The Influence of Cultural Context on Translation Strategies in Saudi Literature: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract

The current research investigates the influence of cultural context on translation strategies in Saudi literature and the potential challenges that emerge during the translation process. It also examines how translators manage to cope with such challenges. The research employs a quantitative approach to scrutinize this issue and the complexities of cultural nuances. It utilizes a self-constructed questionnaire to survey 40 academic professors and teachers of translation studies in Saudi universities. The study highlights that cultural context plays a decisive role in the strategic decisions of translators. The findings also reveal that the participants most frequently adopt explanatory notes, substitution, and adaptation strategies. The study further indicates that translators face unique challenges, most notably the lack of the direct linguistic equivalents and the risk of losing cultural authenticity. It concludes that there is a pressing need to specialized training in cultural translation and for greater collaboration with original authors, editors and cultural experts to effectively address the cultural context in Saudi literature.

Keywords: Cultural Context, Translation Strategies, Saudi Literature.

أثر السياق الثقافي في استراتيجيات الترجمة في الأدب السعودي: دراسة كمية

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المستخلص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة أثر السياق الثقافي على طرق الترجمة إلى الأدب السعودي لمعرفة التحديات التي يفرضها ذلك السياق على المترجمين، وكيف يتعاملون معها، وقد اتبعت الدراسة لتحقيق أهدافها المنهج الكمي الوصفي، عبر استبانة تم تصميمها من قبل الباحث وتوزيعها على 40 عضوا من أساتذة الترجمة في الجامعات السعودية؛ لمعرفة مدى تأثير السياق الثقافي على الطرق التي يتبعونها في الترجمة إلى الأدب السعودي، وكيف يعالجون هذا التأثير، وما هي أبرز الصعوبات التي تواجههم بسبب ذلك، وقد خلصت الدراسة إلى وجود أثر كبير للسياق الثقافي على طرق الترجمة إلى الأدب السعودي، وأن هناك مجموعة من التحديات التي ينبغي أن يتعامل معها المترجم بعناية بالغة، ومن أهمها غياب المقابل اللغوي المناسب للنص الأجنبي، والفهم التام للسياق الثقافي الذي جاءت فيه تلك النصوص، ومدى توافقها مع السياق الثقافي للأدب السعودي، وأن غياب ذلك الفهم أو قصوره قد يؤدي إلى ترجمة لا تناسب السياق الثقافي السعودي، وقد قدمت الدراسة عددا من الطرق التي يمكن من خلالها التغلب على تلك الصعوبات، ومن ذلك إضافة بعض الشروحات التفسيرية أو التعاون مع ذوي الخبرة من المترجمين الذين لديهم فهم للسياق الثقافي للغة النص الأصلي والسياق الثقافي السعودي؛ من أجل الوصول إلى ترجمة تنقل معنى النص الأصلي بشكل صحيح، ولا تتعارض مع الثقافة السائدة للأدب السعودي.

كلمات مفتاحية: الترجمة، الأدب السعودي، السياق الثقافي.

Introduction

The general essence of translation entails an interactive process of cognitive experiences among the author, translators and the target readers. This means that a broad definition views translation as a medium of cross-language communication. The process concerns itself largely with the semantic meanings of the source text and the best possible way to transfer them to the target readership. Nida (1964), for example, rightly describes this process and emphasizes that translation is the act of the reproduction of the source text into the target language. This act aims to preserve both the style and the meaning of the source text. Similarly, Catford (1965) argues that translation is the replacement of the source text with the closest equivalent textual materials in the target language. However, the work of the translator and the translation process extend beyond purely linguistics aspects such as semantic meanings, style or textual structure. Thus, translators should look outside these boundaries to transfer the source text accurately into the target language. Other equally important aspects linked to the original meaning play significant roles to capture it, particularly in specific contexts. One crucial aspect in this regard is the cultural context, which influences the strategies translators use to transfer linguistic meanings between languages (Mohammed & Al-Azzawi, 2025). This means that translation is not a purely linguistic act but a cultural one. Translator, therefore, should convey cultural norms, values and traditions along with linguistic meanings. In other words, translators negotiate two cultures and need to balance the linguistic and cultural equivalence to ensure effective communication (Nida, 1964). Dickins (2012) further supports this perspective and emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness and contextual sensitivity in Arabic–English translation. In addition, Bassnett (2014) asserts that language constitutes the core of culture while translation functions as the primary mechanism for cultures to communicate and interact. Thus, understanding this interconnected relationship between the translation process and cultural context is a valuable tool. It helps ease the task of translators and assist them to render the source text into the target readership with clear sense. It also helps them navigate the cultural boundaries and adopt the most appropriate strategies to serve the final translation output. Consequently, the study of the cultural context requires translators to identify and evaluate the cultural context challenges. Moreover, the cultural and linguistic transfer does not occur in a vacuum. It is shaped by the translator's background, ideology and awareness of the social, historical and aesthetic dimensions embedded in the text. Hence, when translators approach a work, especially a literary one, they bring with them interpretive frameworks that determine how faithfully or creatively they convey cultural meanings. This interplay between fidelity and adaptation defines the art of translation and determines how the readers perceive the translated work. In other words, the ability to decode cultural connotations, idioms and references becomes an essential skill that distinguishes the professional translators from the literal mediators.

This, however, may pose formidable challenges before translators and require them to adopt certain strategies to bridge the gap between linguistic systems and cultural contexts to enhance readability and intelligibility of the text content (Munday, 2022). As a result, investigating how such challenges appear in a particular context is paramount. It sheds light on the potential impact on translation strategies and how translators can effectively address these challenges. The researcher, therefore, decided to conduct this research to explore the extent to which the cultural context can influence the translation strategies with special focus on Saudi literature.

Rationale of the Study

This study stems from several pressing reasons that highlight the growing significance of translation in Saudi Arabia. First, translation practices in the Saudi Arabia have gained heightened importance in the recent decade as a vital medium for the intercultural communication to enrich the Arabic literary canon with works from diverse global traditions as expressed by Aldawood (2017). In other words, translation has become a cultural bridge that connects the Saudi readers with the international perspectives. This connection fosters the intellectual and artistic exchange across the linguistic boundaries. Second, translation is progressively recognized as both a linguistic activity and a cultural and professional practice. The rapid growth of the literary production under Saudi Vision 2030 underscores this recognition, which emphasizes the cultural openness and knowledge transfer. Consequently, the public increasingly views translators as cultural mediators who shape the representation of the global narratives within Saudi society. This expansion has also created new demands for instruction and the development of context-sensitive strategies that reflect the cultural and linguistic identity of Saudi Arabia.

Research Gap

Despite the abundance of scholarly discussions on the influence of the cultural context on translation strategies, there remains a notable absence of empirical research that directly addresses this issue in the specific context of Saudi literature. Most existing studies focus on general theoretical frameworks without examining how the cultural factors manifest in the Saudi translation environment. This gap limits our understanding of how translators in Saudi universities and professional institutions negotiate between the linguistic fidelity and cultural adaptation.

Objectives and Research Questions

As stated above, this study aims to bridge the identified gap and open a new avenue for future research to explore the cultural dimensions of translation from multiple perspectives. Specifically, the research seeks to measure how academic professors and teachers of translation studies in Saudi universities evaluate the impact of the cultural context on their translation strategies during the translation of Saudi literary texts. The research also examines how translators manage to address challenges linked to Saudi literature. To fulfill this purpose, the study focuses on the following key questions:

1. How does the cultural context influence the choice of translation strategies in Saudi literary translation, if there is any?

2. What challenges do the translators encounter when cultural context is involved in the translation of Saudi literature?

3. What best practices are recommended for addressing these challenges in the translation of Saudi literary texts?

Significance of the Study

By reframing the cultural context as a measurable and influential variable, this study contributes to translation studies in two remarkable ways. First, it provides empirical evidence from the Saudi context to enrich the global translation scholarship with local insights. Second, it proposes pedagogical and pro-

fessional reforms to enhance the translators' competence in the culture-specific domains. Ultimately, the study underscores that the translators aim not only to capture the linguistic meanings but also to convey the cultural essence and contextual relevance that resonate within the target society

Literature Review

Scholars have long regarded culture as a cornerstone of translation studies and continues to occupy a central place in scholarly discussions on the meaning and communication. It constitutes the shared system of beliefs, values, traditions and behaviors that shape how individuals perceive and interact with their world. In this sense, language and culture are inseparable as language reflects culture, and the culture gives the language its depth and the contextual meaning. Newmark (1988) defines culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression. It is the full range of learned human behavior patterns" (p. 94). Similarly, Richards (1985) conceptualizes it as "the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviors and social habits of the members of a particular society" (p. 70). Both definitions highlight that language is not merely a communicative code but a repository of the cultural identity. In other words, language is a vehicle for communities to express and preserve their worldviews and social conventions.

Given this intrinsic relationship, scholars cannot treat translation as a purely linguistic process. Rather, it represents a complex act of the cultural negotiation. Accordingly, translators operate at the intersection of languages and cultures and mediate between distinct systems of the meaning. House (2015) observes that linguistic messages often carry culturally embedded associations that extend beyond the surface-level meanings and the translators bear the responsibility to recognize and transfer these associations to the target audience. Consequently, when translators overlook cultural context, translations risk a loss of authenticity, intelligibility, readability and cultural appropriateness. As a result, the attempts to isolate the text from its cultural environment and focus solely on the linguistic equivalence can result in distortions that alienate target readers or misrepresent the source culture. Thus, the effective translation requires a dual competence: linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness. This means that the translators must be not only bilingual but also capable to understand and convey the subtleties and implicit meanings that arise from the cultural differences. As Mehrpouyan & Zakeri (2021) argue, the cultural contexts often contain CSIs with no direct linguistic equivalents. This absence compels translators to employ creative and adaptive strategies. Such awareness enables the translators to go beyond the literal transfer and engage with the text as a cultural artifact for reinterpretation within a new sociocultural framework. This sensitivity is especially critical in the literary translation where aesthetic, historical and emotional dimensions deeply intertwine with the cultural identity. With this in mind, both theoretical and empirical scholarship examine the relationship between language, culture, and translation. Newmark (1988), for example, underscores that cultural words are decisive elements that shape the translator decisions. He proposes strategies such as footnotes, descriptive translation or the use of cultural equivalents to balance fidelity and readability. Similarly, Hatim & Mason (1990) assert that the cultural context profoundly influences the translation strategies. This influence reshapes the translated product and determines its resonance with the target audience. They stress that the translators must function as cultural mediators who preserve the source text flavor while they adopt it to the norms, expectations and communicative conventions of the receiving culture.

However, in relation to the Saudi context, empirical research further corroborates these theoretical assertions. For example, in a corpus-based study to examine the translation of Arabic–English color metaphors, Al-Jarf (2019) analyzed a set of translated metaphorical expressions produced by translation students. Although her study focused on translation students in Saudi universities rather than professional translators, it provides empirical evidence of how cultural meaning constrains accurate translation of metaphors. More specifically, her findings indicate that the cultural context exerted a strong influence on translation outcomes. The complexity of the culturally bound imagery, however, limited accurate renderings to approximately 25% of the translated cases in her study. Similarly, within the Saudi context, Al-Malki (2021) conducted a mixed-methods investigation into how Saudi translators rendered Western cultural references in Arabic. His findings revealed a marked preference to maintain the foreignness of the source text. This choice reflects a commitment to the cultural authenticity even when it compromised readability. Furthermore, Alhomoud & Ismail (2024) examined the translation of the classical Arabic expressions in Saudi novels. Specifically, they examined the translation of the novel Riyadh Girls into English. Their results indicated that the translators faced considerable linguistic and cultural challenges and often resorted to the cultural transposition and communicative strategies to convey the meaning. Their study concluded that while these techniques enhanced reader comprehension, they occasionally led to a partial loss of the stylistic and cultural depth.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that the cultural context exerts a substantial influence on the translators' strategic decisions, which shapes both the process and the final product of the translation. Nevertheless, despite this growing body of research, there remains a noticeable gap concerning the specific dynamics of the Saudi literary translation. Few empirical studies have systematically analyze how the Saudi translators perceive and respond to the cultural challenges in their work, particularly in academic and professional settings. Therefore, there is a pressing need exists to bridge this gap as translation in Saudi Arabia has expanded rapidly under the framework of Vision 2030. This initiative fosters the cultural exchange, literary creativity and international dialogue.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a quantitative research approach to achieve the study objectives. This approach was chosen for its capacity to generate measurable, comparable and statistically analyzable data on how the cultural context influences the translation strategies. It also offers a systematic and objective framework to examine the relationships and recurring patterns within a well-defined population. Such an approach enhances the credibility and reliability of the findings. It also provides a basis to draw the inferences supported by empirical evidence. Furthermore, quantitative analysis allows to identify the consistent trends and correlations between translators awareness of the cultural factors and the strategies they apply. These considerations ultimately contribute to a deeper understanding of the translation behavior in the Saudi literary context.

The study employ purposive sample method to identify 40 professors who possess at least five years of teaching or research experience in translation. The rationale for this criterion is that seasoned academics are more capable to articulate reflective and evidence-based perspectives on the influence of the culture on translation decision-making. Their professional maturity ensures the delivery of insights that capture both pedagogical and practical challenges related to Arabic literary translation and culturally embedded texts. The population of interest consisted of academic experts in translation studies across Saudi

universities. This group was selected due to their deep familiarity with both the theoretical models and applied translation practices. Table 1 below presents the demographic information of the participants.

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	25–34	6	15.0
	35–44	6	15.0
	45–54	14	35.0
	55 and above	14	35.0
Gender	Male	21	52.5
	Female	19	47.5
Academic Qualification	Bachelor's	17	42.5
	Master's	11	27.5
	PhD	12	30.0
Professional Experience	Less than 1 year	6	15.0
	1–5 years	7	17.5
	6–10 years	14	35.0
	More than 10 years	13	32.5

Table 1 demographic information of the academic experts

To collect the necessary data, a structured questionnaire was developed after an extensive review of the relevant literature and similar empirical studies. The instrument was carefully designed to be concise, logically ordered and user-friendly to encourage precise responses while minimizing respondent fatigue. The questionnaire comprises three sections:

1. Demographic information covering variables such as gender, age, academic qualification and professional experience as presented in the table 1.

2. Evaluation of the translation strategies which explored the frequency and perceived effectiveness of specific approaches (e.g., explanatory notes, substitution, adaptation and omission) when addressing the cultural nuances.

3. Perceptions of challenges and best practices which allow the participants to reflect on their experiences, perceived obstacles and recommended solutions to render the culture-specific elements faithfully and meaningfully. All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree (1)* to *strongly agree (5)*. This scale enabled the researcher to quantify respondents' attitudes and degrees of agreement, which facilitated the statistical interpretation of the collected data.

To ensure the instrument validity and reliability, the research undertook multiple procedures. First, three senior professors in translation studies validated the content. They provided feedback on the wording, coverage and clarity of the items. This process led to minor adjustments to eliminate ambiguity and redundancy. Second, a pilot study involving ten participants was carried out to assess the internal consistency. The results revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.70, which confirmed that the questionnaire items measured their intended constructs consistently. This finding provided the necessary confidence to implement the full-scale data collection. Thereafter, the main survey was administered electronically to allow broader geographic access and convenience for the respondents. The survey explicitly stated that the participation is completely voluntary and the participants could with-

draw at any time without consequences. It also contained a cover letter to explain the objectives, confidentiality policies and the academic purpose of the study. The respondents were assured that their personal information would remain anonymous and that the data would be used solely for the research purposes. Accordingly, the ethical considerations were strictly observed to ensure compliance with the standard academic research protocols. After the completion of data collection, the collected data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistical analyses including means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages were employed to address the study's research questions. These analyses helped to identify the dominant translation strategies, highlight recurring patterns and, reveal key areas of divergence in the translators' perceptions. Specifically, the analyses were used to examine how participants evaluated the influence of the cultural context on the translation strategies, the challenges they encountered and the best practices they recommended in relation to Saudi literary translation. Finally, the researcher employed rigorous data verification and interpretation procedures to ensure the precision and transparency of the results. In this regard, he checked each dataset for completeness and consistency prior to analysis. He then integrated the findings derived from the quantitative data into the discussion section to interpret their implications in light of the research questions, existing translation theories and, cultural frameworks.

In conclusion, the chosen methodological approach provides a coherent and systematic tool to explore how the cultural context influences the translation strategies among the participant. The quantitative design, combined with the validated instruments and ethical rigor, enabled the researcher to draw evidence-based conclusions that reflect both the complexity of cultural mediation in translation and the professional practices that shape the participants decision processes.

Findings

The findings of the study reveal that cultural context exerts a profound influence on the strategic decisions of the translators who work with Saudi literary texts. Across the responses, a clear consensus exists that translation in such contexts extends far beyond a mechanical linguistic exercise. Rather, the participants perceived it as an act of the intercultural negotiation that requires conscious, informed and ethical decision. The participants demonstrate a mature awareness that their role is not merely to render words from one language to another but to interpret, mediate and reconstruct the meaning between two distinct cultural systems. The study also identifies several consistent patterns across the participants. These patterns highlight shared perceptions and common practices among Saudi university professors and translation instructors. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the correspondents exhibit a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between the cultural context and translation strategies. The results further underscore their collective recognition that translating culture-bound expressions requires more than linguistic proficiency. It demands cultural awareness, interpretive sensitivity and professional adaptability.

In addition, the results of the study indicate that explanatory notes received the highest mean score (M = 4.65). this score indicates that the participants widely regard contextual clarification as the most reliable means to maintain the cultural meaning without compromising readability. In such cases, the participants consistently emphasized that explanatory notes, whether presented as footnotes, endnotes or brief parenthetical explanations, allow translators to preserve the integrity of the source culture. These notes also facilitate comprehension for readers who may lack prior familiarity with Saudi or other

cultural concepts. Following the explanatory notes, substitution with the culturally relevant terms (M = 4.42) and adaptation (M = 4.30) also scored high mean values. This outcome reflects the translators awareness of the need to balance cultural fidelity with reader accessibility. These two strategies reveal a practical orientation toward what Nida (1964) termed dynamic equivalence where the translator seeks to reproduce the intended effect rather than adhere rigidly to the formal structures. Moreover, the participants note that substitution and adaptation proved particularly useful to translate idiomatic expressions, proverbs and metaphors that lack direct lexical counterparts in the target language. Accordingly, the participants opted to replace the culturally bound references with the target-culture equivalents that evoke similar emotional or conceptual associations. This choice ensures that the readers receive a comparable experience to the one the original author intended. In contrast, literal translation received a notably lower mean score (M = 2.85). Many respondents indicate that literal translation often leads to semantic distortion, awkward phrases and a loss of the intended nuance. In particular, they observed that literal translation tends to misrepresent the idiomatic and metaphorical expressions, resulting in texts that appear unnatural or even incomprehensible to the target readers. Consequently, the participants favored the interpretive flexibility and cultural sensitivity over literal transfer.

With regard to the challenges translators face, the absence of the direct lexical equivalents emerged as the most frequently cited difficulty with a mean score of (M = 4.55). The participants stress that this problem becomes particularly acute when they translate religious references, traditional idioms and culturally specific objects and practices that lack functional counterparts in the target culture. The analysis also indicates that the risk of losing authenticity ranked as the second major challenge (M = 4.33). The translators express concern that in their attempt to make the texts accessible to the readers, they might unintentionally dilute or distort the cultural identity of the original work. They also note that the excessive adaptation or domestication can strip the text of its cultural distinctiveness and aesthetic richness, which undermines its literary value. in addition, time constraints emerged as a significant practical challenge (M = 4.12). This result reflects the pressures of the professional translation work in academic and publishing contexts. The correspondents acknowledge that while the culturally informed translation demands careful research and reflection, deadlines often restrict the extent to which researchers can conduct the cultural checks or consult experts. Some respondents, however, mentioned that the institutional or commercial settings often prioritize productivity and turnaround time over the cultural precision, which may compromise the quality. By comparison, the readers' unfamiliarity with the foreign cultural terms was rated as moderately critical (M = 3.90). Although the participants do not consider this the most pressing issue, many translators observed that the limited cultural exposure among the target audiences can lead to misinterpretation or diminished engagement with the translated works. In light of these challenges, when asked about the best practices to enhance cultural translation, the participants expressed strong agreement on three major approaches. The first was the use of explanatory notes or footnotes (M = 4.70) which received the highest endorsement overall. The second was collaboration with foreign authors or editors (M = 4.35) as many translators viewed the intercultural collaboration as a means to ensure accuracy, enrich interpretation and expand professional competence. The third best practice was participation in specialized training in cultural translation (M = 4.28). This choice emphasizes the importance of the ongoing professional development. The respondents also highlighted that the translation education should go beyond the linguistic instruction to include comparative cultural studies, pragmatics and intercultural communication to prepare the future translators for complex literary projects.

In addition to these quantitative findings, several open-ended comments from the participants revealed deeper reflections on the ethical responsibility of translators as cultural mediators. Many respondents view translation as a form of intercultural dialogue. They express the belief that translators should not only reproduce words but also transmit values, emotions and identities across cultural boundaries. A few participants, however, stress that translators who work in Saudi universities and engage with Saudi literary texts, in particular, have a growing role to represent Saudi literature to the international audiences under the framework of Vision 2030. This national agenda, they argued, amplifies the importance of culturally sensitive translation that both honors the source culture and promotes cross-cultural understanding. Furthermore, the processed data suggest an increasing professional consciousness among the participant translators regarding their dual role as interpreters and cultural ambassadors. The participants demonstrated a keen awareness that translation operates not merely as a linguistic exercise but also as a sociocultural act that shapes how cultures perceive and interact with one another. Many participants further call for the institutionalization of translation ethics courses and the establishment of national associations to promote the professionalization of translation in Saudi Arabia. Such initiatives, they argued, would enhance accountability, ensure consistent quality and strengthen Saudi Arabia's presence in the global translation market.

In summary, the findings collectively suggest that the participant translators prioritize the meaning over the form and the culture over literalness when they translate Saudi literary works. They consciously adopt strategies to safeguard the cultural resonance and reader comprehension while they remain faithful to the spirit of the original text. The findings, therefore, provide compelling evidence that the awareness of the cultural context is not an optional skill but a central component of the professional translation competence. They alsunderscore that effective cultural translation requires technical mastery, ethical judgment, cross-cultural empathy and institutional support to sustain high standards of practice across both academia and industry.

Discussion

The study's findings indicate that the preference for explanatory notes among participants (M = 4.65) represents a deliberate tendency toward dynamic equivalence as theorized by Nida (1964). This strategy emphasizes producing an equivalent effect in the target language rather than reproducing the exact formal or grammatical features of the source text. In the Saudi literary context, the translators view explanatory notes and contextual clarifications as a means to preserve both accuracy and cultural resonance. Such transparency reflects a professional commitment to the readers' understanding particularly when dealing with concepts, idioms or cultural practices unfamiliar to the target audience. In this regard, the participant translators appear to privilege communicative clarity and reader accessibility without entirely sacrificing the depth of the source culture. This approach is consistent with Newmark's (1988) position that annotations, including footnotes and glosses, serve as practical tools for compensating for cultural loss and conveying culture-bound meanings. Thus, explanatory notes function as an effective mediating device that maintains fidelity to the original text. This finding also underscores a broader interpretive principle that translation is not merely a transfer of words but a dialogic and interpretive act. The translators' preference for contextualization suggests that they consider themselves as cultural mediators who bridge the gap between linguistic systems and cultural worlds. They acknowledge that literal or overly formal translation may obscure cultural meanings whereas explanatory additions en-

able readers to access the embedded cultural nuances of the source text. Thus, translation emerges as a strategic and responsible practice to balance linguistic fidelity with cultural intelligibility. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate a frequent reliance on substitution and adaptation as pragmatic strategies for mitigating cultural conflict in the translation of Saudi literary texts. These strategies which recorded relatively high mean scores (M = 4.42 and M = 4.30 respectively) align with Lawrence Venuti's (1995) concept of domestication. In this approach, translators recalibrate elements of the source text to match the cultural norms and expectations of the target audience. Through substitution, the translators replace the culturally bound items with analogues capable of evoking similar emotional or conceptual effects. At the same time, adaptation enables them to reshape the form and content of the source text to preserve its intended impact. Nevertheless, while these approaches enhance readability and the audience engagement, the participants also voiced concern over the risk of losing cultural authenticity. They emphasized that excessive domestication may dilute the unique cultural identity of the original text and diminish its aesthetic or historical value. Accordingly, the empirical results reveal an ongoing balance between cultural fidelity and reader accessibility. The translators continually negotiate how to preserve the cultural integrity of the source text and make it understandable to the target audience. This constant negotiation represents the central challenge at the heart of every translation endeavor.

In addition to strategy preferences, the findings report several best practices that the participants consistently recommend. These practices reflect the practitioners insight into how to improve translation quality in culture-complex settings. The result highlights three practices. First, the participants recommend specialized training in cultural translation to equip translators with theoretical and practical tools to recognize and manage culture-specific elements. Second, they encourage collaboration with authors, editors and cultural experts to enable deeper cultural sensitivity and cross-verification of meaning. Third, they emphasize transparency and contextual clarification primarily through explanatory notes or footnotes. They believe that this approach helps bridge the cultural gaps without erasing the richness of the source text. These practices reaffirm that the cultural context is not a peripheral issue but a central determinant of the translation strategies, challenges and resolutions in Saudi literary translation. This conclusion aligns with the long-standing theoretical perspectives in translation studies, which suggest that culture permeates every level of the textual meaning (Bassnett, 2014). Similarly, the preferences that the participants express regarding explanatory notes, substitution and adaptation demonstrate that cultural considerations shape the translators strategies, inform the challenges they encounter and influence the solutions they ultimately adopt. These results reveal a shared understanding that translation is a dialogic process that requires constant negotiation between competing priorities; fidelity to the source text and accessibility for the target readership. In this view, translation is not merely a linguistic task but an interpretive and ethical practice. It carries the responsibility to transmit cultural identity, symbolism and worldview across linguistic boundaries (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

Moreover, the findings illuminate an emerging sense of professional and cultural consciousness among the translators who increasingly situate their work within the broader intellectual and cultural transformation taking place in Saudi Arabia. Several participants implicitly link their translation choices to the objectives of Vision 2030 which emphasizes cultural preservation, global cultural outreach and the promotion of Saudi literature on the international platforms. This alignment suggests that a new perspective reframes the act of translation as a national endeavor. This work contributes to the cultural

diplomacy, international representation and the soft power of Saudi Arabia. Such interpretations resonate with Venuti's (1995) argument that translators play an active role to shape the cultural visibility of nations through the strategies they adopt. The findings further indicate a strong awareness among the translators of the evolving expectations from both local and international readers. The respondents recognize a clear demand for translations that balance accuracy with stylistic appeal and authenticity with readability. This awareness reflects a shift in translation pedagogy and professional practice in Saudi Arabia from traditional prescriptive approaches toward culturally responsive and audience-oriented translation. House (2015) argues that effective translation requires the preservation of the cultural and pragmatic meaning while meeting the simultaneously communicative needs of the target audience. Accordingly, the participants' emphasis on contextualization, mediated explanations and culturally attuned strategies reflects this broader movement within the field toward functional and context-sensitive translation practices.

In addition, the collective insights of the participants indicate a mature translation community in Saudi Arabia that values cultural literacy, theoretical foundations and ethical accountability. The translators increasingly understand that sociocultural forces embed their work and that translation itself evolves in response to the global communication shifts and national cultural ambitions. Their reflections reveal an acute awareness of the translator's agency to mediate cultural knowledge, preserve authenticity and shape the intercultural comprehension. As a result, the findings of this study contribute not only to the translation theory but also to the broader discourse on the role of translation to advance cultural dialogue and intellectual development within the Saudi context.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the cultural context exerts a significant influence on the translation strategies adopted by the participant translators. The quantitative analysis reveal a consistent preference for explanatory notes, substitution and adaptation. This finding indicates that the participants perceive cultural translation as a process of mediation rather than literal transfer. Conversely, the low reliance on literal translation strategies reflects an awareness that direct linguistic equivalence alone cannot effectively convey the cultural meaning. Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study offers three key practical implications. First, it emphasizes the need for specialized training in cultural translation to better equip translators with strategies to handle culture-specific expressions. Second, it highlights the importance of collaboration among translators, authors, editors and cultural consultants to ensure culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate translations. Third, it calls for the establishment of standardized practices and professional guidelines to address recurring challenges such as terminology gaps and the preservation of cultural authenticity.

Overall, the findings underscore that translation is not merely a linguistic transfer. Rather, it is a dynamic process of cultural negotiation that the translator's awareness, ethical responsibility and interpretive choices shape. Thus, cultural competence emerges as a defining component of professional translation practice. The study reaffirms that achieving balance between fidelity and intelligibility requires both theoretical grounding and practical skill. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the translator's role as an intercultural mediator through the acknowledgment of the cultural context as a central determinant in translation. Ultimately, the promotion of culturally informed translation edu-

cation and institutional support will enhance the translation quality, foster cross-cultural understanding and strengthen Saudi Arabia's contribution to the global literary exchange.

Limitations and recommendations

As is the case with similar works in the academic field, the study has certain limitations. One key constraint is its exclusive focus on the professors and translation instructors in Saudi universities. Although the study provides valuable academic insights, it does not capture the perspectives of professional translators or those in the publishing industry. Another constraint relates to the reliance on self-reported questionnaire data. This data reflects the participants' perceptions rather than the actual translation practices and may therefore involve a degree of subjectivity. Accordingly, future research could broaden the sample to include practicing translators from professional and publishing contexts. In addition, researchers could opt for mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or textual analyses. Such approaches would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how translators negotiate the cultural context in translation practice across various sectors in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Instrument

Statement of Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines the influence of cultural context on translation strategies used by academic translators in Saudi Arabia. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. By proceeding with this questionnaire, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided below and that you consent to participate in the study.

No personal identifying information will be collected and all responses will remain anonymous and confidential. The data will be used solely for the academic research purposes and analyzed in aggregate form to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Purpose of the Study

This survey aims to gather insights from academic translators and translation instructors in Saudi universities regarding their experiences, strategic choices and perceptions when translating culture-specific elements in Saudi literature. Your responses will contribute to a broader understanding of how the cultural context shapes translation decisions and the challenges encountered during the process. The results will support the development of improved translation practices and enhance academic research in translation studies within the Saudi context.

By completing this questionnaire, you agree to the anonymous use of your responses for research and publication purposes.

Instructions:

Please respond to all items honestly based on your personal experience with translation and cultural issues and indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Section One: Demographic Information

   1. Age

   2. Gender

   3. Academic Qualification

   4. Experience

Section Two: The extent that cultural context impact the translation strategies of Saudi literary works

Item No.	Statements
Q1	Cultural customs are an essential part of translating Saudi literature
Q2	Cultural values influence the understanding of Saudi literary texts during the translation process
Q3	Cultural context is a key factor in developing translation strategies for Saudi literary works
Q4	Understanding the cultural context improves the quality of Saudi literary translation through choosing the appropriate translation strategy
Q5	Understanding the Saudi cultural context results in choosing the most suitable translation strategy
Q6	Translations that ignore Saudi cultural elements are less effective for a global audience
Q7	Cultural context influences the choice of words and phrases in the translation of Saudi literary texts
Q8	Cultural nuances play a crucial role in translating Saudi literature, influencing how readers perceive the text
Q9	Misinterpretation of cultural elements leads to a distorted representation of Saudi literary works for foreign readers by choosing the inappropriate translation method
Q10	Cultural awareness is essential to capture the essence and emotional depth of Saudi literary texts
Q11	Successful Saudi literary translation requires navigating the cultural gaps between the source and target audiences through choosing the most appropriate translation strategy

Section Three: The challenges faced by translators to maintain the authenticity of Saudi culture elements

Item No.	Statements
Q1	Convey the nuances of Saudi cultural elements into a foreign language
Q2	Saudi cultural elements require additional explanations to be understood by a foreign audience
Q3	The potential of losing authenticity in translated texts due to cultural differences
Q4	The translator's mission in choosing the appropriate terminology that reflects Saudi culture
Q5	lack of understanding of cultural elements by a foreign audience may affect the success of the translation
Q6	Time pressures may reduce translators' interest in preserving cultural elements
Q7	The weak training levels provided for translators in cultural translation
Q8	Finding equivalents for culture-specific terms is challenging
Q9	The possibility of losing the cultural nuances in the translation

Section Four: The best practices for bridging the cultural gaps between Saudi literature and foreign readerships

Item No.	Statements
Q1	Using explanatory notes to maintain cultural authenticity in translation
Q2	Collaborating with local cultural experts to overcome cultural challenges in translation
Q3	Taking into account the cultural background of the target reader in Saudi literary works
Q4	Substitution a cultural-specific item with an item that has a similar impact on the target reader
Q5	Using translators who specialize in Saudi literature is an effective step to bridge cultural gaps
Q6	Including historical and cultural explanations in translations to enhance understanding
Q7	Targeting the simultaneous translation of literary talks at international events can be useful for bridging cultural gap
Q8	Collaborations between Saudi and foreign writers which can contribute to enhancing cultural understanding
Q9	Adding cultural information to the original texts that have cultural implicitly

Biographical Statement	**معلومات عن الباحث**
Author's name is Saad Salem Alshamrani, an Associate Professor of Translation studies in the Department of English, Applied College, Shaqra University. Dr. Saad received his PhD degree in Languages and linguistics (2017) from Aberdeen University. His research interests include English Borrowings used in Saudi Arabian Newspapers.	**د. ســـعد بــــن ســـالم الشــــمراني** أستاذ الترجمة المشارك في وحدة اللغة الإنجليزية بالكلية التطبيقية في جامعة شقراء (المملكة العربية السعودية حاصل على درجة الدكتوراه في اللغات واللغويات من جامعة إبردين عام 2017 تدور اهتماماته البحثية حول الكلمات الإنجليزية المقترضة في الصحافة السعودية الصادرة باللغة العربية.