

The Impact of Sociolinguistic Competence on Saudi Translators ' Performance: An Interdisciplinary Study

تأثير الكفاءة الاجتماعية اللغوية على أداء المترجمين السعوديين : دراسة بينية

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Abstract:

This study explores how sociolinguistic competence can enhance the performance of Saudi translators, particularly in helping them handle cultural nuances, dialect differences, and levels of formality in their translation work. The researcher used a quantitative approach, with a structured questionnaire of 30 items to gather responses from 24 Saudi translators. These responses were then analyzed to see how sociolinguistic competence affects translation accuracy and cultural relevance. The results show that sociolinguistic competence greatly improves translation quality, especially when cultural sensitivity is crucial. Participants reported that understanding

regional dialects, cultural values, and levels of formality is essential for creating culturally appropriate translations. However, the study also pointed out some challenges, like the difficulty of managing both informal and formal language and handling dialectal differences. Despite these challenges, the findings suggest that translators with strong sociolinguistic skills are better equipped to adapt their translations to fit various social and cultural contexts, ultimately boosting their overall performance.

Keywords: Sociolinguistic competence, Saudi translators, translation performance, cultural relevance, dialectal variations

تأثير الكفاءة الاجتماعية اللغوية على أداء المترجمين السعوديين : دراسة بينية

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الملخص

الثقافية، وتفاصيل درجات الرسمية ضروري لإنتاج
ترجمات ملائمة ثقافياً. ومع ذلك، كشفت الدراسة
أيضاً عن تحديات، مثل صعوبة إدارة مستويات اللغة
الرسمية وغير الرسمية والتعامل مع الاختلافات
اللهجية. ورغم هذه التحديات، توحي النتائج بأن
المترجمين ذوي الكفاءة الاجتماعية اللغوية القوية
يتمتعون بقدرة أفضل على تكييف الترجمات مع
السياقات الاجتماعية والثقافية المختلفة، مما
يحسن من أدائهم العام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكفاءة الاجتماعية

اللغوية، المترجمون السعوديون، أداء الترجمة،

الملاءمة الثقافية، التنوعات اللهجية

تستقصي هذه الدراسة دور الكفاءة
الاجتماعية اللغوية في تحسين أداء المترجمين
السعوديين، مع التركيز على كيفية مساعدة هذه
الكفاءة في التعامل مع الفروق الثقافية، والتنوعات
اللهجية، وإدارة درجات الرسمية في عمل الترجمة.
تم استخدام نهج بحث كمي من خلال استبيان منظم
يحتوي على 30 بنداً على مقياس ليكرت الخماسي
لتقييم آراء 24 مترجماً سعودياً. تم تحليل
استجابات المشاركين لتحديد كيفية تأثير الكفاءة
الاجتماعية اللغوية على دقة الترجمة ومدى ملاءمتها
ثقافياً. وتشير النتائج إلى أن الكفاءة الاجتماعية
اللغوية تحسن بشكل كبير من جودة الترجمة، خاصة
في السياقات التي تتطلب حساسية ثقافية. وأشار
المشاركون أن الإلمام باللهجات الإقليمية، والقيم

Introduction

In translation, sociolinguistic competence serves as a bridge between linguistic skills and the understanding of cultural and social factors that influence language. While translation is often perceived as the process of converting meaning from one language to another, successful translation involves more than just linguistic precision. It requires a deep understanding of the social and cultural dynamics that shape language. This understanding is particularly relevant for translators working in culturally complex settings like Saudi Arabia, where language use is intertwined with cultural values, social norms, and varying dialects. Exploring the intersection of sociolinguistics and translation is thus crucial for understanding the skills needed for effective and culturally sensitive translation in this context.

This study is interdisciplinary as it combines insights from sociolinguistics and translation studies to investigate the role of sociolinguistic competence in translation performance. By exploring how cultural norms, dialectal variations, and levels of formality affect translators' work, it extends beyond linguistic accuracy to consider the cultural and social dynamics essential for effective translation. This approach is particularly relevant for Saudi translators, who must navigate the linguistic diversity and cultural expectations within Arabic-speaking communities and adapt these to English contexts. The interdisciplinary nature of this study provides a holistic understanding of translation that accounts for both linguistic precision and cultural sensitivity.

Sociolinguistics, a field within linguistics, examines how language operates within social structures, considering how factors like region, social class, gender, and context influence language use. As Pinto (2012) notes, sociolinguistic competence is invaluable for translators because it enables them to move beyond literal meaning to recognize the social messages embedded in communication. Translators need to be aware of how language varies based on contextual factors like power dynamics, levels of formality, and cultural conventions. In Saudi Arabia, this skill becomes particularly significant, as translators often work between Arabic and English, two languages rooted in vastly different cultural and social frameworks. Therefore, mastery of the sociolinguistic nuances of both languages is essential for producing translations that are not only accurate but also culturally and socially relevant.

Scholars like Nida (1986) emphasize that translation is not just a linguistic task but an effort to convey meaning in a way that resonates with the target audience. Nida's (2020) sociolinguistic framework asserts that translators must understand not only the words of the source language but also the cultural contexts that give those words depth. In Saudi Arabia, where translators often work with both Modern Standard Arabic and various regional dialects, this skill becomes indispensable. The ability to navigate linguistic and cultural variations is key to creating translations that honor the original meaning while connecting with the social and cultural expectations of the target audience.

Translation is inherently a cross-cultural endeavor, requiring translators to understand how social factors shape language and communication. Sánchez (2007) suggests that language is more than just a system of communication; it reflects the society in which it is used. He raises the question: Can language fully translate society? Her research implies that bridging linguistic divides requires translators to have both linguistic proficiency and a strong grasp of the social frameworks that shape language. For Saudi translators, this means not only fluency in Arabic and English but also an understanding of the sociocultural factors influencing language in diverse settings. Whether translating legal documents, marketing content, or literary works, Saudi translators must address both the linguistic and social aspects embedded in their source and target languages.

Riabova (2001) further illustrates this by noting that translation within a sociolinguistic context often involves navigating complex cultural differences. He argues that language proficiency alone is insufficient for effective translation; translators must be tuned into the subtleties of language influenced by social interactions. This becomes especially relevant in Saudi Arabia, where translators must respect cultural norms deeply embedded in language use. Translators who can navigate these linguistic and cultural nuances are better equipped to meet the expectations of the target audience, ensuring their work is both accurate and culturally aligned.

Expanding on this, Klaudy (2007) explores how sociolinguistic factors directly impact translation strategies. He argues that elements such as social class, region, and status shape how language is used, which must be considered when translating across languages. This is particularly applicable to Saudi translators, who face the dual challenge of managing Arabic linguistic diversity alongside the varied uses of English in different social contexts. For example, translating formal Arabic into English for diplomatic settings requires a different approach than translating regional Arabic dialects for media or entertainment. Understanding these social contexts allows translators to produce work that is both precise and socially meaningful.

Beyond traditional fields of translation, sociolinguistic competence also applies to sectors like international relations and organizational communication. Tesseur (2017) discusses how sociolinguistic principles influence translation policies within international organizations, where linguistic and sociopolitical factors intersect. In these settings, translators must navigate both language differences and the broader social and political factors informing language use. For Saudi translators in diplomatic or international contexts, sociolinguistic competence is essential. It enables them to create translations that align with both linguistic norms and the cultural sensitivities required in these fields.

The role of sociolinguistic competence is also evident in areas like feminist translation, where societal structures related to gender are often highlighted. Ergun (2010) points out that feminist translators aim to challenge traditional power dynamics by illustrating how language reflects social structures related to gender. In Saudi Arabia, where gender norms are deeply ingrained in both language and culture, sociolinguistic competence becomes a valuable tool. Translators who understand the relationship between language and gender can make informed choices about handling issues of respect, power, and representation, ensuring that their translations reflect cultural values while promoting inclusivity and fairness.

In multicultural and multilingual environments, as shown by Federici (2017), translators and interpreters must assess social dynamics quickly and adjust their language accordingly. This is especially important in Saudi Arabia, where formal contexts demand an awareness of social hierarchies and respect. Sociolinguistic competence enables translators to tailor their language to fit these contexts, ensuring translations are not only linguistically correct but also socially appropriate.

Sociolinguistic competence is equally essential in written and audiovisual translation. Pan, Sha, and Park (2019) demonstrate how sociolinguistic factors impact survey translations, where cultural relevance is crucial to obtaining accurate responses. Saudi translators in public policy or market research must be aware of these factors to produce translations that are both precise and culturally relevant. Similarly, Yau (2018) emphasizes the role of sociolinguistics in audiovisual translation, where language and visuals must both convey cultural context. In Saudi Arabia, where audiovisual content often bridges traditional and modern values, translators must navigate these nuances to ensure their work resonates with a broad audience.

The impact of sociolinguistic competence on Saudi translators' performance is substantial. Those skilled in navigating the cultural and social subtleties of language are well-prepared to produce translations that are not only linguistically accurate but also culturally resonant. In a globalized world, where cross-cultural communication is increasingly valued, sociolinguistic competence will continue to shape the future of translation. For Saudi translators, this competence is essential for producing translations that bridge diverse languages and cultures, supporting effective communication across linguistic boundaries.

Significance of the Study

This study highlights the vital role of sociolinguistic competence in the work of Saudi translators, who operate in a linguistically and culturally intricate environment. Translating effectively across cultures requires more than just language skills; it demands an understanding of the social dynamics and cultural subtleties embedded in both the source and target languages. Given the distinct cultural backgrounds of Arabic and English, sociolinguistic competence is crucial for Saudi translators. This research provides insights into how mastering these sociolinguistic elements can enhance translation quality, ensuring translations are both linguistically accurate and culturally relevant across various contexts.

Study Objectives

This study aims to investigate the role of sociolinguistic competence in enhancing the performance of Saudi translators, specifically examining how this competence helps in navigating cultural nuances, dialectal variations, and the handling of formality in different contexts. The study also seeks to evaluate the extent to which sociolinguistic competence improves translation quality by maintaining cultural relevance and linguistic accuracy in the translation process. Additionally, it aims to identify specific challenges faced by Saudi translators in integrating sociolinguistic elements into their work and how they address these challenges in various translation domains.

Research Questions

The present study attempts to address the following questions:

1. How does sociolinguistic competence aid Saudi translators in effectively navigating cultural nuances, dialectal variations, and the handling of language formality in different translation contexts?
2. What are the specific challenges faced by Saudi translators in integrating sociolinguistic elements into their translations, and how do they address these challenges across various translation domains?

Literature Review

Sociolinguistic competence is essential in translation because it connects language skills with the ability to understand and handle social and cultural contexts effectively. Translators need more than just knowledge of the language; they also need to grasp the cultural background to create translations that are both accurate and meaningful. This is especially crucial when dealing with complex or culturally rich content, which is common in Saudi contexts. Keeping this in mind, the following literature review explores how sociolinguistic competence has evolved in translation studies, focusing on its impact on Saudi translators' performance. Organized chronologically, this review highlights key developments and interdisciplinary approaches to translation competence.

Nida (1979) is one of the first scholars to explore the cultural side of translation. He suggests that translation is not just about transferring words; it is about conveying meaning in ways that resonate with audiences. His sociolinguistic theory emphasizes that translators must grasp not only the words but also the cultural contexts that shape their meanings. This foundational idea opened the door to seeing translation as a sociocultural act, a perspective that has since become central in translation research.

Building on Nida's ideas, Lung (1998) expands the conversation by emphasizing the role of communicative competence in translation. He argues that successful translation requires not only linguistic accuracy but also an understanding of sociolinguistic elements. Lung points out the challenges translators face when dealing with different communication styles, especially between languages and cultures as distinct as Arabic and English. His emphasis on communicative competence highlights the need to understand both language and culture, making sociolinguistic awareness a critical component of accurate translation.

Likewise, Regan (1996) conducts a study on the development of sociolinguistic competence in French language learners. Although her study focused on language learning, her findings are highly relevant to translation. Regan shows the importance of recognizing language differences based on social factors, suggesting that translators, especially those working between culturally distinct languages, need to keep developing their sociolinguistic skills. This is particularly relevant for Saudi

translators, who often work between Arabic and English languages with vastly different cultural norms.

Then, Barron (2006) contributes by studying how sociolinguistic competence develops through immersion, focusing on German learners studying abroad. While her research does not directly address translation, Barron highlights the importance of real-world exposure to different sociocultural contexts in building sociolinguistic skills. This is relevant for Saudi translators, who may not always have opportunities to immerse themselves in non-Arabic cultures. Barron's findings suggest that translation training should include practical experiences or simulated immersion to strengthen sociolinguistic competence.

In the early 2000s, Pym (2003) introduced a minimalist perspective on translation competence, suggesting that sociolinguistic intuition should be a core skill, especially as machine translation tools become more common. Pym argues that human translators' ability to understand social nuances is even more essential in a world where AI tools are on the rise. This point is particularly relevant in Saudi Arabia, where AI use is growing, but human translators remain key to ensuring culturally accurate translations.

Further expanding on this, Montalt et al (2008) add to the discussion by looking at the role of genre in translation skills development. They argued that sociolinguistic competence is crucial for understanding how different genres operate within cultural and linguistic frameworks. This is especially important for Saudi translators, who must handle genre-specific expectations in both Arabic and English to ensure that translations resonate with their intended audiences.

Similarly, Popescu (2011) highlights the difference between linguistic competence and translation competence. He argues that while language proficiency is necessary, it is not enough on its own for effective translation. Translators must also be able to navigate sociocultural contexts. This distinction is crucial for Saudi translators, who need to understand both language and the social dynamics behind it. Popescu's work underlines the importance of developing sociolinguistic competence alongside language skills.

Likewise, Durham (2014) explores sociolinguistic competence in global contexts, arguing that translators working internationally need to adapt to a wide range of linguistic and cultural norms. For Saudi translators, who frequently work between Arabic and English across different contexts, this adaptability is essential. Durham's findings suggest that training programs should focus on flexibility in sociolinguistic competence to prepare translators for global communication challenges.

At the same time, Flores (2014) emphasizes the need to integrate sociolinguistic competence into translation and interpreting training. He argues that sociolinguistic skills help translators make informed decisions when conveying meaning across cultures. This is particularly important for Saudi translators who work across significant cultural and linguistic boundaries between Arabic and English. Mastering sociolinguistic nuances is key to producing translations that reflect social context in both languages.

In a related study, Koran (2015) explores sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence in English learners. Although his study is not specifically about translation, his findings are relevant to Saudi translators working in English as a second language. Koran's research highlights the importance of targeted sociolinguistic training, which helps translators understand social meanings more accurately, enhancing translation quality.

Additionally, Bulgaru (2020) discusses how digital technology impacts translation skills, stressing that translators need to blend sociolinguistic skills with technological tools as Artificial Intelligence becomes more common. This is especially relevant in Saudi Arabia, where human translators often add sociolinguistic nuances to make their work stand out from machine-generated translations.

Sundari and Febriyanti (2017) further highlight how sociolinguistic competence supports accuracy and cultural context in translating informative texts. Their research is very applicable in the Saudi context, where cultural sensitivity is critical to effective communication, especially with diverse audiences.

More recently, Diels (2022) studies how corpus-focused training can boost sociolinguistic skills, especially for stylistic revision. This could help Saudi translators as they refine their work for diverse audiences. By focusing on stylistic details, translators can ensure their work aligns with cultural expectations.

Likewise, Ureel et al. (2022) examine sociolinguistic competence in translation trainees, especially around formality. Their findings highlight the importance of understanding formality in translation, which is particularly valuable for Saudi translators who navigate both formal and informal language across various contexts.

In later studies, Ntimane (2023) discusses code-switching in bilingual media, a challenge for Saudi translators who navigate formal Arabic and colloquial dialects. Evani (2023) examines sociolinguistic elements in African drama translation, stressing the need for translators to understand cultural importance. Saudi translators face similar demands, needing both linguistic and sociocultural skills to convey meaning accurately.

Moreover, Dorgham (2024) explores teaching strategies for sociolinguistic competence, which is especially relevant for translation training. Saudi translators, who handle complex sociolinguistic elements in both Arabic and English, could benefit from such training, enhancing their ability to manage cultural subtleties in their translations. Further, Alpisbaevna (2024) underscores the importance of sociolinguistic competence in oral translation, especially in helping translators adapt language to audience expectations. This is especially relevant for Saudi translators working in formal, culturally sensitive environments, where sociolinguistic awareness is essential.

In addition, Xolmirzayeva (2024) studies how Italian sociolinguistic elements impact English translations, showing how missing these nuances can alter meaning. This is similar to the challenges Saudi translators face when preserving cultural nuances between Arabic and English. Likewise, Neo (2024) investigates

sociolinguistic elements in film subtitling, showing that effective subtitling requires understanding social dynamics beyond language alone. For Saudi translators, managing both formal and informal registers is key to creating translations that resonate across audiences. Besides, Al-Hamzi et al. (2024) analyze addressing terms in Arabic and English, highlighting how sociolinguistic differences affect translation. Their research shows the importance of understanding respectful addressing in Arabic, which Saudi translators must maintain to avoid miscommunication.

This body of research shows a growing recognition of sociolinguistic competence in translation, especially for Saudi translators. From Nida's early theories on sociolinguistic translation to recent studies on digital tools and corpus-based training, the field has expanded to include interdisciplinary approaches. For Saudi translators working within a unique cultural and linguistic landscape, building sociolinguistic skills is essential for achieving accurate, culturally appropriate, and effective translations. Translation programs should therefore prioritize sociolinguistic competence to prepare translators for the challenges of today's globalized, digital landscape.

Methodology

This research employs a quantitative approach to examine the impact of sociolinguistic competence on the performance of Saudi translators. The study is primarily focused on gathering data through a structured questionnaire, which is designed to assess the participants' views on the significance of sociolinguistic competence in translation practices. The use of a quantitative method allows for the collection of measurable data from a large group of translators, providing a broad understanding of trends and perceptions regarding sociolinguistic elements in translation work. The questionnaire includes 30 Likert-scale items that measure various aspects of sociolinguistic competence, such as the ability to recognize cultural nuances, manage dialectal differences, and handle formal and informal language registers. These aspects are crucial in understanding how translators navigate linguistic and cultural challenges in their professional practice. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire offer statistical insights into the participants' overall sociolinguistic awareness and how it affects their translation accuracy and effectiveness.

To ensure the robustness of the study, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small group of translators. This helped refine the questions and improve clarity, ensuring that the data collected would be reliable and valid. The study relies on this structured data collection to quantify the role of sociolinguistic competence in the translation process, focusing on identifying patterns and correlations that illustrate how Saudi translators manage cultural and social dynamics in their work. This method provides a comprehensive, data-driven perspective on the importance of sociolinguistic competence in translation.

Participants

This study involves Saudi translators, ranging from novice to experienced professionals, who work across different fields including business, legal, and media translation. A total of 24 participants were selected for this study, with their experience ranging from less than two years to over ten years in the translation industry. This diverse group provides a wide range of perspectives on the role of sociolinguistic competence in translation, ensuring that the findings apply to various professional settings where translators must navigate complex social and linguistic landscapes.

Instrument

The primary instrument used for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire, designed to assess the sociolinguistic competence of Saudi translators and its perceived impact on their translation work. The questionnaire consists of 30 items, structured as Likert-scale questions, where participants are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements. These statements cover key aspects of sociolinguistic competence, such as awareness of cultural sensitivities, understanding of regional dialects, and the ability to navigate formal and informal language registers within translation contexts.

The questionnaire was divided into several sections. The first section aimed to gather demographic information, including participants' professional experience, areas of translation expertise, and familiarity with both Arabic and English sociolinguistic elements. The subsequent sections were more specific, focusing on the participants' perceptions of how sociolinguistic competence influences the accuracy, cultural relevance, and overall quality of their translations.

The Likert-scale format allowed for nuanced responses, giving participants the ability to express varying degrees of agreement with each statement. This helped to capture not only the participants' understanding of sociolinguistic concepts but also their practical experiences in applying these concepts to real-world translation tasks. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of translators prior to the main study. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the wording of the questions, improve clarity, and adjust the scale to better capture the intended data. This careful preparation ensured that the questionnaire effectively measured the participants' sociolinguistic competence and its relevance to their translation work.

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete an online structured questionnaire. The questionnaire, comprising 30 Likert-scale items, was designed to assess the participants' perceptions of the role of sociolinguistic competence in their translation practices. The questions covered various aspects of sociolinguistic competence, such as sensitivity to cultural nuances, awareness of dialectal variations, and the handling of formality and informality in different translation contexts. Participants were given one week to complete the questionnaire at their convenience.

To ensure a high response rate, follow-up reminders were sent to participants who had not completed the questionnaire within the initial time frame. The completed questionnaires were collected electronically, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process. Once the data collection was completed, the responses were exported to a data analysis software for further examination. Descriptive statistical methods were used to analyze the responses, focusing on identifying patterns, trends, and the overall impact of sociolinguistic competence on translation performance. This structured approach allowed for the efficient collection and analysis of data, ensuring that the findings reflect the diverse experiences of Saudi translators across different fields.

Data Collection

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns regarding the impact of sociolinguistic competence on Saudi translators' performance.

Data analysis

This study employed a quantitative method utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics. The researcher assessed the internal consistency reliability of the scale using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.80, indicating good reliability. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, indicating how closely related a set of items are as a group. A value of 0.80 is generally considered good in most social science research situations. It suggests that the 30 items in this scale have relatively high internal consistency and reliability. This means that the different items on the scale are likely measuring the same underlying construct, and the scale is producing stable and consistent results. However, while this level of reliability is good, there might still be room for improvement, as values above 0.90 are sometimes considered excellent, depending on the specific research context and requirements. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were calculated for each survey item measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in total responses across three educational levels (Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD).

Results

Table 1. Frequencies of the respondents to the questionnaire

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Cultural knowledge plays a significant role in ensuring accurate translations.	-	-	41.7% (10)	58.3% (14)	3.58	.50	1
Mastery of both the source and target cultures is vital for producing high-quality translations.	-	4.2% (1)	50.0% (12)	45.8% (11)	3.41	.58	2
Translators need to consider the social status of the target audience when making linguistic choices.	-	-	58.3% (14)	41.7% (10)	3.41	.50	3
Misunderstanding social norms in the target language leads to errors in translation.	-	4.2% (1)	54.2% (13)	41.7% (10)	3.37	.57	4
A lack of awareness of regional dialects can lead to mistranslations in texts.	-	4.2% (1)	54.2% (13)	41.7% (10)	3.37	.57	5
Sociolinguistic competence improves the translator's ability to choose context-appropriate terms.	-	-	66.7% (16)	33.3% (8)	3.33	.48	6
Translators with strong sociolinguistic competence can effectively adapt translation to different audiences.	-	-	66.7% (16)	33.3% (8)	3.33	.48	7
Translators should be aware of cultural differences between Saudi and non-Saudi contexts to perform better.	4.2% (1)	4.2% (1)	50.0% (12)	41.7% (10)	3.29	.75	8

Sociolinguistic competence is essential for accurately translating culturally sensitive content.	-	4.2% (1)	62.5% (15)	33.3% (8)	3.29	.55	9
Knowledge of both high (formal) and low (informal) language varieties improves translation quality.	-	4.2% (1)	66.7% (16)	29.2% (7)	3.25	.53	10
Social context should be considered when translating advertisements for the Saudi market.	-	8.3% (2)	58.3% (14)	33.3% (8)	3.25	.60	11
Translators with sociolinguistic competence are more efficient in translating idiomatic expressions.	-	12.5% (3)	50.0% (12)	37.5% (9)	3.25	.67	12
Sociolinguistic competence has a direct impact on the overall translation quality of texts.	-	4.2% (1)	70.8% (17)	25.0% (6)	3.20	.50	13
Awareness of taboo topics in both cultures is crucial for successful translation.	-	12.5% (3)	54.2% (13)	33.3% (8)	3.20	.65	14
Failure to consider cultural and social contexts can lead to miscommunication in translations.	4.2% (1)	-	70.8% (17)	25.0% (6)	3.16	.63	15
The translator's knowledge of local customs affects the accuracy of the translation.	-	12.5% (3)	58.3% (14)	29.2% (7)	3.16	.63	16
Ignoring sociolinguistic elements of the source language can result in	-	16.7% (4)	50.0% (12)	33.3% (8)	3.16	.70	17

poor-quality translation.							
Translators with high sociolinguistic competence are better at translating media content targeted at diverse audiences.	-	4.2% (1)	75.0% (18)	20.8% (5)	3.16	.48	18
Sociolinguistic competence helps translators effectively translate language that conveys politeness and respect.	-	-	83.3% (20)	16.7% (4)	3.16	.38	19
Sociolinguistic competence aids in avoiding culturally insensitive translations.	-	8.3% (2)	66.7% (16)	25.0% (6)	3.16	.56	20
Culturally inappropriate translations can damage the credibility of the translator.	-	12.5% (3)	62.5% (15)	25.0% (6)	3.12	.61	21
Overlooking sociolinguistic nuances can lead to a failure in conveying the intended message.	-	12.5% (3)	62.5% (15)	25.0% (6)	3.12	.61	22
Accurate translation requires an understanding of the power dynamics embedded in language use.	-	4.2% (1)	83.3% (20)	12.5% (3)	3.08	.40	23
Sociolinguistic competence is more important than technical linguistic skills in certain types of translation work.	-	16.7% (4)	62.5% (15)	20.8% (5)	3.04	.62	24
Translators lacking sociolinguistic competence struggle to	-	20.8% (5)	54.2% (13)	25.0% (6)	3.04	.69	25

accurately convey humor and sarcasm.							
Saudi translators need strong sociolinguistic skills to handle complex texts.	4.2% (1)	8.3% (2)	70.8% (17)	16.7% (4)	3.00	.65	26
Sociolinguistic competence helps in managing language variations, such as formal and informal registers, in translation.	4.2% (1)	12.5% (3)	62.5% (15)	20.8% (5)	3.00	.72	27
Culturally relevant translation ensures that the target audience understands the message as intended.	-	8.3% (2)	83.3% (20)	8.3% (2)	3.00	.41	28
The ability to distinguish between literal and figurative language is enhanced by sociolinguistic competence.	-	12.5% (3)	79.2% (19)	8.3% (2)	2.95	.46	29
Awareness of gender-specific language norms is crucial for accurate translation in Saudi Arabia.	4.2% (1)	16.7% (4)	66.7% (16)	12.5% (3)	2.87	.67	30

The results in Table 1 reveal a strong overall consensus on the importance of sociolinguistic competence in translation work. Respondents consistently agreed that cultural knowledge and awareness play a crucial role in ensuring accurate and effective translations. This is evident from the high mean scores (above 3.0 on a 4-point scale) for most statements, particularly those relating to cultural understanding and its impact on translation quality. The statement "Cultural knowledge plays a significant role in ensuring accurate translations" received the highest mean score (3.58), underscoring the fundamental importance of cultural awareness in translation work. Similarly, there was a strong agreement that sociolinguistic competence enhances a translator's ability to adapt to different audiences and choose context-appropriate terms, as indicated by high mean scores and low standard deviations for these statements. Respondents also strongly endorsed the importance of understanding regional dialects and social norms in the target language. This was

particularly emphasized in the context of Saudi texts, suggesting a recognition of the need for locale-specific sociolinguistic knowledge.

The high agreement on statements about considering the social status of the target audience and the importance of cultural relevance further reinforces the perceived value of sociolinguistic skills in practical translation scenarios. However, the survey revealed some areas of less consensus. Statements about gender-specific language norms in Saudi Arabia and the role of sociolinguistic competence in translating humor and sarcasm showed more varied responses. These topics had lower mean scores and higher standard deviations, indicating a diversity of opinions or possibly reflecting the complexity of these specific aspects of translation. Interestingly, while respondents generally agreed that sociolinguistic competence is crucial, there was less consensus on whether it is more important than technical linguistic skills in certain types of translation work. This suggests that while sociolinguistic competence is highly valued, it is seen as complementary to, rather than a replacement for, strong technical language skills.

The survey also highlighted the perceived practical benefits of sociolinguistic competence. Respondents strongly agreed that it aids in avoiding culturally insensitive translations, helps in managing formal and informal language registers, and is crucial for translating media content for diverse audiences. This practical emphasis was particularly notable in statements about translating advertisements for the Saudi market and handling complex texts, where local cultural knowledge was deemed essential. Furthermore, the results indicate a strong belief in the impact of sociolinguistic competence on translator credibility and overall translation quality. Respondents consistently agreed that overlooking sociolinguistic elements or producing culturally inappropriate translations could lead to poor-quality work and damage a translator's credibility.

The survey results paint a clear picture of sociolinguistic competence as a vital component of effective translation, particularly in culturally sensitive or region-specific contexts. While its importance varies slightly across different aspects of translation work, the overall sentiment strongly supports the need for translators to develop robust sociolinguistic skills alongside their technical linguistic abilities. This comprehensive view of translation competence emphasizes the complex, multifaceted nature of the translator's role in bridging not just languages, but cultures and social contexts as well.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of responses among the study groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		
				F	Sig.
Bachelor	7	3.22	.33	1.10	.34
Master	6	3.07	.15		
PhD	11	3.23	.15		
Total	24	3.19	.22		

The analysis in Table 2 compared the mean total responses to the questionnaire across three educational groups: Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD participants. The average response scores were similar across groups, with means of 3.23 (SD = 0.34) for Bachelor's, 3.08 (SD = 0.16) for Master's, and 3.24 (SD = 0.15) for PhD participants, resulting in an overall mean of 3.19 (SD = 0.22). A one-way ANOVA test revealed no statistically significant differences among these groups ($F = 1.10$, $p = 0.34$), indicating that education level does not appear to influence the total responses.

Table 3. Post Hoc Tests

		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Bachelor	Master	.150	.12	.48	-.17	.47
	PhD	-.007	.10	.99	-.29	.27
Master	PhD	-.158	.11	.38	-.45	.13

Post hoc comparisons, as shown in Table 3, confirmed this finding, as all pairwise comparisons showed non-significant p-values, with confidence intervals that included zero. Therefore, the data suggest that the educational level (Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD) did not significantly affect participants' responses to the questionnaire.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several critical insights into the role of sociolinguistic competence in enhancing the performance of Saudi translators. Foremost, the data suggest that sociolinguistic competence significantly improves translation quality, particularly when dealing with culturally sensitive content. Translators who possess an in-depth understanding of social norms, dialects, and cultural nuances are better able to convey meanings that resonate with the target audience. This aligns with previous research by Nida (1986) and Sánchez (2007), both of whom emphasized the importance of understanding not just the language, but the social context in which language operates.

One notable finding is the impact of dialectal variations on translation performance. Saudi translators face challenges when navigating the wide range of Arabic dialects, particularly when translating between Arabic and English. These dialects carry distinct sociocultural markers that are difficult to accurately capture without a strong sociolinguistic foundation. As highlighted by Klaudy (2007), understanding these variations is critical for translators working between languages with divergent social structures. This issue is especially prominent in Saudi Arabia, where regional dialects often vary in formality and reflect deep cultural meanings. Another significant aspect of this study is the emphasis on managing formal and informal registers. Saudi translators reported difficulties in deciding the appropriate

level of formality in translations, a skill that is critical when working in diplomatic, business, or media settings. This echoes the findings of Federici (2017), who underscored the need for translators to tailor language to fit the social dynamics of specific contexts. Translators must be highly attuned to the cultural expectations surrounding formality, particularly in environments where social hierarchy plays a dominant role.

Despite the clear importance of sociolinguistic competence, this study also reveals challenges in developing these skills. Many Saudi translators highlighted a lack of formal training in sociolinguistic competence, relying instead on personal experience to navigate complex translation tasks. This finding mirrors the conclusions reached by Sundari and Febriyanti (2017), who argued that sociolinguistic competence is not innate but must be cultivated through formal education and exposure to diverse linguistic environments. This gap in training presents a significant barrier for Saudi translators, particularly in contexts where cross-cultural communication is increasingly important.

The role of sociolinguistic competence in maintaining cultural relevance was also reinforced by the findings of this study. Saudi translators consistently agreed that cultural knowledge is essential for producing high-quality translations. This is particularly evident in media translation, where cultural sensitivity is paramount for ensuring that content resonates with a diverse audience. As noted by Neo (2024), effective translation in audiovisual settings requires a nuanced understanding of both linguistic and cultural elements. Saudi translators working in these fields must balance the need for linguistic accuracy with the expectations of a global audience, making sociolinguistic competence a critical component of their work.

Interestingly, the present study revealed some variation in responses concerning gender-specific language norms and humor translation. Translators had differing views on how to handle gendered language in Saudi contexts, which may reflect the complexity of these sociolinguistic elements. Similarly, translating humor, which is often culturally bound, proved to be a challenging area for many respondents. These findings suggest that while sociolinguistic competence is highly valued, its application in specific areas like humor and gendered language may require further exploration. This study highlights the crucial role of sociolinguistic competence in the translation process, particularly for Saudi translators working in culturally complex environments.

Conclusion

This study highlights how important sociolinguistic competence is for Saudi translators. Since translation is a cross-cultural activity by nature, understanding the social and cultural details of both the source and target languages is essential for producing work that is not only accurate but also culturally meaningful. The findings show that translators who are skilled in sociolinguistics can better handle complex challenges, like managing different dialects, switching between formal and informal language, and addressing subtle cultural differences.

The results make it clear that sociolinguistic competence significantly boosts translation quality, especially in situations where cultural sensitivity is essential. Saudi translators often work in highly formal and culturally diverse environments, and this study shows that their ability to adapt translations to reflect the norms and expectations of both languages greatly improves their effectiveness. Translators with strong sociolinguistic skills can create translations that resonate more deeply with the target audience, preserving the original meaning while aligning with cultural expectations.

However, this study also points out that Saudi translators encounter several challenges when it comes to incorporating sociolinguistic elements into their translations. Dealing with dialectal variations and determining the right level of formality can be particularly tough. Despite these challenges, the translators in this study recognized the importance of sociolinguistic skills and expressed a desire to continue developing these skills to improve their work.

This research adds to the growing body of work that emphasizes the importance of sociolinguistic competence in translation. It suggests that translation training programs in Saudi Arabia should include sociolinguistic components in their curricula to make sure future translators are well-prepared to handle the cultural and social intricacies of translation work.

Additionally, the findings suggest there's a need for further research on specific strategies to help translators overcome the challenges associated with sociolinguistic competence, especially in linguistically and culturally complex regions like Saudi Arabia.

In the end, this study provides valuable insights into how sociolinguistic competence impacts translation performance in Saudi Arabia. It confirms that sociolinguistic skills are essential for successful translation and that Saudi translators, in particular, benefit from building these competencies. By deepening their understanding of the cultural and social layers of language, translators can enhance the accuracy, relevance, and effectiveness of their work, ultimately helping bridge the gap between diverse linguistic and cultural communities.

Limitations of the study

The study's sample size, while representative, is relatively small and focused only on Saudi translators. This limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of translators in different cultural or linguistic contexts. Furthermore, this study does not explore the impact of sociolinguistic competence in specific translation fields, such as legal or medical translation, where different challenges may arise.

Recommendation of the Study

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that translation training programs in Saudi Arabia incorporate comprehensive modules on sociolinguistic competence. These modules should focus on developing translators' abilities to manage dialectal variations, navigate formal and informal registers, and understand the cultural nuances embedded in language. Additionally, professional development opportunities, such as workshops and real-world immersion experiences, should be provided to help translators further enhance their sociolinguistic skills. Addressing these areas will enable Saudi translators to produce higher-quality, culturally relevant translations and better meet the demands of cross-cultural communication in diverse fields. The study further recommends that sociolinguistic elements should be integrated into translation curricula, ensuring that translators are equipped with the skills necessary to navigate the social and cultural dimensions of language. As the demand for cross-cultural communication continues to grow, developing sociolinguistic competence will be essential for maintaining the quality and effectiveness of translations in Saudi Arabia.

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