

# The Translation of Complaint Speech Act in Business Communication: A Cultural Perspective

ترجمة أسلوب الشكوى في الحوار التجاري: منظور ثقافي

[10.35781/1637-000-096-005](https://doi.org/10.35781/1637-000-096-005)

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## Abstract:

This study aims to examine the translation strategies used for translating Saudi complaints in business communication, with a focus on the influence of Saudi cultural norms. The research methodology employed in this study includes a comprehensive analysis of complaint speech acts in Saudi culture, as well as a comparison of translation strategies used in different cultural contexts. The Findings demonstrate that while most translations were adequate, inaccuracies arose from a lack of equivalent terms in English. The literal translation was common but

ineffective in conveying Arabic nuances accurately. Borrowing was prevalent for maintaining meaning. Limited use of transposition, calque, adaptation, modulation, and expansion strategies hindered the accurate conveyance of complaints. The study highlights challenges in translating Saudi complaints due to cultural nuances and advocates for a nuanced approach to enhance accuracy and effectiveness in cross-cultural translation.

**Keywords:** Complaint; Speech Act; Saudi; Communication, culture

## ترجمة أسلوب الشكوى في الحوار التجاري: منظور ثقافي

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### الملخص:

الترجمة الحرفية شائعة ولكنها غير فعالة في نقل الفروق الدقيقة في اللغة العربية بشكل صحيح. كان الافتراض شائعاً للحفاظ على المعنى. أدى الاستخدام المحدود لاستراتيجيات الإبدال والاستدانة والتكيف والتحوير والتوسع إلى صعوبة نقل الشكاوى بدقة. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على التحديات في ترجمة الشكاوى السعودية بسبب الحساسيات الثقافية وتنادي بنهج متفرد لتعزيز الدقة والفعالية في الترجمة الثقافية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: شكوى؛ فعل الكلام؛

السعودية؛ اتصال، ثقافة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص استراتيجيات الترجمة المستخدمة في ترجمة الشكاوى السعودية في الحوار التجاري، مع التركيز على تأثير الأعراف الثقافية السعودية. تتضمن منهجية البحث المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة تحليلاً شاملاً لأفعال الشكاوى في الثقافة السعودية، بالإضافة إلى مقارنة لاستراتيجيات الترجمة المستخدمة في سياقات ثقافية مختلفة. توضح النتائج أن معظم الترجمات كانت مقبولة، ولكن ظهرت عدم الدقة في الترجمة نتيجة لعدم وجود مصطلحات معادلة في اللغة الإنجليزية. كانت

## Introduction

Effective cross-cultural business communication hinges upon a nuanced grasp of cultural dynamics (Gruber et al., 2010). Among the myriad factors at play, the intricacies of complaint behaviour emerge as a pivotal aspect, inherently influenced by cultural subtleties (Akbari et al., 2021). Complaints, integral to the fabric of any business transaction, serve as mechanisms for addressing issues that arise during exchanges (Henneberg et al., 2015). However, the approaches to handling complaints diverge significantly across cultures, with factors such as

individualism and collectivism shaping negotiation styles (Peter, 2019). For example, in collectivist Middle Eastern cultures, implicit complaints are favored to maintain harmony. Consequently, indirect mitigation strategies take precedence to avert potential distress or damage to relationships, which are paramount for business success (Brock et al., 2013).

In the realm of cross-cultural business communication, effective translation necessitates careful consideration of the norms shaping business expression (Chen, 2017). While linguistic substitution facilitates the transfer of content, pragmatic nuances play a pivotal role in ensuring communication adequacy (Vldeon, 2024). The research underscores that translations lacking cultural calibration run the risk of inducing confusion, missed opportunities, or even conflict escalation (Bao & Charoenroop, 2023). A comprehensive understanding of politeness models, crucial to negotiations, is imperative, as the intentions and impacts of complaints may present hurdles to successful deals, underscoring the importance of meticulous source analysis. Corpus analysis offers insights into complaint behaviours across diverse contexts. However, to delve into the pragmatic underpinnings, critical discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor analyses prove instrumental in unveiling underlying thought processes (Decock & Spiessens, 2017). Speech act theory furnishes a framework for comprehending how cultural schemas influence illocutionary forces, thereby impacting business deals (Vöge, 2010). Moreover, contrastive pragmatics aids in understanding context-specific business etiquette, contributing to fruitful negotiations.

Immersive cultural experiences play an indispensable role in fostering an internalized understanding of sociocultural norms (Chen, 2017). Discourse socialization, facilitated through engagement with native businesspeople, reshapes perceptions and understanding (Rampton, 1995). Workplace exposures provide professionals with opportunities to adeptly resolve novel complaints professionally and diplomatically (Zhoumin, 2011), equipping translators with the necessary skills to effectively facilitate cross-border business relationships. The translation of complaint speech acts hinges on socioculturally informed comprehension, drawing from recent business-focused research. Understanding the divergent complaint logic in cross-cultural negotiations is essential for mitigating cultural friction. This comprehensive introduction underscores the significance and relevance of enhanced intercultural business communication.

## **Literature Review**

Complaint speech acts were influenced by cultural norms and expectations, rendering their translation a complex task. Several studies investigated the cultural variations in complaint strategies, shedding light on differences in directness, politeness, and preferred communication styles across cultures. For instance, Kowalski (1996) scrutinized complaint strategies in English and Danish, revealing that Danish speakers tended to employ more direct and confrontational strategies compared to English speakers. Customer complaints constitute an inevitable aspect of any business operation, offering valuable feedback that could drive improvements

in products, services, and overall customer satisfaction. Decock and Spiessens (2017) adopted a discursive-pragmatic approach to analyze customer complaints and disagreements in multilingual business environments, underscoring the intricate interplay of language, culture, and communication styles in shaping the expression and resolution of complaints. Moreover, Harari (1999) emphasized the power of complaints as a catalyst for organizational change and improvement, advocating for businesses to leverage customer feedback to enhance their offerings and strengthen customer relationships.

Furthermore, Pyon et al. (2011) explored how businesses could utilize customer complaints as inputs for service improvement through business process management, emphasizing the importance of effectively managing and utilizing complaint data to drive continuous enhancement of service quality. Additionally, Aksoy and Yilmaz (2022) focused on consumer complaints and complaint management specifically within the tourism sector, shedding light on unique challenges and strategies for addressing complaints in an industry heavily reliant on customer satisfaction and reputation. In addition, Moon et al. (2019) investigated complaints and resolutions within a peer-to-peer business model, offering insights into the dynamics of complaint handling in collaborative consumption platforms. Moreover, Garrett and Toumanoff (2010) analyzed consumer complaints to the Better Business Bureau, questioning whether consumers were truly disadvantaged or vulnerable, contributing to understanding the consumer perspective on complaint resolution mechanisms.

Moreover, Gruber et al. (2010) explored complaint resolution management expectations in asymmetric business-to-business contexts, highlighting the importance of managing complaints effectively in maintaining productive business relationships. Similarly, Fisher et al. (1999) focused on dissatisfied consumers who filed complaints with the Better Business Bureau, examining factors influencing consumer propensity to complain and the outcomes of complaint resolution processes. Furthermore, Cho et al. (2002) delved into online customer complaints and their implications for web complaint management, offering insights into the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the digital landscape. Additionally, Henneberg et al. (2015) conducted a cross-cultural comparison of business complaint management expectations, revealing cultural nuances that influenced the perception and handling of complaints across different contexts. Additionally, Trosborg and Shaw (1998) explored the handling of complaints in everyday and cross-cultural business interactions, highlighting the importance of effective communication and conflict resolution strategies. Building on this, Brock et al. (2013) replicated a study on satisfaction with complaint handling in a business-to-business context, identifying determinants that impacted the effectiveness of complaint resolution processes. Also, Bao and Charoenroop (2023) examined customer requests and complaints in intercultural Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) emails, focusing on the communication dynamics between American customers and Chinese sales managers.

Complaint speech acts often involve the use of idiomatic expressions and culturally specific language. Translating such expressions accurately required a deep understanding of the source and target cultures. A study by Park et al. (1998) examined the translation of complaints in business contexts between Korean and English, revealing that translators faced challenges when dealing with culturally specific idioms, as direct translation often failed to capture the intended meaning. Translators relied on cultural equivalence, adaptation, or explanation strategies to convey the idiomatic expressions effectively. Localization involves adapting content to suit the target culture while preserving the intended message. In complaint speech acts, localization ensured that the translated complaints were culturally appropriate and resonated with the target audience. A study by Au, Buhalis, and Law (2014) investigated the localization of complaint letters in the hospitality industry between English and Chinese, highlighting the importance of understanding cultural norms, customer expectations, and the business context to effectively localize complaint speech acts.

Translating complaint speech acts in business communication requires not only language proficiency but also cultural competence. Translators had to be aware of cultural norms, values, and communication styles to accurately convey complaints. A study by Leonardi (2009) explored the ethical considerations involved in translating complaints in business settings, emphasizing the translator's role in maintaining the integrity of the complaint while adapting it to the cultural context, ensuring that the translated complaint remained faithful to the original intent. The translation of complaint speech acts in business communication from a cultural perspective was a multifaceted task that required an in-depth understanding of both source and target cultures. Cultural variations in complaint strategies, politeness norms, idiomatic expressions, and pragmatic transfer posed challenges to translators. However, by considering cultural nuances, employing appropriate politeness strategies, and utilizing localization techniques, translators could bridge the gap between languages and cultures, ensuring accurate and effective communication of complaints in business contexts. As cross-cultural communication continued to play a crucial role in global business interactions, further research was needed to explore additional cultural perspectives, investigate specific language pairs, and develop guidelines for translators in handling complaint speech acts. By enhancing translators' cultural competence and providing them with the necessary tools and resources, businesses could facilitate successful complaint resolution and build stronger relationships with their international stakeholders.

### **The Speech Act of Complaint in Saudi Culture**

The speech act of complaint has been the subject of extensive research in the context of Saudi Arabian culture. Scholars have delved into the nuances of complaint realization, strategies, and pragmatic functions employed by Saudi individuals, providing valuable insights into the intricacies of interpersonal communication and linguistic practices within this cultural framework. Numerous studies have explored the complaint speech act among Saudi individuals, revealing distinct patterns and

preferences in the ways complaints are expressed and realized. Alsallum's (2023) study on the realization of complaint speech acts among Saudi female English majors at Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University highlighted the tendencies of these learners to utilize a combination of direct and indirect complaint forms. Notably, the participants demonstrated a preference for more indirect and polite expressions when addressing individuals of higher social status or authority figures, reflecting the influence of cultural norms and power dynamics on complaint strategies.

Similarly, Al Rashidi's (2017) interlanguage pragmatic study on Saudis' complaint behaviors underscored the importance of considering cultural-specific factors, such as the degree of imposition, social power, and the severity of the offence, in shaping the complaint strategies employed by Saudi participants. Furthermore, El-Dakhs et al. (2019) highlighted the multifaceted nature of this speech act. Their findings revealed how Saudis employ complaints not only to express grievances but also to negotiate social relationships, maintain face, and navigate power dynamics. Researchers have also investigated the interlanguage pragmatic aspects of complaint speech acts among Saudi individuals. Al-Shorman's (2016) comparative study on the complaining strategies of Saudi and Jordanian undergraduates revealed both similarities and differences in the pragmatic competence and language use of the two groups, suggesting the need for targeted instruction and awareness-raising in cross-cultural communication.

Building on this, Alhamdan's (2022) study on Saudi and Jordanian university students' complaining strategies further underscored the importance of understanding the cultural and linguistic factors that shape compliant behaviour. The findings emphasized the role of social status, power dynamics, and pragmatic transfer in the students' choice of complaint strategies. Expanding the understanding of complaint speech acts in the Saudi context, El-Dakhs and Ahmed's (2021) variational pragmatic analysis compared the realization of complaints in Alexandrian and Najdi Arabic. Their study revealed distinct patterns in the linguistic and pragmatic features employed by speakers from these two Arabic dialects, highlighting the influence of regional and cultural nuances on complaint behaviours.

The existing research on the speech act of complaint within the Saudi cultural context has provided a multifaceted understanding of this linguistic phenomenon. By examining the strategies, structures, and pragmatic functions of complaints, scholars have gained valuable insights into the cultural, social, and linguistic factors that shape interpersonal communication and linguistic practices in Saudi Arabia. Continued exploration of the complaint speech act in the Saudi context holds promise for enhancing our understanding of cross-cultural pragmatics and fostering more effective communication across diverse linguistic and cultural boundaries.

## **Strategies for Translating Cultural Expressions**

Several strategies can be used for translating cultural items such as Newmark (1981) who proposed several strategies for translating texts from one language to another. These strategies are aimed at ensuring that the meaning and intent of the

original text are accurately conveyed in the target language. Newmark strategies include 1. Semantic translation. 2. Communicative translation: 3. Literal translation: 4. Free translation: Newmark's strategies highlight the importance of considering both linguistic and cultural factors when translating texts, as well as adapting them to suit their intended audience. By employing these strategies effectively, translators can ensure that their translations are accurate, meaningful, and engaging for readers in different languages and cultures. Another theory was both Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) who proposed a set of translation strategies to help translators navigate the challenges of translating between languages. These strategies include direct translation, borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation, and expansion. They divided these strategies into two types;

### **Direct Translation**

The direct translation strategy is a method of translating a text from one language to another without making any significant changes to the original meaning or structure. This strategy aims to preserve the original message as closely as possible, often resulting in a more literal translation. One of the main advantages of using a direct translation strategy is that it can be a quick and efficient way to translate a text, especially when time is limited. It also allows for a more accurate representation of the original content, which can be important in certain contexts such as legal or technical documents. However, there are also some drawbacks to using a direct translation strategy. One of the main challenges is that not all languages have direct equivalents for certain words or phrases, which can lead to awkward or confusing translations. Additionally, this approach may not take into account cultural differences or nuances that could affect the meaning of the text.

The strategy has the following procedures:

Borrowing when taking a word directly from another language,

Calque when taking a foreign word or phrase and then translating it literally into TL, and Literal translation using a word-for-word translation.

### **Oblique Translation**

Oblique Translation Techniques are used when the structural or conceptual elements of the source language cannot be directly translated without altering meaning or upsetting the grammatical and stylistic elements of the target language. This is employed to convey the conceptual elements of the SL without interfering with the meaning. This type of translation includes transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation, and expansion strategies( Ou-Hssata & Tounsi, 2019)

### **Research Qestions**

The research will attempt to answer the following three research questions:

1. What are the translation strategies employed by Saudi Arabic translators to render the cultural aspects of Saudi Arabic complaint utterances in institutional settings in their English translations?



2. How do the cultural norms of the Saudi culture influence the use of the translation strategies employed by Saudi Arabic translators in Saudi Arabic complaint utterances in institutional settings?
3. What factors might affect the use of these strategies in translation (e.g., the topic of complaint, severity of the complaint, etc.)?

By finding the answers to these research questions, it is hoped that Arabic translators will be aware of the effective strategies that can be used when translating complaint utterances into Saudi Arabic institutional discourse in general, and Saudi Arabic in particular. They will also be aware of how cultural aspects of a culture are of the topmost aspects to consider when translating complaints into institutional discourse.

### **Methodology**

This study is descriptive quantitative, which aims to investigate the strategies employed by Saudi translators in translating complaints. The researchers collected the Saudi complaint expressions from Saudi websites. Then they handed these expressions over to four translators to translate these expressions. 58 Saudi complaint expressions were translated by four professional translators, two males and two females. Two of them have PhD degrees in translation, one has an MA degree in translation, and one has a BA degree in translation. Also, the accuracy of translation was measured by three judges to assess the translations, using a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Finally, the researchers used the results of the analysis to identify the most used strategy and whether the type of complaint affects the utilization of these strategies. In this study, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) were used as a taxonomy for this study.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed to find out the strategies used in translating the complaints as well as the accuracy of translation. In the Arabic culture, the speaker usually uses some complaints to complain about a bad service or treatment. Saudi Arabic speakers almost use metaphors, proverbs, and ambiguous expressions to express dissatisfaction without confronting the offender, allowing for subtle negotiation. In this section, the analysis will be twofold- quantitative and qualitative. In the quantitative, the effect of the strategies on the speech act of complaints will be considered.

### **Results**

Despite that, the first question aimed to identify the translation strategies employed by Saudi Arabic translators to render the cultural aspects of Saudi Arabic complaint utterances in institutional settings in their English translations, but it was found before indulging to the analysis of the data related to this question it is a good chance to have a clear vision about the accuracy of translating Saudi complaints by the participated translators.



*Table 1 The accuracy of translating Saudicomplaints*

Range	Scale	Fre.	%
1	Inadequate transfer of ST meaning, undermined by serious inaccuracies.	10	5.74
2	Adequate transfer of general ST meaning, but with many lapses in accuracy	30	17.25
3	Adequate transfer of general ST meaning, but with a few lapses in accuracy	61	35.06
4	Almost complete transfer of ST meaning; there may be one or two insignificant inaccuracies	70	40.23
5	Complete transfer of ST meaning	3	1.72
<b>Total</b>		<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>

The scale is adopted from Thabet and Qadha (2024)

Closer inspection of Table (1) reveals that the accuracy of translating complaints was in general adequate as almost all density of translations fell between the ranges 3 to 4. What is striking about this table is that a respectable percentage of inadequate translation was found in the translation of Saudi complaints. This was ascribed to the lack of inadequate equivalents in the TL. Such as in a complaint ‘شكل بجي رمضان ونعيد’ which was translated as ‘it looks like Ramadan will come and we will repeat...’ where the translator first does not pay attention to the addressees who might have no idea about Ramadan- in the Hijri calendar, the month of fasting, the translator better to use the expansion strategy, furthermore, the Arabic word ‘نعيد’ which was translated wrongly as “repeat”, but the complainer intended to have also the ceremony of Eid- the day at the end of Ramadan in which Muslims celebrate their fulfilling fasting. This also cannot be translated by using literal translation.

Luckily the inadequate transfer of source text (ST) accounts for 5.74% of the total complaint translation. Generally, it can be seen that most complaints fall into categories 3 and 4, indicating that there is generally an adequate transfer of ST meaning with some minor inaccuracies. The ranges 1 and 2 have lower percentages, suggesting that serious inaccuracies are less common in the translations of Saudi complaints, but still some other factors might affect the translation of complaints which will be discussed in the third question.

*RQ1- What are the strategies adopted by the translators in translating complaints from Arabic into English?*

To answer this question the frequencies and the percentage of the strategies used were calculated.

**Table 2 ranking of the most strategy used in translating complaints**

No	Strategy used	Fre.	%	Rank
1	Literal translation	152	87.36	1
2	Borrowing	7	4.02	2
3	Equivalence	6	3.45	3
4	Transposition	3	1.73	4
5	Calque	2	1.15	5
6	Adaptation	2	1.15	5
7	Modulation	1	0.57	6
8	Expansion	1	0.57	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 2 reveals the strategy used in translating complaints. The most commonly used strategy is literal translation, with 87.36% of respondents. This suggests that translators prefer to stick closely to the original wording when translating complaints. Borrowing is the second most common strategy, with 4.02% which showed that respondents incorporated words or phrases from the source language into the target language in which it can carry the meaning and the effect of the complaints. Equivalence, transposition, calque, and adaptation are less commonly used strategies, with only a small percentage of respondents. Modulation and expansion are the least commonly used strategies, with only 0.57% of respondents for each. The results suggest that translators tend to prefer more literal translations when dealing with complaints, but the excessive use of literal translation in some cases spoiled their translations.

### Strategy 1: Literal Translation

Literal translation involves the direct conversion of words or phrases from one language to another without taking into account the cultural or linguistic nuances that may affect the meaning, (Ou-Hssata & Tounsi, 2019).

**Table 3. Examples of Literal translation of Saudi culture-specific expressions used in translating complaints.**

Arabic	English
اعتقد تصكر هالحساب لان الحماية للتاجر ضد المستهلك .. الله المستعان	I think this account should be closed because the protection is for the merchant against the consumer.. God is the Helper.
مركز الخدمة لا يعرف شئ عن هذه الخدمة عيب عليكم	The service centre does not know anything about this service. Shame on you
ياخي اقسم بالله عيب عليكم ايش الخدمة السيئة هذه ! دفعت المبلغ وقالو خلال ساعتين التوصيل والان لي ثالث يوم وانا كل شوي اسوي	Brother, I swear to God, it's a shame on you, what is this bad service? I paid the amount and they said within two hours of delivery and now I have the third day and

<p>موعد جديد وتقومو بالغاءه دون التواصل معنا حتى!!!!!!</p>	<p>every now and then I make a new appointment and cancel it without contacting us even!!!!!!</p>
<p>اسوء نت جربته في حياتي وجربته في بيتي ومنطقتين مختلفه ما في اي فرق وكل يوم اقله واشغله عشرين مره وبرضو ضعيف تقول شاربه بفلوس حرام</p>	<p>The worst internet I have ever found in my life. I tried it in two homes and two different areas. There is no difference. Every day I turn it off and on twenty times and it is still weak. do you think that I bought it with forbidden money!!!!</p>
<p>خذيت من عندكم تذكره وابغا اسرد المبلغ عطيتوني ٥٠ ريال والباقي لهفتوه وبغيت اغير اتجاه الطياره قلتو لا وربى اخس طياران ناس افضل منكم بكثير جعل فلوسي ماتهناكم</p>	<p>I bought a ticket from you and I want to take my money back. You gave me 50 riyals and took the rest of the amount and I wanted to change my direction. You said no your company is the worst Nas company is far better than yours. I hope my money doesn't bring you happiness.</p>

Examples in Table 3:display the translation of some complaints. The translators used a literal strategy to translate these complaints. These literal translations may not effectively convey the intended meaning or tone of the original Arabic complaints. For example, the phrase "اعتقد تصكر . . . الله المستعان" is translated as "I think this account should be closed . . . God is the Helper." The literal translation does not capture the frustration or urgency expressed in the original complaint. Similarly, the phrase "مركز الخدمة لا يعرف شئ عن هذه الخدمة عيب عليكم" is translated as "The service centre does not know anything about this service. Shame on you." The direct translation does not effectively convey the disappointment or anger expressed in the current complaint. In addition, cultural nuances and expressions may not directly translate into English, leading to a loss of meaning or impact in the translated text. For example, a phrase like "ياخي اقسم بالله عيب عليكم" contains emotional and cultural elements that may be lost in a direct translation. Therefore, it is important to consider cultural context and nuances when translating complaints or expressions from one language to another to ensure that the intended message and tone are accurately conveyed. Another expression is that 'تقول شاربه بفلوس حرام' that was translated as 'do you think that I bought it with forbidden money!!!!' in this case the translation is meant to the English language speakers that their culture is deviant from Saudi culture, the 'بفلوس حرام' might not be understood by the translation 'with forbidden money' also the translation of 'جعل فلوسي ماتهناكم' the reader – audience, might not understand the implied meaning of the translation of this complaint 'I hope my money doesn't bring you happiness'. This strategy is mostly utilized by almost all translators in almost all the complaints.

## Strategy 2: Borrowing

Borrowing in translation refers to the practice of integrating words or phrases from the source language into the target language without undergoing a translation process, as exemplified by the adoption of "sushi" from Japanese directly into English ( Kuleli, 2020).

**Table 4. Examples of borrowing strategy of translating Saudi culture-specific expressions used in complaints.**

Arabic	English
ما بيون يصدعون راسهم بالشكاوي خلاص	They don't want to bother themselves with complaints, Khalas- I am depressed
والله عيب عليكم	Wallah Allah, shame on you
و ويوصل بوقتو وهو كلام فاضي	. . .finally, he finds a bullshit.

Examples in Table 4 display the translation of some complaints. The translators used borrowing to translate these complaints. These translators may resort to this strategy to convey the intended meaning or tone of the original Arabic complaints. For example, the phrase " خلاص " is translated as " khalas". 'Wallah Allah' is the translation of the swear word ' والله ', borrowing this word from Arabic makes the swear word more dynamic. Nasution and Kharisma (2024) stated that 'borrowing is used when the source text has no proper translation in the target text'(p. 16) It is likely that borrowing can help the translators preserve the dynamic meaning of the complaints.

## Strategy 3: Equivalence

The equivalence strategy focuses on ensuring that the translated text effectively communicates the same intended meaning as the original text while accommodating linguistic and cultural disparities, such as adapting idiomatic expressions.

**Table 5. Examples of Equivalence strategy of translating Saudi culture-specific expressions used in complaints...**

Arabic	English
بالله هاذي خدمه تقدمونها	Is this the kind of service you provide?
يعني انا اكذب عليكم	Does it mean I am telling a fairy tale!
معقولة طلب يجلس اكثر من 3 ايام	Seriously! More than 3 days for one order

Examples in Table 5 reveal the translation of some complaints. The translators resorted to an equivalence strategy to translate these complaints. These translators may resort to this strategy to clearer meanings of the Arabic complaints. For example, the phrase ' بالله هاذي خدمه تقدمونها ' is translated as 'Is this the kind of service you provide?'. ' يعني انا اكذب عليكم ' is translated as ' Does it mean I am telling a fairy tale!', here in these examples the translators found it more satisfactory to use

equivalence strategy to render these complaints. It is better to keep in mind the addressees' understandability of these complaints rather than other factors such as tone and effect.

#### Strategy 4: Transposition

Transposition as a translation strategy involves altering the grammatical structure or word order in the target language to retain the intended meaning of the original text, including transformations like changing from active voice to passive voice (Dogonadze & Nijaradze, 2018)

**Table 6. Examples of transposition strategy of translating Saudi culture-specific expressions used in complaints.**

Arabic	English
الوزارة ما في احد يرد علي التلفونات ولا الأنتستغرام لنا اسبوع حطوا خط ساخن اهم شي المراجعين والموظفين مرتاحين	In the ministry, no one answers the phones or Instagram, it's been a week. They should set up a hotline and relieve the visitors and employees."
"ما بيون يصدعون راسهم بالشكاوي خلاص"	They don't want the ruin their day, stop

Examples in Table 6 demonstrated that only three complaints out of 58 were translated by using transposition strategy. The translators resorted to this strategy to translate these complaints, it was found that they shifted the word class from the noun in Arabic as in 'مرتاحين' into the verb 'relieve' in English, in the second example they changed the word class of the verb 'يصدعون' into a noun in Arabic 'the ruin'. These translators may resort to this strategy to go the norm of the structure of the target language.

#### Strategy 5: Calque

Calque entails the direct rendering of words or phrases from one language to another, often leading to literal translations that may not be coherent in the target language. One might be confused between loan/borrowing and calque, to make a shortcut between them Fernández Guerra put it this way the loan/borrowing "imitates the morphology, sense, and phonetics of the foreign word or phrase, while the calques only imitate the morphological scheme and the signification of that term, but not its pronunciation" (Fernández Guerra, 2012, p.8)

**Table 7. Examples of calque strategy of translating Saudi culture-specific expressions used in complaints.**

Arabic	English
لكم شهر على هذه الحالة عطلتوني وعطلتو اشغالي حسبني الله ونعم الوكيل	You have suspended me and my work. Allah suffices me, and He is the best disposer of affairs.
وهو كلام فاضي	Finally, he finds a bullshit talk.

Examples in Table 7 demonstrated that only two complaints out of 58 were translated by the using calque strategy. The translators resorted to this strategy to translate these complaints, as in the above examples. Some expressions in these complaints are translated using the calque strategy. As in ‘حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل’ and ‘كلام فاضي’ which was translated as ‘Allah suffices me, and He is the best disposer of affairs’ and ‘كلام فاضي’ respectively.

### Strategy 6: Adaptation

Adaptation involves the adjustment of elements within the source text to align with the linguistic and cultural background of the target audience while maintaining the core message of the original text, which may include altering unfamiliar references to the target audience( Harkness et al., 2010; Shan, 2024).

**Table 8. Examples of modulation strategy of translating Saudi culture-specific expressions used in complaints.**

Arabic	English
اذا ورطنا وتم التعامل بعد البيع ايش راح يصير	Unfortunately, if we are up to your trick and the deal takes place after the sale, what will happen?
ايش قوله ما ادري يعني انا اكذب عليكم!	I don't know what to say. I don't know. Do you think I am a snake in the grass?

Examples in Table (8) demonstrated that only two complaints out of 58 were translated by the using adaptation strategy. The translators resorted to this strategy to translate these complaints, as in the above examples. Some expressions in these complaints are translated using the adaptation strategy. As in ‘اذا ورطنا’ and ‘انا اكذب عليكم’ which were translated as ‘we are up to your trick’ and ‘am a snake in the grass’ respectively.

### Strategy 7: Modulation

Modulation encompasses changing the perspective or tone of a text during the translation process while upholding the fundamental meaning of the original text, such as transitioning from formal to informal language, a strategy employed by translators to convey the essence of the source text effectively( Fathi, 2012).

**Table 9. Examples of modulation strategy of translating Saudi culture-specific expressions used in complaints.**

Arabic	English
ماسبب تاخير توصيل المشتريات للمدينة اكثر من شهر ورغم الاتصال ورفع شكوى ولا حياة لمن تنادي.	Why is the delivery of purchases to the city delayed for more than a month, despite calling and filing a complaint, as if the person whom we call is dead?

The example in Table 9 demonstrated that only one complaint out of 58 was translated by using a modulation strategy. The translator resorted to this strategy to translate these complaints to make the complaint meaning clearer.

### Strategy 8: Expansion

Expansion in translation refers to the act of introducing additional information or words into the translated text to elucidate the meaning or provide extra context that was not explicitly present in the source text, a method utilized to enhance comprehension and clarity in translated works Al-Badani et al. (2016) added that the “translator fills out ST by including additional phrases, spelling out implicatures or adding connectives to help the logical flow of the text to increase readability”(p.57).

**Table 10. Examples of the expansion strategy of translating Saudi culture-specific expressions used in complaints.**

Arabic	English
والله عيب عليكم سوء الخدمة ...	"Wallah' By Allah, shame on you for the poor service ...

The example in Table 10 showed that only one complaint out of 58 was translated by using an Expansion strategy. The swear word ‘و الله’ was borrowed into English to keep the effect of these divine words, but the translator felt that this would not be clear enough to the reader, so the expansion strategy was utilized to clarify its meaning.

2- How do the cultural norms of the Saudi culture influence the use of the translation strategies employed by Saudi Arabic translators in Saudi Arabic complaint utterances in institutional settings?

Cultural norms in Saudi Arabia influence translation strategies used by Saudi Arabic translators in translating complaints in institutional settings. Translators may adapt language to maintain politeness, and respect, and uphold cultural values like hospitality and indirect communication. They utilize such strategies include using formal language, avoiding direct confrontation, and considering social status when translating complaints to ensure they align with Saudi cultural norms. Translators in this study were found to use formal language to maintain politeness when translating complaints. Translators might fail to convey the tone of complaints to avoid direct confrontation, as direct criticism can be seen as disrespectful in Saudi culture. Such as in the translation of some complaints, translators can render some expressions to TL using equivalence but they prefer to use either literal translation and in some cases borrowing to avoid using such expressions that might be considered disrespectful in using their equivalence in English, for example, the expression ‘حرام’ translated into ‘haram’. ‘توبه’ into ‘toobah’, they did so to preserve the same effect and meaning of these words.



Translators take into account the social status of individuals involved when translating complaints. They may adjust the language used based on the hierarchical relationships between parties to uphold respect and avoid offending. In this respect, from the examples translated in this study, it was found that some examples rendered without conveying this aspect such as 'ما بيون يصدعون راسهم بالشكاوي خلاص' the word 'خلاص' was not conveyed as well, some translated it as 'stop' which did not convey the cultural norms and effect. One translator used borrowing and explanation at the same time to convey the implied meaning of this word.

3- What factors might affect the use of these strategies in translation (e.g., the topic of complaint, severity of the complaint, etc.)?

Understanding cultural nuances is crucial to accurately convey the tone and severity of complaints between Arabic and English languages. Translators need a high level of proficiency in both source and target languages to effectively translate complaints without losing their original meaning and effect. The context in which the complaint arises necessitates the translators to choose appropriate strategies that reflect the severity and urgency of the issue, as well as the tone and politeness. So selecting the tone and level of formality in translations based on cultural norms and the severity of the complaint is crucial for effective communication. In this regard, it was found that the translations only focused on conveying the meaning as they almost utilized the literal translation, which could not convey the implied and the same effect of the original text.

## Discussion

This study aimed to compare the utilization of the translation strategies in translating Saudi complaints as well as identify the influence of the cultural norms of Saudi culture on the use of the translation strategies. Based on these aims, the researchers conducted a test. Our results showed that most translations were adequate with some inaccuracies found in Saudi complaints due to lack of equivalent terms in the target language. Inaccurate translations accounted for 5.74% of total complaints. The range of the translation was between 3 and 4 which means the translation was generally adequate. However, serious inaccuracies are less common in translations of Saudi complaints.

The findings also indicated that literal translation was the most common strategy at 87.36%, followed by borrowing at 4.02%. Equivalence, transposition, calque, and adaptation were less common, while modulation and expansion were least used. Translating complaints by utilizing literal translation was found to ineffectively convey the original Arabic tone. As in many complaints, the translation was not properly rendered because English language speakers do not know some Arabic cultural norms and they might not understand the implied meaning of the translation of such a complaint if translated by using literal translation such as 'I

hope my money doesn't bring you happiness'. This strategy is mostly utilized by almost all translators in almost all the complaints.

The findings of our study have shown that the majority of translations were deemed adequate, although some inaccuracies were identified in the translations of Saudi complaints. These inaccuracies were primarily attributed to the absence of equivalent terms in the target language (Anwar, et al. 2024.). Inaccurate translations accounted for approximately 5.74% of the total complaints analyzed. The overall range of translation quality fell between 3 and 4, indicating that the translations were generally adequate. However, it is worth noting that serious inaccuracies were found to be less prevalent in the translations of Saudi complaints.

One significant finding was that literal translation emerged as the most commonly employed strategy, this finding is consistent with the finding of Stepanova, (2017) who found that "the most favoured translation strategies are functional equivalence, borrowings, literal translation"(p.1202) in the current study also borrowing was the second most frequently used strategy, representing approximately 4.02% of the translations, this finding also goes in the same vein with the study of (Stepanova, 2017). Equivalence, transposition, calque, and adaptation were found to be less commonly employed, while modulation and expansion were the least utilized strategies, the same finding was reported by Alirezaei (2022) who found that the least frequently used strategies were modulation, calque, and adaptation in rendering English collocations into the Persian. However, the use of literal translation was found to be ineffective in accurately conveying the original Arabic tone, particularly in complaints where English language speakers may be unfamiliar with certain Arabic cultural norms and the implied meanings behind certain phrases (Akan, et al, 2019). For example, the phrase "I hope my money doesn't bring you happiness" may not be fully understood if translated literally, as its implied meaning differs from its literal interpretation. It is important to note that the strategy of literal translation was consistently employed by the majority of translators across various complaints. It was worth noting that some translators used borrowing strategies to convey the original Arabic tone of complaints. Borrowing helps preserve the dynamic meaning of complaints. Nasution and Kharisma (2024) mention borrowing is used when no proper translation exists. So these translators intentionally translated these expressions and ignored their translation equivalents, because equivalents, fail to carry the complete nuances of the meaning of the SL expression, this result is entirely consistent with the findings of (Kashgary, 2011)who reported that in some cases English equivalents fall short of consigning the full meaning, particularly in terms of religious nature, often a strategy of borrowing the SL term is used.

The transposition strategy was found to be the least used strategy as the translators in very limited cases shift word classes to adhere to the target language norms. The other strategies; Calque, Adaptation, Modulation, and Expansion were found to be used very less. Generally speaking, almost all translators who participated in this study seem inadequate to transfer the Saudi complaints, because

their translation strategies were mainly restricted to literal translation and borrowing so many complaints were not accurately rendered.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the utilization of translation strategies in translating Saudi complaints and explored the impact of Saudi cultural norms on these strategies. The results revealed that while most translations were adequate, some inaccuracies stemmed from a lack of equivalent terms in the target language. Literal translation was the most common strategy employed, but it was found to be ineffective in conveying the original Arabic tone accurately, especially in cases where English speakers may not grasp certain cultural nuances. Borrowing emerged as the second most utilized strategy and was used for preserving the dynamic meaning of complaints. This research sheds light on the complexities of translating complaints across different cultural contexts and highlights the importance of considering cultural norms and implied meanings in translation work. Even if there are English equivalents they sometimes fail to convey the full meaning, especially in religious contexts, leading translators to borrow terms from the source language. Translators rarely used transposition strategy, preferring literal translation and borrowing. Calque, Adaptation, Modulation, and Expansion strategies were also infrequently used. Overall, translators inadequately conveyed Saudi complaints due to limited translation strategies employed.

This research offers valuable perspectives into the obstacles of rendering Saudi complaints, underscoring the influence of cultural standards on translation methodologies. The results emphasize the restrictions of literal translation and the importance of adopting to seize subtle connotations efficiently. The investigation accentuates the requirement of contemplating cultural subtleties and implied connotations in translation endeavors, particularly in spiritual settings where English equivalents may be inadequate. The research's examination of diverse translation strategies illuminates the intricacies implicated in intercultural translation, highlighting the necessity for a more refined approach to improve precision and efficacy in communicating Saudi complaints.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research received grant no. (103/2023) from the Arab Observatory for Translation (an affiliate of ALECSO), which is supported by the Literature, Publishing & Translation Commission in Saudi Arabia.

## **Declaration of conflicting interests**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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