating to personal ethics as well as the ethics of activism and engagement.

The scope of this study was unfortunately limited by the small sample size, suggesting that additional research using larger samples is required. Future researchers may also wish to use alternative qualitative methodologies, such as interviews, to collect more data on issues acknowledged to be particularly important, such as questions of personal ethics and activist responsibility. The general ethics of the translation industry are the main theme of this study, and it is important to recognize that specialized translators (legal, medical, etc.) may have different views on these matters based on the type of texts they translate. Future studies should thus aim to provide a more thorough grasp of the ethics relevant to specialized translation.

5. Conclusion

This research delved into the topic of translation ethics within the Saudi Arabian professional translation sector, an area that has recently attracted additional scholarly interest. The purpose of this study was to determine what translators working in the region think should be included in a code of ethics for professional translators in the Saudi translation market, particularly in terms of ethical norms. Special attention was paid to the various perspectives on

translation ethics, with reference being made to the Code of Conduct and Ethics of AUSIT, the Code of Ethics and Professional Practice of the ATA, and the Translator's Charter of the FIT, three significant extant professional codes of ethics. Investigations were also conducted into personal, professional, and similar ethical stances. A review of the translation industry in Saudi Arabia was undertaken that supported the necessity of creating a code of ethics for translators as well as suggesting that an empirical examination of translators' perceptions of ethical concerns in translation and their ideas of ethical resolutions should serve as the basis for such a code of ethics.

A questionnaire survey was then designed to gather data from a representative sample of translators in order to learn more about their perspectives regarding the contents of a code of ethics for professional translators in the Saudi translation market. Quantitative techniques were used to analyze survey data regarding translators' opinions of translation ethics in Saudi Arabia. The results of this analysis justify the inclusion of all 11 ethical principles in any future code of ethics for translators in Saudi Arabia. Future studies could also be conducted to compare the recently issued "Professional Guide" for translators in Saudi Arabia (Professional Guide for the Translators, 2023) with other codes of ethics for translators from all over the world, as such further studies to investigate Saudi Arabian translators' perspectives and prospects about the recently issued professional manual might be expected to yield insightful results.

Investigating the similarities between the ethics section in the translator's manual published by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission and the Translation Association (Professional Guide for the Translators, 2023) and the Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct of the AUSIT would offer significant insights into the universal principles of ethical translation practices. Additionally, analyzing the ways in which these principles are specific to the Saudi context would advance our knowledge of the contextual and cultural factors that influence translation in Saudi Arabia. In addition to helping to identify best practices for translators working in various cultural and linguistic contexts. This comparative approach may make a substantial contribution to the area of translation studies.

References

- Abu-ghararah, B. (2017). The Gap between Translator Training and the Translation Industry in Saudi Arabia. *Arab World English Journal for Translation and Literary Studies*, 1(4), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol1no4.8>
- Al-Faifi, A. (2000). *Teaching translation at the undergraduate level in Saudi Arabia : The case of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom]. <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/10323>
- Alkhamis, A. (2012). *Socio-cultural perspectives on translation activities in Saudi Arabia: A Bourdieusean account*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester, United Kingdom]. <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/api/datastream?publicationPid=uk-ac-man-scw:184617&datastreamId=FULL-TEXT.PDF>
- American Translators Association (ATA). (2010). *ATA code of ethics and professional practice*. <https://www.atanet.org/about-us/code-of-ethics/>
- American Translators Association (ATA). (2010). *Who we are*. <https://www.atanet.org/about-us/who-we-are/>
- Asiri, E.A.S., Sahari, Y., Alasmri, I., & Assiri, A. (2023), Revisiting the notions of translation ethics in Saudi Arabia: a survey of translators' perceptions, *Saudi Journal of Language Studies*, 3(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SJLS-09-2022-0066>

- Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT). (2012). *AUSIT code of ethics and code of conduct*. https://ausit.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Code_Of_Ethics_Full.pdf
- Baker, M. (2006). *Translation and conflict: A narrative account*. Routledge.
- Baker, M. (2011). *In other words: A coursebook on translation* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Bostanji, A. (2010). *Legal translation in Saudi Arabia: A contrastive analysis of linguistic challenges encountered by practitioners*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Sydney, Australia]. <http://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws:8802>
- Chesterman, A. (2001). Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath. *The Translator*, 7(2), 139-154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2001.10799097>
- Cronin, M. (2003). *Translation and globalisation*. Routledge.
- Drugan, J. (2013). "Translation ethics wikified: how far do professional codes of ethics and practice apply to non-professionally produced translation?", *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes In Translation Studies*, Vol. 10, p. 1, doi: [10.52034/lanstts.v10i.280](https://doi.org/10.52034/lanstts.v10i.280)
- Fatani, A. (2009). The state of translation industry in Saudi Arabia. *Translation Journal*, 13(3), 1-21. <http://www.translationjournal.net/journal/50saudi.htm>
- Gouanvic, J.-M. (2001). Ethos, ethics and translation: Toward a community of destinies. *The Translator*, 7(2), 203-212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2001.10799101>
- Hermans, T. (2009). Translation, ethics and politics In J. Munday (Ed.), *The Routledge companion to translation studies* (pp. 93-105). Routledge.
- Inghilleri, M. (2008). The ethical task of the translator in the geo-political arena: From Iraq to Guantánamo Bay. *Translation Studies*, 1(2), 212-223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700802113556>
- Inghilleri, M. (2009). Ethics. In M. Baker and G.Saldanha (Eds.), *The Routledge encyclopaedia of translation studies* (pp. 100-104). Routledge.
- International Federation of Translators (FIT). (1994). Translator's Charter. Retrieved June 05, 2023, from <http://www.fit-ift.org/?p=251>
- Koskinen, K. (2000). *Beyond ambivalence: Postmodernity and the ethics of translation*. University of Tampere.
- Koskinen, K., & Pokorn, N. K. (2020). *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Ethics*. Routledge.
- Kruger, H., & Crots, E. (2014). Professional and personal ethics in translation: A survey of South African translators' strategies and motivations. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*, 43(1), 147-181. <https://doi.org/10.5842/43-0-613>
- Lee, H., & Yun, S. W. (2020). How can we improve the codes of ethics for translators?, *Babel* 66(4-5), 706-718. <https://doi.org/10.1075/babel.00190.yun>
- Li, T. (2023). Translation ethics in the light of the Chinese ecological model of translation. *Litera*, 6, 69-78. <https://doi.org/10.25136/2409-8698.2023.6.40997>
- Munday, J. (2012). *Introducing translation studies: Theories and applications* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Ozolins, U. (2014). Rewriting the AUSIT Code of Ethics – principles, practice, dispute. *Babel: International Journal of Translation*, 60(3), 347-370.
- Pym, A. (2001). Introduction. *The Translator*, 7(2), 129-138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2001.10799096>
- Pym, A. (2012). *On translator ethics: Principles for mediation between cultures*. John Benjamins.
- Pym, A. (2021). Cooperation, risk, trust. *STRIDON: Studies in Translation and Interpreting*, 1(2), 5-24. <https://doi.org/10.4312/stridon.1.2.5-24>
- Qualtrics (2023). *Make every interaction an experience that matters*. <http://www.qualtrics.com>

- Robinson, D. (2003). *Becoming a translator: An introduction to the theory and practice of translation* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Salamah, D. (2022). Translation competence and the translation job market in Saudi Arabia: investigating recruitment practices and job-market readiness. *Saudi Journal of Language Studies*, 2(4), 236–258. <https://doi.org/10.1108/sjls-08-2022-0064>
- The Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission, the Translation Association (2023). *Professional guide for the translators*, (1st ed.). Riyadh.
- Tymoczko, M. (2007). *Enlarging translation, empowering translators*. St. Jerome.
- Venuti, L. (2008). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Yi, R. (2023). New Advances in Legal Translation and Interpreting” Junfeng Zhao, Defeng Li and Victoria Lai Cheng Lei (2023). *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*, 30(1), 152–157. <https://doi.org/10.1558/ijsl.26388>

أخلاقيات مقترحة للترجمة المهنية في المملكة العربية السعودية: دراسة استقصائية لتصورات المترجمين

عيسى أحمد سعيد عسيري^١، و أمل عبدالستار متولي^٢

^١ أستاذ مساعد بقسم الترجمة، و^٢ أستاذ مساعد بقسم الترجمة، كلية اللغات والترجمة، جامعة الملك خالد، أبها، المملكة العربية السعودية

المستخلص. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على مبادئ أخلاقيات مهنة الترجمة في السياق السعودي؛ وهو الموضوع الذي حظي مؤخراً بقدر كبير من الاهتمام، وتهدف الدراسة إلى التعرف على آراء المترجمين العاملين في قطاع الترجمة في السياق السعودي حول المبادئ الأخلاقية التي ينبغي تضمينها في ميثاق أخلاقيات مهنة الترجمة في المملكة العربية السعودية. وبناءً على ذلك، استعرض الباحثان ثلاثة من أهم الموثائق الأخلاقية المهنية للمترجم حول العالم: ميثاق أخلاقيات وقواعد السلوك التابعة للمعهد الأسترالي للمترجمين الفوريين والمترجمين التحريريين (AUSIT)، وميثاق الأخلاقيات والممارسات المهنية التابعة لجمعية المترجمين الأمريكيين (ATA)، وميثاق المترجم التابع للجمعية الدولية لاتحاد المترجمين (FIT)، كما استنتج الباحثان وجهات النظر المختلفة الواردة في هذه الموثائق الأخلاقية وأنواع أخلاقيات الترجمة المختلفة المنصوص عليها في هذه الموثائق. وركزت هذه الدراسة على مجال الترجمة في المملكة العربية السعودية بشكل خاص من أجل إبراز الحاجة إلى تطوير ميثاق أخلاقيات مهنة الترجمة في السياق السعودي. وطور الباحثان استبانة لجمع البيانات من عينة تمثل المترجمين العاملين في قطاع الترجمة من أجل الحصول على معلومات محددة حول المحتوى المناسب لميثاق أخلاقيات مهنة الترجمة في المملكة العربية السعودية. وأظهرت نتائج البحث الكمية تصورات المترجمين لأخلاقيات مهنة الترجمة التي يجب تضمينها في ميثاق أخلاقيات مهنة الترجمة في السياق السعودي وذلك بإدراج أحد عشر مبدأً أخلاقياً في أي ميثاق مستقبلي لمهنة الترجمة في السياق السعودي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ميثاق الأخلاقيات، الترجمة المهنية، المملكة العربية السعودية، دراسة كمية، تصورات المترجمين.