Translation Research as Reflection on Translation Practice and Product: The Case of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Translation activities in Saudi Arabia have significantly increased due to government initiatives and technological advancements within modernization efforts. This paper analyzes Saudi Arabia's research carried on translation practices and outcomes using a bibliometric approach on 193 publications by 164 authors across 31 fields. The analysis shows a predominance of classroom-related research, with 61.14% focusing on pedagogy, reflecting local practices and global trends in translation studies as shown by earlier research. Despite the growing interest, critical areas such as audiovisual translation, tourism, and video games translation remain under-researched. The study identifies gaps and suggests future research directions, emphasizing the need for a broader scope to align translation research with the country's developmental goals under Vision 2030. Broadening research beyond academic settings to include practical applications in various sectors will enhance the role of translation in Saudi Arabia's growth, fostering cross-cultural understanding and intellectual discourse.

Keywords: Translation research, practice and outcome, reflection, bibliometric analysis, research gaps.

الملخص

يشهد نشاط الترجمة في المملكة العربية السعودية ازديادًا ملحوظًا بفضل المبادرات الحكومية، والعناية بتبني أحدث ما توصلت إليه التقنية في إطار سعي البلاد نحو التقدم والنمو. وتحلل هذه الورقة البحوث التي تناولت ممارسات الترجمة ومخرجاتها في المملكة العربية السعودية باستخدام منهج القياس الببليومتري مطبقًا على 193 عنوانًا لـ 164 مؤلف في 31 حقلًا بحثيًا. ويظهر التحليل هيمنة البحوث المتعلقة بقاعة الدرس، إذ ينصب 61.14٪ منها على العملية التعليمية، وهذا يؤكد ما كشفته البحوث عن الممارسات المحلية والاتجاهات العالمية السائدة في دراسات الترجمة. إلا أن البحوث لا تزال محدودة جدًا في مجالات مهمة مثل الترجمة السمعبصرية، والسياحية، وترجمة ألعاب الفيديو على الرغم من الاهتمام المتزايد بها. وتحدد الدراسة الثغرات وتقترح الاتجاهات البحثية المستقبلية، مع التركيز على الحاجة إلى توسيع نطاق البحث؛ لتوائم بحوث الترجمة الأهدافَ التنمويةَ للمملكة في إطار رؤية 2030. وسيساهم توسيع البحث، ليشمل التطبيقات العملية في مختلف القطاعات– إلى جانب البيئة الأكاديمية– في تعزيز دور الترجمة في نمو ونهضة المملكة، وتعزيز الفهم الثقافي المتبادل والحوار الفكري.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بحوث الترجمة، الممارسات والمخرجات، بحث تحليلي، تحليل ببليومتري، ثغرات بحثية

1. Introduction

The history of translation in Saudi Arabia is rooted in the country's rich cultural and linguistic heritage, which is deeply influenced by Islam and Arabic. Translating texts from other languages into Arabic and vice versa has played a significant role in the dissemination of knowledge and exchange of ideas in the Arab world and Saudi Arabia's various developmental phases.

In more recent times, Saudi Arabia has experienced a significant surge in translation activities, driven by the country's modernization efforts, educational reforms, and growing interest in international literature and knowledge exchange. The establishment of universities, research institutions, and cultural organizations has further stimulated translation endeavors (Fatani, 2009).

Government initiatives have also played a crucial role in promoting translation in Saudi Arabia. For example, the Ministry of Culture's Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission has been actively translating important works into Arabic, supporting local translators and promoting research since 2020 (Ministry of Culture, n.d.). These efforts are maintained by established translation programs and departments in universities across the country, which have long been training professionals in the field.

Overall, the history of translation in Saudi Arabia reflects a continuous effort to bridge linguistic and cultural barriers, enrich intellectual discourse, promote cross-cultural understanding in the region and beyond, and help the country in its bid for development (Harabi, 2007; Al-Otaibi, 2015). Moreover, the translation industry in Saudi Arabia has been growing steadily due to various factors such as globalization, increased international business transactions, and a growing focus on language accessibility (Alzahrani, 2017). The translation market size can vary depending on factors like demand for translation services, the number of translators and translation agencies operating in the country, and government initiatives promoting translation and localization efforts.

There are no definitive figures as to the size of the translation market in Saudi Arabia, but one estimate projects it to reach US$28.99m in 2024 and expects it to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2024-2030) of 13.14%, resulting in a market volume of US$60.82m by 2030 (Statista, 2024). Moreover, advancements in technology have facilitated translation processes globally, including in Saudi Arabia. These advancements have made it easier to access and translate a wide range of texts efficiently. The internet and digital platforms, for instance, have provided avenues for both professional translators and enthusiasts in Saudi Arabia and beyond to engage in translation activities and share their work with a broader audience (Seidenova & Mussaly, 2022).

This surge in translation activity finds strong impetus from various factors. Vision 2030 serves as the primary catalyst, propelling the country towards globalization through diversification of the economy, promotion of tourism, attraction of foreign investment, investment in human capital, and heightened global partnerships and collaborations (Vision 2030, n.d.). This transformative vision is driving Saudi Arabia towards becoming a truly multilingual society. Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism's ambitious plan to attract 150 million visitors by 2030 and the forthcoming mega events such as Saudi Expo 3030 and the FIFA World Cup 2034 are poised to fuel the demand for multilingual solutions further.

This is to say that translation is academically practised through its teaching, training, and research and industrially through generating translations for various clients (including government agencies, cultural and entertainment outlets, private enterprises, and individuals) to address numerous needs. This prompts inquiries into the extent of research supporting this comprehensive practice, which is influenced by and serves as a conduit of globalization. In essence, the academic realm focuses on equipping students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills, complemented by research exploring linguistic challenges,

cultural nuances, and technological advancements. Concurrently, the industrial application of translation responds to the demands of globalization by facilitating cross-cultural communication and understanding in diverse contexts. The synergy between academic research and industrial practice ensures that translation evolves, maintaining its relevance and efficacy in an increasingly interconnected world, highlighting the vital role of continuous research in supporting and enhancing this dynamic field.

2. Objective of the study

Given the preceding, this paper is one such effort which aims to reveal the extent and purpose of the research conducted on Saudi Arabia's translation practices and output. This investigation seeks to delineate dominant patterns, pinpoint areas lacking sufficient research attention, and underscore overarching requirements for translation studies within Saudi Arabia. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding, this inquiry addresses the following questions:

Q1: What are the primary patterns observed in reflective translation research within the domain of translation studies in Saudi Arabia?

Q2: What are the key domains and deficiencies that necessitate further investigation to enhance translation practice and outcomes in Saudi Arabia?

3. The scope of the study

This article presents a bibliometric analysis aimed at mapping the specified translation research activities. The objective is to identify challenges and gaps constructively and suggest future research directions with great potential for advancing the field. Current research predominantly focuses on descriptive analysis to present an overarching view of the field. Bibliometric analysis, a quantitative method, investigates the structure of knowledge, focal research areas, and developmental trends within a field through the examination of related articles, theses, and books.

Since its establishment as a research tool in the 1970s, bibliometrics has involved the use of statistical methods to examine a corpus of literature in order to show patterns of authorship, publishing, and usage as well as historical trends in the subject field (Halpin, 2013, p. 19). In recent years, bibliometric studies have been introduced in the field of translation studies. The Translation Studies Bibliography (TSB) (Van Doorslaer & Gambier, 2015) and Translation Studies Abstracts (TSA) (Zanettin et al., 2015) are two critical resources for context-specific bibliometric analysis in the field. Bibliometrics is often used to examine these bibliographies. Furthermore, bibliometrics has been applied to assess translation and interpreting research endeavours in certain nations, like Spain (Aixela & Rovira-Esteva, 2019) and China (Wang et al., 2019). Certain researchers chose to conduct topic-specific bibliometric analyses, emphasizing disciplines such as discourse analysis (Zhang et al., 2015) and study interpretation (Ren et al., 2020). It is possible to supply fresh instructions for future scholars and decision-makers and a quantitative depiction of research frequency and local and worldwide collaborations through bibliometric analysis.

As for the Saudi context, previous studies of this kind have been undertaken, with their outcomes appearing in various forms such as postgraduate theses and dissertations (al-Nasser, 1998; Alkhamis, 2012; Al-Otaibi, 2015), bibliographies (King Fahd National Library, 2008; The Saudi Observatory on Translated Publications, 2019), and research articles (Harabi, 2007; Harabi, 2008; Abdel Latif, 2018). These studies often incorporate bibliometric data and analyses. However, the primary focus of these investigations has revolved mainly around examining translation activities, particularly in the context of translated books.

Alanqari (2023) recently embarked on a study to investigate the realm of translation and interpreting research within Saudi Arabia from 1990 to 2019. Her research encompassed 180 journal articles, specifically delving into the broad spectrum of translation studies yet exclusively considering work published in Saudi-based journals or authored by individuals affiliated with Saudi institutions. The study deliberately excluded book chapters, postgraduate dissertations, and conference proceedings.

The scope of the present paper is broader and more inclusive. Unlike Alanqari (2023), it does not solely focus on the book format or researchers affiliated with Saudi institutions. However, it focuses exclusively on research that examines translation practices across diverse domains involving various participants, as well as studies that analyze the translated output.

Reflection serves as a cornerstone for improvement and development, a vital process through which practitioners and planners can derive significant benefits. Through reflection, practitioners critically assess their actions, decisions, and experiences, enabling them to identify areas for enhancement, learn from past successes and mistakes, and make informed adjustments to their practices or strategies. This introspective process fosters a deeper understanding of one's work and the dynamics of their field, paving the way for more effective actions and innovative solutions in future endeavors. Consequently, embracing reflection is beneficial and essential for continuous improvement and achieving higher standards of excellence.

4. Methodology: data collection

The methodology employed involved several key phases: data collection, theme identification, linkage of themes, and creating a conceptual framework or typology, as outlined by Creswell (2012). Firstly, to compile the study dataset, Harzig's Publish or Perish (Windows GUI Edition) tool was utilized to identify pertinent titles using the keywords "translat*" and "Saudi", resulting in a collection of 7,250 entries from data sources, i.e., Google Scholar, Crossref, Scopus, Web of Science, OpenAlex, and Semantic Scholar. The entries were subsequently transferred to an Excel spreadsheet for manual examination by the researcher. This process refined the list and whittled it down to a solid 193 titles most relevant to the study's objectives. The earliest title dates back to 1990, with the most recent title dated April 2024, corresponding to the period of this research. Each title was then meticulously evaluated against the specific criteria and goals of the research. This included assessing the relevance of the content to the study's focus, the accuracy of the bibliographical information, and the alignment with the key themes and questions guiding the research. Ensuring each title met these standards made it possible to precisely categorize them within the designated research area, thereby directly supporting the study's objectives. The results were individually vetted to confirm their contribution to the core of this research endeavour, thereby enhancing the integrity and focus of the study.

Fig. 1. Raw data culled by Harzig's Publish or Perish
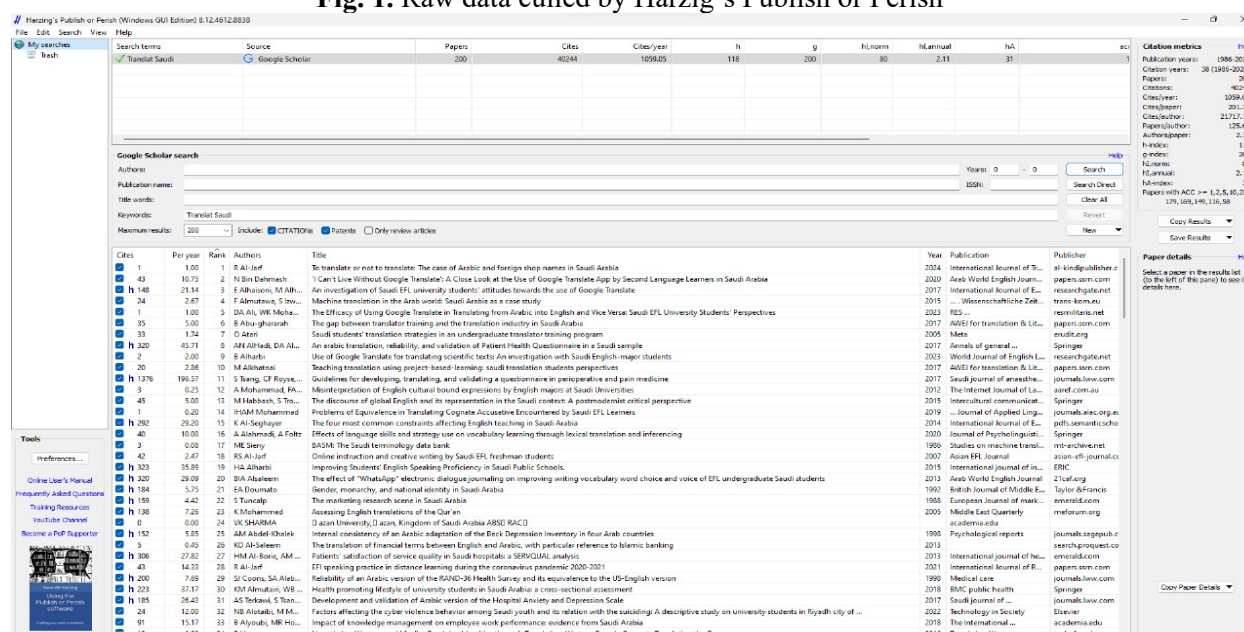
The data set included parameters, such as the author's name, publication title, publication year, field of interest, publisher, and publication type. These were ideally selected to facilitate the investigation of research on practices and outputs related to translation activities in Saudi Arabia.

What follows is an outline description of the data followed by a detailed analysis:

5. Data analysis and discussion

Table 1 below provides an overview of the refined data set. A total of 193 publications were published by 164 unique authors across 31 distinct fields of study. These works were published in 13 different types of publications and appeared in 157 unique sources.

Table 1. Summary of researched data

Category	Counts
Total Publications	193
Unique Authors	164
Unique Fields of Study	31
Unique Publication Types	13
Unique Sources of Publication	157

5.1 Publication trends over time

The dataset reveals a consistent upward trend in publication counts over time, with a marked surge starting in 2016, with the highest number of publications occurring in 2023 (28 publications), followed by 2022 (26 publications) and 2021 (25 publications), illustrating an enhanced interest and productivity in translation studies, with a particular focus on reflective research within this domain. This trend dates back to 1990, marking the era when translation was recognized as an independent field of knowledge within English language departments. During this period, translation courses were increasingly integrated into the curriculum, a phase that extended until 1999 (Alanqari, 2023). Subsequently, from 2000 to 2010, a significant number of translation departments emerged nationwide (Alanqari, 2023), although some translation courses remained within the English departments. This historical context elucidates the initial slow pace of reflective research on translation, which began to consistently increase from 2007 onwards, as evidenced in the chart below. Furthermore, the evolution into comprehensive translation departments providing graduate and postgraduate programs has further fueled this increase.

Given the scope of this study, a pertinent question emerges: Which research fields predominantly attracted the attention of scholars throughout these 34 years?

Chart 1. Numerical distribution of publications per year

Number of Publications per Year
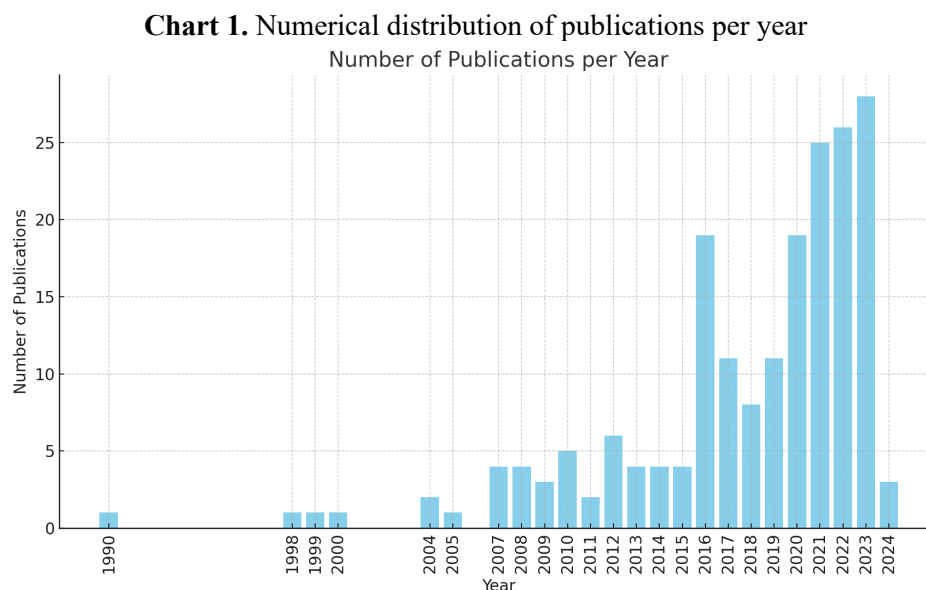
5.2 Field Distribution

The table below provides a comprehensive breakdown of these fields of study, along with their respective percentages within the area being examined:

Table 2. Counts and percentages of covered fields of study

No.	Field of Study	Counts	Percentage
1	Pedagogy/Tertiary	83	43.01%
2	Pedagogy/EFL	35	18.13%
3	Literature	11	5.70%
4	Bibliometric	7	3.63%
5	Sign Language	6	3.11%
6	Religious	6	3.11%
7	Translation Industry	4	2.07%
8	Localization	4	2.07%
9	Law	4	2.07%
10	CAT Tools	4	2.07%
11	Shop Signs	3	1.55%
12	Hotel Names	1	0.52%
13	Medicine	2	1.04%
14	Machine Translation	2	1.04%
15	Hajj*	2	1.04%
16	Ethics	2	1.04%
17	Censorship	2	1.04%
18	Audiovisual	2	1.04%
19	Press/Media	2	1.04%
20	Volunteering	1	0.52%
21	Songs	1	0.52%
22	Self-image	1	0.52%
24	Post-editing**	1	0.52%
25	Politics	1	0.52%

26	Paratexts	1	0.52%
27	Military	1	0.52%
28	Tourism	1	0.52%
29	Institutional	1	0.52%
30	Dialects	1	0.52%
31	Academia	1	0.52%
Total		193	100.00%

The data indicates that research is overwhelmingly dominated by classroom-related studies, comprising 118 titles, which represent 61.14% of the total 193 titles included in the study. This finding aligns with expectations and has been previously observed by Alanqari (2023) as well as Abdel Latif (2018), who proposed a classification for this burgeoning area of research.

The category of "Pedagogy" is further delineated into specific studies on the translation classroom itself, with 83 titles accounting for 43.01%, and research where translation supports English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, represented by 35 titles or 18.13%. Both instances reflect a genuine interest stemming from everyday practice that has evolved into research. They also underline academic engrossment in the classroom for their ease of access to research materials and engagement with the topics under study, which unfortunately comes at the expense of practical translation and language solutions needed for cross-cultural synergy and the country's developmental needs.

The next four most researched fields are literature (11 entries, accounting for 5.70%), bibliometrics (7 entries, 3.63%), sign language (6 entries, 3.11%), and religion (6 entries, 3.11%), totalling a mere 30 entries which constitute 15.55% of the overall entries.

The fascination with literature and religious translation, beyond the realms of sign language and bibliometric studies, is understandable. Zanetti *et al*. (2014, p. 168) point out that literary translation emerges as the most explored area within global translation studies. This prominence is attributed to the extensive volume of literary translations, with the majority of the top 50 most translated authors historically being literary authors (UNESCO, n.d.) and the many worldwide programs dedicated to literary translation, which is the encapsulation of national and cultural identity. Meanwhile, interest in religious translation research has been significantly influenced by its crucial role in the Islamic world. This region is not only a pivotal gathering site for Muslims worldwide, especially during the Hajj pilgrimage, but it also stands as the largest producer of the Qur'an globally (Yakubovych, 2024).

While research in the two fields of pedagogy and literary translation, along with studies in translation as a profession (4 entries, 2.07%), localization (4 entries, 2.07%), computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools (4 entries, 2.07%), and law (4 entries, 2.07%), indicates a growing interest in these areas, it is fair to argue that they remain significantly under-researched.

Bibliometric research (7 entries, 3.63%), which is a meta-analysis approach looking into patterns of publication to sketch out the field and identify trends, has a lure of its own. It is an empowering tool and a critical apparatus that is hard to escape the sight of researchers keen on setting the campus in the right direction, especially in emerging fields. This has not escaped the notice of Saudi translation researchers (al-Nasser, 1998; Harabi, 2007; Harabi, 2008; Alkhamis, 2012; Al-Otaibi, 2015; Abdel Latif, 2018, Alanqari, 2023). Over 25 years, from 1998 to 2023, they tracked the progress of translation output in Saudi Arabia from various perspectives, including book production and scholarly articles related to translation studies within the country.

However, it is crucial to note that the potential topics for bibliometric research in translation listed below highlight the pressing need for further in-depth research in Saudi Arabia. These areas, if explored, could significantly contribute to the advancement of translation studies in the country:

Publication Patterns: Analyzing the volume and types of translation-related publications over time to identify trends in research focus, productivity, or shifts in scholarly interest.

Citation Analysis: Examining how frequently translation studies publications are cited, identifying key works and authors that have influenced the field, and understanding the impact of specific research over time.

Collaboration Networks: Studying the collaboration patterns among researchers in translation studies, including co-authorships and institutional collaborations, to understand the structure and dynamics of the research community.

Geographical Distribution: Mapping the geographical distribution of research output and citations to identify global and regional centers of translation studies research.

Interdisciplinary Connections: Exploring the connections between translation studies and other disciplines by analyzing cross-citations, shared research topics, and collaborative projects. This can reveal how translation studies interacts with fields like linguistics, literature, sociology, and technology.

Research Topics and Trends: Identifying the most popular and emerging topics within translation studies by analyzing keywords, abstracts, and full texts of scholarly articles. This can reveal shifts in focus areas over time and predict future directions of research.

Impact of Technology: Assessing the influence of technological advancements on translation studies, such as the adoption of machine translation and computer-assisted translation tools, through publications that discuss these technologies.

Funding and Research Support: Investigating the sources of funding for translation studies research and its impact on research output and direction, identifying key supporters and their influence on the field.

Language and Translation Types: Analyzing the languages involved in translation research, types of translations studied (e.g., literary, medical, legal), and their respective academic interest and development.

Gender and Diversity Studies: Exploring gender and diversity aspects within translation studies research, including the representation of different groups in authorship and thematic focuses.

Sign language, comprising six entries and making up 3.11% of the data, utilizes the visual-manual modality to convey rich and complex meanings. It is an integral part of translation studies, as noted by Zanetti et al. (2014, pp. 176-177). Its inclusion in this bibliographic data is not surprising. It has been demonstrated that Saudi translation researchers are part of the global translation studies community and are likely influenced by both emerging and prevalent research trends in the field.

Notably, shop signs and hotel names account for four entries, making up 2.07%. While this might seem peripheral, it is highly relevant and provides valuable insights into several aspects of Translation Studies. This relationship can be explored through the lenses of linguistics, semiotics, and marketing. Almost all commercial signage in Saudi Arabia is bilingual (and/or multilingual), even in areas not frequently visited by foreigners (Aljarf, 2022, p. 34). This linguistic phenomenon is conspicuously present everywhere, making it no surprise that it has captured the attention and interest of researchers. Its practical relevance and the relative ease of analyzing this corpus contribute further to its academic appeal.

Chart 2. Top ten fields of research focus per number of publications
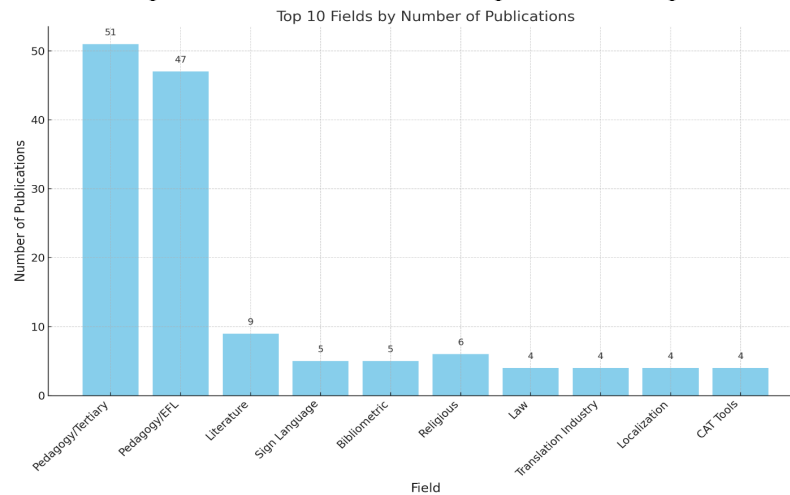
In conclusion, the analysis of the dataset's most prevalent fields of research shows that Saudi translation research not only aligns with global trends in Translation Studies but also responds to the local context. The growing numbers in recent years across various fields reflect both expanding interests and possibly increased opportunities for publication.

Additionally, a detailed examination of both publication types and sources further highlights these findings. Scholarly research papers are the predominant publication type, with peer-reviewed journals leading the publication landscape with 136 (=70.47%) instances out of the total 193 collected titles. This underscores the importance of peer-reviewed journals as the primary medium for disseminating translation research in academic circles. Theses and dissertations also play a significant role, with 33 instances (=17.10%) emphasizing the contribution of academic research at the graduate level. Other dissemination channels, such as conference presentations (10 instances= 5.18%), book chapters (8= 4.15%), essays, published in magazines, and occasional papers, published by certain academic institutions on special occasions (3), and to a much lesser extent, books (2). The diversity of these outlets through which translation studies are communicated highlights the richness and multifaceted nature of the field.

Chart 3. Numerical distribution per publication type
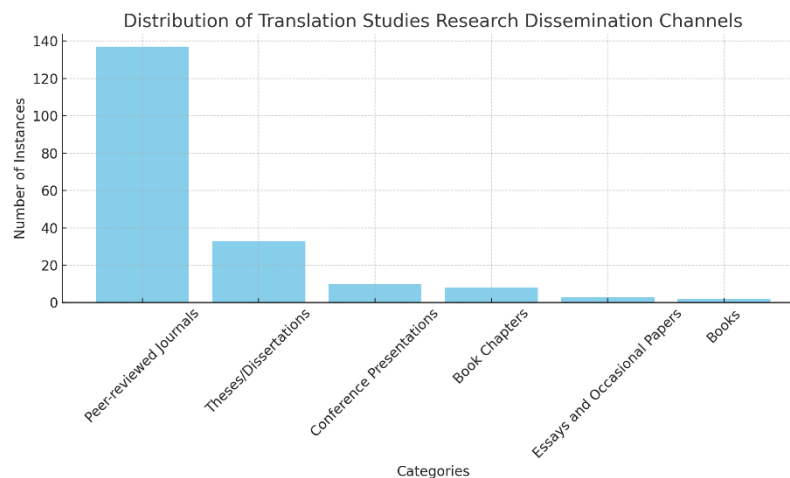
The Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) (4 results) and its sister journal, which is also published by the same group, AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies (15 results), are the most frequent publishers. Following these are the Saudi Journal of Language Studies, International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation, and International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature, each hosting 5 publications. This distribution indicates a robust academic interest and well-established channels for disseminating research in translation studies.

5.3 Identifying research gaps

These insights paint a picture of a vibrant and expanding field of study. However, this research's volume, richness, and variety still need to be increased. This deficiency is especially apparent in several vital areas that need more comprehensive investigation, particularly given the transformative developments the country has experienced since 2016. Some of these under-researched topics are included in the table below, as extracted from the current dataset.

Table 3. Count and percentages of less-covered research areas

No.	Field of Study	Counts	Percentage
1.	Medicine	2	1.04%
2.	Machine Translation	2	1.04%
3.	Hajj	2	1.04%
4.	Ethics	2	1.04%
5.	Censorship	2	1.04%
6.	Audiovisual	2	1.04%
7.	Press/Media	2	1.04%
8.	Tourism	1	0.52%
9.	Songs	1	0.52%
10.	Self-image	1	0.52%
11.	Volunteering	1	0.52%
12.	Post-editing	1	0.52%
13.	Politics	1	0.52%
14.	Paratexts	1	0.52%
15.	Military	1	0.52%
16.	Institutional	1	0.52%
17.	Dialects	1	0.52%
18.	Academia (research abstracts)	1	0.52%

This research aimed to uncover the main patterns in reflective translation studies within Saudi Arabia, and the crucial areas and shortcomings that require further exploration to improve translation practices and outcomes in the country. Up to this point, I have addressed addressed results for Q1 and highlighted the urgent need for additional research in traditional yet vital domains.

The gaps identified so far in the research on translation in Saudi Arabia span various areas, each underscoring a distinct need for more in-depth investigation and understanding (see Table 3 above). However, given the country's current critical developmental phase under the very ambitious, wide-reaching Saudi Vision 2030, there is a pressing need for studies that examine the outcomes of translation, or its absence, in critical issues particularly relevant to Saudi Arabia today. The following areas that require concerted translation research efforts represent the focus areas most frequent among translation specialists in Saudi Arabia. However, more research has yet to be conducted on any of them. The continuously evolving dynamics of the Saudi milieu have no significant both direct and indirect impacts on the

productivity and thematic focus of Translation Studies research in Saudi Arabia. The list is not exclusive, nor is it exhaustive.

1. Quality and quantity assessment of the Tarjim Initiative: The biggest ever of its kind in the country's history, this initiative comes under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, seeking to promote cultural exchange and enrich the global cultural dialogue. The initiative focuses on translating significant contemporary intellectual and scientific writings from Arabic into major world languages and vice versa. The initiative's grants cover not only books but also scientific periodicals. Since 2020, it has translated 1,554 titles (Official communication with the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission).
Research could focus on the effectiveness and impact of these translations, in terms of the subject areas and languages they cover, exploring whether they meet the intended objectives and how their quality can be consistently ensured through rigorous assessment methods.
Akin to the Tarjim Initiative is the Arabic Observatory of Translation, a joint venture between the Saudi Ministry of Culture's Commission for Literature, Publishing, and Translation and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). Aimed at creating the biggest and the most reliable bibliography on translated works in the Arab world, the observatory monitors and documents translation activities, sets specific standards for them, updates knowledge of the techniques used, and supports studies and research in this sector. This constitutes an unprecedented effort that merits the researchers' attention.

2. Translation and Saudi Vision 2030: Saudi Vision 2030 is a strategic framework to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil, diversify its economy, and develop public service sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, recreation, and tourism. Research could explore how translation supports these goals, particularly in facilitating international partnerships, attracting foreign investments, and promoting cultural exchange. This also involves quality assessment of translated public documents, which is a crucial practice for governmental transparency and the accessibility of information to non-Arabic speakers. Research here could evaluate current practices and develop standardized criteria or methodologies to improve the accuracy and reliability of these translations.

3. Audiovisual translation: As Saudi Arabia's media landscape expands, particularly with recent reforms in cinema and entertainment, there is a burgeoning need for research in translating films, TV shows, and other media content. Research in this area could help develop guidelines and best practices that respect cultural sensitivities while maintaining the original's integrity. This includes investigating effective dubbing and subtitling methods, exploring localization strategies for various genres, assessing the impact of emerging technologies like AI and machine learning, and conducting audience reception studies to understand how different translation approaches are perceived. Developing and evaluating training programs for translators, examining existing policies and regulations, encouraging interdisciplinary research, and investigating ethical dimensions are also crucial. Additionally, analyzing market trends and demand for various media content, conducting comparative studies with other countries, and studying the influence of global streaming services on local media consumption are important areas of focus. By addressing these research areas, scholars can significantly contribute to the development of a robust and culturally sensitive audiovisual translation industry in Saudi Arabia, ensuring that the rapid growth in media and entertainment is supported by high-quality translation practices.

4. To tap into the vast video game industry, Saudi Arabia has founded the Savvy Games Group, a Public Investments Fund-owned company dedicated to video games and esports, formed to drive esports' long-term growth and the broader games industry worldwide. With the global rise of esports gaming, understanding how video games are translated into Arabic and their reception among Saudi gamers can offer insights into cultural adaptation processes and the potential for localized game development. Recommendations for video game translation include researching and developing best practices for localizing game content into Arabic, studying the impact of cultural nuances on gameplay, and developing

specialized training programs for game translators. Additionally, assessing the effectiveness of current translation technologies, examining the regulatory environment for video game content, and conducting player reception studies are crucial. Performing comparative studies on videogame translation practices in different markets, focusing on the localization of esports content, fostering collaborations between Saudi game translators and international developers, and encouraging the development of games tailored for the Saudi market will also enhance the industry. These efforts will ensure that localization respects cultural sensitivities while providing an engaging and authentic gaming experience for Saudi players.

5. The e-commerce market is closely related to the demand for digital services, including translation and language solutions, and shows significant growth. As businesses expand their reach globally, the need for accurate and culturally appropriate translations becomes essential to effectively communicate with diverse customer bases, enhance user experience, and increase market penetration. Factors contributing to this growth include high individual net income, high per capita GDP, and increasing internet penetration. Specifically, the beauty and personal care segment within e-commerce is expected to hold a significant share, with many global skincare companies expanding their business in Saudi Arabia through e-commerce channels. Major e-commerce players in the country include Amazon, Haraj, Noon AD Holdings Ltd, Namshi General Trading LLC, and Aliexpress (Research and Markets, 2024). This vast area remains open for multilingual research, including localization of websites and products, cultural adaptation, and cross-cultural communication techniques.

6. Tourism translation: Saudi Arabia wishes to use tourism as a strategic economic growth and development alternative, especially in preparation for a future without oil. It aims to attract wound 100-150m tourists by 2030 (Ministry of Tourism, n.d., https://mt.gov.sa/). Additionally, the multilingual nature of the country's population, coupled with the fact that tourists display cultural and lingual differences, necessitates language translation services. Researching this area could explore how language translation supports the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia, the role of language translators in Saudi Arabia's tourism sector, the gaps between current language translation programs and industry practice and how language translation can be improved in response to emerging needs in the growing tourism sector and the pursuit of the country's Vision 2030.

7. Pilgrimage and communication: Millions of pilgrims visit Saudi Arabia annually for Hajj and Umrah, creating diverse linguistic interactions. Studies could focus on the effectiveness of current translation and communication tools used during the pilgrimage and develop innovative solutions to enhance this experience, possibly through mobile technology or multilingual support systems.

8. Reception research in translation studies: Self-image is crucial to the Saudi 2030 Vision. How people perceive the country affects tourism, investment and strategic partnerships. The image of the linguistic other is made only through multilingual communication. Understanding how different audiences receive translations can provide insights into translated materials' cultural and contextual appropriateness. Research could investigate how translations influence the perceptions and behaviors of non-Arab readers. Studies could demonstrate how reception research can benefit user-centered translation (UCT) and offer concrete suggestions on how culture-bound elements are processed by the recipients of translations (cf. Suojanen, et al. 2014).

These gaps in translation studies are not just academic voids, but urgent calls for action. They signify that translation studies are yet to prove itself as economically and socially relevant in this critical developmental stage in the history of Saudi Arabia. The gaps in crucial reflective and direction-setting research on translation as both a process and a product underline the pressing need for Saudi Arabia to bolster this kind of research activity. These research gaps underscore translation's importance in various spheres of Saudi Arabian society and suggest a strategic direction for academics and practitioners. By

addressing these gaps, the role of translation can be significantly enhanced in achieving broader socioeconomic objectives.

6   Findings and Conclusion

6.1   Findings from the Research (Q1): What are the primary patterns observed in reflective translation research within the domain of translation studies in Saudi Arabia?

The bibliometric analysis of translation research in Saudi Arabia has yielded significant findings that are not only crucial for understanding the field's current state but also have a profound impact on guiding future research directions in the country.

1. Dominance of pedagogical research: A significant portion (61.14%) of the research focuses on pedagogy, emphasizing teaching translation and educational aspects. This strong academic interest reflects local practices in preparing future translators. However, this focus highlights a gap in research on practical and industrial applications of translation, suggesting a need for studies on how translation can directly contribute to Saudi Arabia's economic and social development.

2. Under-researched critical areas: Areas such as audiovisual translation, tourism, video game translation, and localization remain significantly under-researched. Despite their growing importance, these fields account for a small fraction of the total research output. Addressing these gaps is urgent as these areas are crucial for supporting Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, helping diversify the economy and promote cultural exchange.

3. Growth in translation research: There has been a consistent increase in translation research publications, particularly since 2016. This upward trend reflects enhanced interest and productivity in translation studies. However, the focus remains heavily on academic and pedagogical aspects. Expanding research to include practical applications and industry-related studies is necessary to make translation studies more economically and socially relevant.

4. Diverse but imbalanced research fields: The research covers 31 distinct fields, with a few areas like literature, bibliometrics, sign language, and religious translation receiving more attention. However, many fields have relatively low numbers of studies, indicating an imbalance. This underscores the need for a diversified research agenda that addresses both traditional and emerging areas of translation.

5. Significant role of government initiatives: Government initiatives such as the Tarjim Initiative and the Arabic Observatory of Translation have significantly shaped the translation landscape in Saudi Arabia. While these initiatives have promoted translation research and practice, more research is needed to assess their impact and effectiveness. Evaluating these initiatives can provide valuable insights for their optimization and alignment with the country's strategic goals.

6.2   Findings from the Research (Q2): What are the key domains and deficiencies that necessitate further investigation to enhance translation practice and outcomes in Saudi Arabia?

The bibliometric analysis reveals significant gaps in translation research that are urgent calls for action. These gaps highlight the need for translation studies to prove its economic and social relevance during this critical developmental stage in Saudi Arabia's history.

1. Strategic direction for research: The identified gaps underscore the need for a strategic approach to translation studies, expanding the scope of research to include practical applications, assessing the impact of government initiatives, and fostering international collaboration.

2. Supporting Vision 2030: Aligning translation research with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is not just a strategic move, but a pathway to achieving broader socioeconomic objectives. This includes enhancing research in areas supporting economic diversification, cultural exchange, and international partnerships, which can bring about significant positive changes in the country.

By addressing these research gaps, translation studies can significantly enhance its role in Saudi Arabia's development. This strategic direction will not only improve the quality and relevance of translation research but also ensure that it contributes effectively to the country's growth and modernization efforts. Methodologically, researchers should employ diverse approaches, including interdisciplinary studies and collaborative projects, that bridge the gap between theory and practice. Enhancing translation practices can support international partnerships, attract foreign investments, and promote cultural exchange.

Acknowledging the limitations of the current study, such as its focus on English-language publications, future research should explore works in other languages to provide a more comprehensive view of the field. By doing so, translation studies can contribute more effectively to Saudi Arabia's knowledge economy and global partnerships, fostering cross-cultural understanding and intellectual discourse.

In conclusion, as Saudi Arabia continues to advance its socioeconomic agenda, the field of translation must evolve to support this growth. Translation studies can significantly contribute to the country's future through targeted research, practical applications, and increased collaboration. Embracing this comprehensive approach will ensure that translation is an integral conduit for cultural and linguistic exchange, both within the region and globally.

Notes on Table 2:
Although Hajj is a religious practice, its significance, as discussed below, is also political and economic.
**This entry talks about human post-editing practices in Saudi translation agencies and is not about machine translation post-editing.

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معلومات عن الباحث

أ.د. **وليد بن بليهش العمري**، أستاذ في دراسات الترجمة بقسم اللغات والترجمة، في كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية في جامعة طيبة (المملكة العربية السعودية). حاصل على درجة الدكتوراه في دراسات الترجمة من جامعة مانشستر ببريطانيا عام 2002، تدور اهتماماته البحثية حول ترجمة المحتوى الإسلامي، والتعريب، وتطبيقات الذكاء الاصطناعي في الترجمة.

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