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الخبرات المهنية واحتياجات التطوير المهني لخريجي الترجمة في المملكة العربية السعودية

عبير جابر الفيفي

قسم اللغات الحديثة وآدابها، كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز
جدة، المملكة العربية السعودية

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5364-3822
aalfaify@kau.edu.sa

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة واقع مهنة الترجمة في المملكة العربية السعودية من منظور خريجي تخصص الترجمة السعوديين. واستنادًا إلى بيانات استبانة شملت 38 مشاركًا من جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز، تبحث الدراسة في أبعاد متعددة من الخبرات المهنية للخريجين، بما في ذلك أنواع أعمال الترجمة التي يضطلعون بها، ومدى إتاحة الفرص المهنية لهم في سوق العمل، ومعدل تلقيهم عروض العمل، ومدى انخراطهم في مجالي الترجمة السمعبصرية والترجمة الشفهية، واحتياجاتهم التدريبية، وممارسات تسعير الخدمات، فضلًا عن وضعهم الوظيفي ومجالات عملهم. وتكشف النتائج عن غلبة الطابع النصي على سوق الترجمة، مقابل محدودية نسبية في مجالي الترجمة السمعبصرية والترجمة الشفهية. كما تشير النتائج إلى محدودية حصول الخريجين على فرص مهنية منتظمة، واعتماد نسبة ملحوظة منهم على وظائف إضافية خارج مجال الترجمة. وتُظهر النتائج كذلك تفاوتًا كبيرًا في ممارسات تسعير الخدمات، إلى جانب وجود حاجة مُلحّة، بحسب تصورات المشاركين، إلى مزيد من التدريب، ولا سيما التدريب الميداني، والترجمة الشفهية، واكتساب المهارات التقنية المتعلقة بأدوات الترجمة بمساعدة الحاسوب. وعلى الرغم من هذه التحديات، أعرب غالبية المشاركين عن انطباعاتهم الإيجابية نحو مهنة الترجمة، وأبدوا استعدادهم للتوصية بها بوصفها مسارًا مهنيًا. وتخلص الدراسة إجمالًا إلى أن قطاع الترجمة في المملكة العربية السعودية يشهد توسعًا وتنوعًا متزايدين، إلا أنه لا يزال يعاني من تفاوتات بنيوية، الأمر الذي يستدعي مزيدًا من التنظيم والتوحيد في الممارسات المهنية، وتعزيز التدريب التطبيقي، وتحقيق مواءمة أكبر بين مخرجات الإعداد الأكاديمي ومتطلبات سوق العمل. كما تؤكد النتائج أهمية الدور التوجيهي للجهات الرسمية ذات الصلة في دعم تطوير ممارسات تسعير موحّدة، وتعزيز التنظيم المهني، وتوسيع فرص العمل المتاحة لخريجي الترجمة، بما يسهم في ترسيخ صناعة ترجمة أكثر استدامة وتنظيمًا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المملكة العربية السعودية؛ الترجمة؛ الترجمة النصية، الترجمة السمعبصرية؛ الترجمة الشفهية؛ التوظيف؛ المسار المهني.

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King Saud University

Employment Experiences and Professional Development Needs of Translation Graduates in Saudi Arabia

Abeer Alfaify

Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, King Abdulaziz University Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5364-3822

aalfaify@kau.edu.sa

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Abstract

This study examines the current state of the translation profession in Saudi Arabia through the perspectives of Saudi translation graduates. Drawing on survey data from 38 participants, the research investigates multiple dimensions of graduates' professional experiences comprising types of translation work undertaken, access to industry opportunities, frequency of work offers, engagement with audiovisual translation and interpreting sectors, perceived training needs, pricing practices, and employment status and occupational field (both translation and non-translation related). The findings reveal a predominantly text-oriented translation market, with comparatively limited engagement in audiovisual translation and interpreting. Results also indicate relatively low exposure to consistent industry opportunities, with a significant proportion relying on supplementary employment outside the translation field. Furthermore, the study highlights considerable variability in pricing practices and a strong perceived need for additional training particularly in field experience, interpreting, and technological tools such as computer-assisted translation (CAT) systems. Despite these challenges, the majority of participants expressed positive attitudes toward the profession and indicated willingness to recommend translation as a career path. Overall, the study concludes that while the translation sector in Saudi Arabia is expanding and becoming increasingly diverse, it remains structurally uneven and requires greater standardization, enhanced practical training, and stronger alignment between academic preparation and industry requirements. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of guidance from relevant official entities to support the development of standardized pricing practices, strengthen professional regulation, and increase employment opportunities for translation graduates, thereby fostering a more sustainable and organized translation industry.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia; translation; audiovisual; subtitling; interpreting; employment; career

Introduction

The translation industry in Saudi Arabia has undergone remarkable transformation driven by rapid socio-economic development, increasing global engagement, and the growing demand for multilingual communication across governmental, educational, and private sectors. The Kingdom has made translation a key pillar of its cultural and knowledge-development agenda under Vision 2030, with the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission leading efforts to strengthen the translation ecosystem through initiatives such as the Tarjim Initiative, which supports the translation of literary, scientific, and cultural works into and from Arabic, promotes Saudi literature internationally, and provides funding and professional support for translators. The commission has also introduced certification and professional development programs to improve translation quality and establish industry standards. Alongside these governmental efforts, Saudi universities have played a major role in developing the sector by establishing undergraduate and graduate programs in translation and interpreting, expanding research in linguistics and language technologies, and preparing qualified translators for the labour market. Institutions such as King Abdulaziz University, King Saud University, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University, King Khalid University, and Prince Sultan University have expanded translation education through specialized degree programs, research centres, and industry partnerships while increasingly incorporating localization, audiovisual translation, machine translation, and artificial intelligence into their curricula. Together, these initiatives are transforming translation from a traditional language service into a strategic sector that supports cultural exchange, knowledge transfer, publishing, and the global visibility of Saudi and Arabic literature.

Despite the increasing prominence of translation as a strategic sector in Saudi Arabia, research on the career paths of translation graduates and the extent to which university training aligns with labour market demands remains limited. Furthermore, limited attention has been

paid to understanding how translators sustain their careers; the availability and nature of employment opportunities within the sector; and the skills, competencies, and professional expectations the contemporary translation market requires.

This study aims to investigate the current state of the translation profession in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of Saudi translation graduates by examining the following key variables shaping their professional experiences: types of translation tasks undertaken, access to industry opportunities, frequency of work offers, perceived training needs, pricing practices, and employment patterns. In addition, the study explores graduates' engagement with different translation modalities, such as written translation, audiovisual translation, and interpreting, as well as their exposure to the subtitling and interpreting industries.

To address these aims, the research is guided by the following questions:

1. What types of translation tasks and professional activities do Saudi translation graduates undertake, and what are their employment patterns within and beyond the translation industry?

2. What industry opportunities are available to Saudi translation graduates, and how frequently do they receive work offers?

3. To what extent do Saudi translation graduates engage in different translation modalities, including written translation, audiovisual translation, and interpreting, and what exposure do they have to the subtitling and interpreting industries?

4. What pricing practices do Saudi translation graduates adopt for their translation services, and what factors influence their pricing decisions?

5. What training needs do Saudi translation graduates perceive as necessary for improving their professional competence and employability in the translation industry?

6. What challenges and opportunities do Saudi translation graduates encounter in navigating the professional translation market, including diversifying their careers through additional income sources?

By answering these questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how the surveyed translation graduates navigate the professional market, the challenges they encounter, and the extent to which they diversify their careers through additional income sources. Ultimately, the research seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the translation landscape in Saudi Arabia, highlighting both its emerging opportunities and structural limitations while also offering implications for curriculum development, professional training, and industry–academia collaboration.

Literature Review

The translation industry has undergone substantial transformation over the past decades as a result of globalization, technological advancements, and the growing demand for cross-cultural communication. Within Saudi Arabia, translation has gradually emerged as a recognized academic and professional discipline following the establishment of formal translation education programs during the late 20th century. The expansion of translation activities in the Kingdom has been closely associated with economic growth; increasing international collaboration; and the communication needs of governmental, educational, and private-sector institutions (Alangari, 2024). Consequently, the translation profession has assumed a more prominent role in supporting Saudi Arabia's engagement with global markets and multicultural environments.

In response to these developments, Saudi universities have contributed significantly to the professionalization of translation and interpreting through the establishment of specialized undergraduate and postgraduate programs. These programs are designed to develop students' translation competence alongside advanced foreign-language proficiency, with the ultimate aim of preparing graduates for professional practice. Despite these efforts, considerable debate persists regarding the extent to which translation curricula adequately address the practical requirements of the professional translation industry.

A substantial body of research has identified a persistent gap between the competencies fostered in translator-training programs and those required in professional translation settings, suggesting that translation curricula do not always equip graduates with the knowledge and skills contemporary translation practice demands (Di Mango, 2018; Int, 2005; Kafi et al., 2018). Studies by Li (2002) and Kafi et al. (2018) reported significant discrepancies between curricular content and industry expectations. Similarly, Kelly (2014) emphasized the importance of conducting local needs analyses to ensure that program design reflects contextual realities and stakeholder requirements. Collectively, these studies indicate that translator-training programs often struggle to keep up with the growing demands of the labour market, thereby limiting their ability to meet the expectations of employers and translation service providers (Horbačauskienė et al., 2017; Int, 2005; Li, 2002).

One area in which this gap is particularly evident concerns translation technology. The increasing integration of technology into translation workflows has fundamentally reshaped professional practice worldwide. For example, in Saudi Arabia, translators are increasingly using computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, machine translation systems, and online terminology resources in their daily work (Abdel Latif & Alsalmi, 2026). Nevertheless, several studies have highlighted a mismatch between university training and industry requirements regarding technological competence. While graduates often acquire theoretical knowledge of translation technologies, they may lack sufficient practical experience with industry-standard CAT tools and real-world translation workflows (Aldossary, 2023). This technological skills gap has become increasingly significant as employers place greater emphasis on digital competence and productivity-enhancing technologies.

Beyond technological developments, the diversification of translation services has generated demand for specialized forms of language mediation, in particular, interpreting and audiovisual translation due to the expansion of multilingual communication across sectors such

as health care, tourism, media, and international events. Although these areas are growing in importance within Saudi Arabia and existing research suggests that both interpreting and audiovisual translation require specialized competencies that extend beyond those typically associated with general translation practice, including advanced cognitive, technical, and communicative skills (Almohizea, 2025), they remain relatively underrepresented in the academic literature. Consequently, entry into these sectors may present additional challenges for recent graduates whose training has focused primarily on general translation.

The challenges associated with specialization are closely linked to broader concerns regarding graduate employability and labour market integration. Research has consistently shown that translation graduates often encounter difficulties when transitioning from academic study to professional practice (Alsaadi & Awashreh, 2025; Mabruk et al., 2021). Such challenges are frequently attributed to limited opportunities for practical training, internships, and direct exposure to industry environments during university studies. As a result, many graduates pursue careers beyond the translation sector, drawing upon their multilingual and intercultural communication skills in a variety of related professions (Al-Jarf, 2021; Hao & Pym, 2023; Torres Hostench, 2013).

These issues of employability and professional preparation intersect with wider debates concerning the professionalization of translation as an occupation. Despite the increasing importance of translation services, research examining translators' professional status, career development, and occupational identity remains relatively limited (Dam & Zethsen, 2008, 2010; Gentile, 2013; Setton & Liangliang, 2009). Within the Saudi Arabian context, such investigations are particularly scarce, highlighting an important gap in the literature. Greater understanding of translators' perceptions of their professional standing, career trajectories, and workplace experiences is therefore needed to support the continued development of the profession.

Moreover, the process of professionalization is further complicated by the absence of universally recognized professional standards and consistent pricing mechanisms within the translation industry (Chan & Liu, 2013; Drugan, 2017; Hlavac, 2013; Kafi et al., 2018; Kang & Shunmugam, 2014). Compensation is often characterized by variability and instability because remuneration rates tend to be determined by prevailing market conditions rather than by standardized regulatory frameworks or professional guidelines (Dam & Zethsen, 2010). Such challenges are especially evident in emerging translation markets, including Saudi Arabia, where the profession continues to undergo institutional and structural development. The limited degree of standardization reflects the evolving nature of the field, in which economic pressures and individual negotiation often exert shape working conditions and remuneration than formal systems of professional regulation and governance.

Taken together, the existing literature highlights several interconnected challenges facing the translation profession comprising curriculum–industry misalignment, technological preparedness, specialization requirements, graduate employability, and the ongoing professionalization of the field. While previous studies have provided valuable insights into these issues, important gaps remain, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia, regarding translators' professional experiences, career development, and perceptions of the labour market. Therefore, addressing these gaps is essential to inform future educational reforms and support the continued growth of the translation profession within the Kingdom.

Methodology

This perception study is primarily quantitative, with a qualitative component, to provide a broad understanding of the current state of the translation profession in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of Saudi translation graduates. Data were collected through a structured online survey administered to 38 translation graduates from King Abdulaziz University through email. Participants' consent to participate in the study was implied through their completion and

submission of the questionnaire. The survey comprised 12 closed- and open-ended questions in English, designed to explore participants' professional experiences, employment opportunities, areas of translation specialization, pricing practices, perceived training needs, and attitudes towards the translation profession.

The study participants comprised graduates who completed the survey between November 2024 and November 2025. They were drawn from the 55 graduates of the first and second cohorts of the interdisciplinary Linguistics and Translation track within the Modern Languages and Literatures program at King Abdulaziz University, all of whom were invited to participate in the study. They graduated in 2023 and 2024, respectively, and were selected based on their completion of the program during those academic years. The participants' ages ranged from 23 to 26 years, while their professional experience ranged from two to four years and encompassed a variety of activities, including paid work, volunteering, and internships, as reported in the questionnaire responses.

Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was pilot-tested to assess the clarity, comprehensibility, and suitability of the questions for the study's objectives. The survey incorporated both closed-ended questions, including Likert-scale items, and open-ended questions to capture a range of quantitative and qualitative data. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the diversity of the dimensions examined, the questionnaire was not treated as a single psychometric scale. Accordingly, the appropriateness of internal consistency measures was considered in relation to the specific Likert-scale items rather than the questionnaire as a whole. The quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while the qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and perspectives. Qualitative data were subsequently quantified by calculating the frequency of occurrence of the identified themes. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data facilitated a more holistic examination of the opportunities, challenges, and professional realities encountered by the

surveyed translation graduates in Saudi Arabia. This methodological approach was particularly appropriate for the study because it combined the strengths of numerical analysis with the depth and contextual richness of qualitative inquiry, thereby offering a better understanding of the factors influencing graduates' engagement with the translation industry.

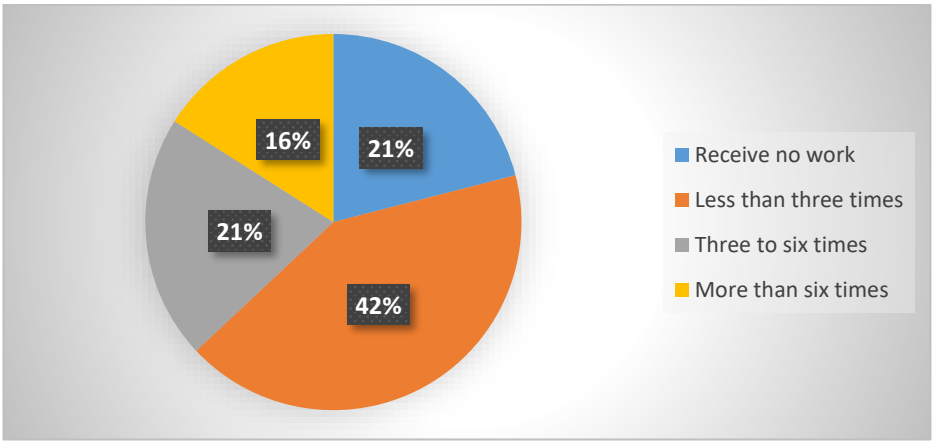
Nevertheless, the relatively small sample size and the absence of a comprehensive psychometric assessment should be considered when interpreting the findings, as they restrict the generalizability of the findings and preclude drawing definitive conclusions about the translation profession in Saudi Arabia as a whole. Despite this limitation, the findings remain valuable, as they offer empirical insights into the professional experiences, challenges, and training needs of early-career translation graduates and provide a useful basis for further research involving larger and more diverse samples.

Results and Discussion

Frequency of Employment Opportunities

One of the investigated aspects was the frequency with which Saudi translation graduates were offered professional work opportunities, as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Frequency of Employment Opportunities



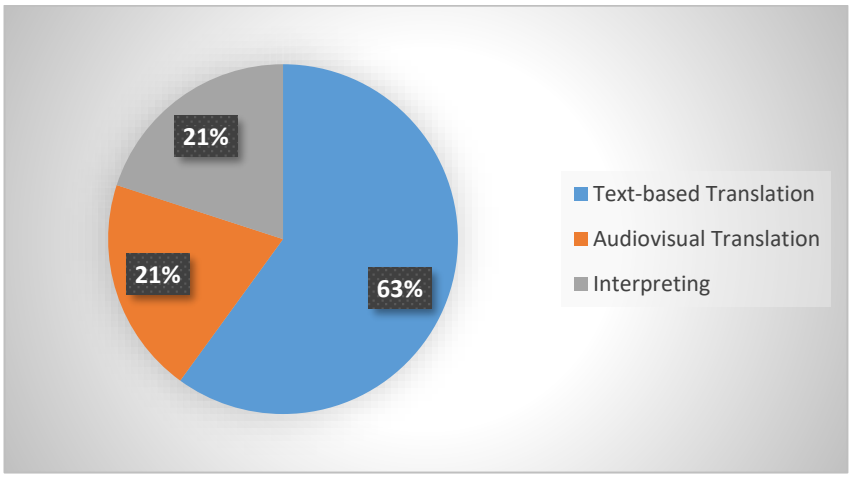
Among the 38 participants, the largest proportion reported receiving work offers less than three times per year (n = 16, 42%), indicating that many graduates experience only occasional engagement with the translation market. By comparison, eight respondents (21%) stated that they received work opportunities between three and six times annually, while six participants (16%) reported being offered work more than six times per year, suggesting a smaller group of graduates who enjoy relatively consistent professional demand. An equal number of respondents (n = 8, 21%) indicated that they had not received any work offers during the year. The distribution of responses reveals a fragmented employment landscape in which opportunities are available to many graduates but are not evenly distributed across the profession.

While the presence of graduates receiving multiple annual work offers reflects a growing demand for translation services within the Kingdom, the substantial proportion of participants reporting infrequent or no opportunities could point to ongoing challenges related to labour market access or professional networking.

Types of Texts Completed by Translation Graduates

Another investigated aspect was the types of translation tasks completed by Saudi translation graduates since graduation, including paid work, volunteer work and internships, as illustrated in Figure 2. Participants were allowed to select multiple answers to reflect their experience across different types of translation work.

Figure 2
Types of Texts Completed by Translation Graduates



The findings show that of the 38 participants surveyed, an overwhelming majority (n = 24, 63%) reported having undertaken text-based translation assignments, indicating that written translation remains the dominant preference among translation graduates. In contrast, only eight participants (21%) reported experience in audiovisual translation, while an identical proportion (n = 8, 21%) indicated involvement in interpreting activities.

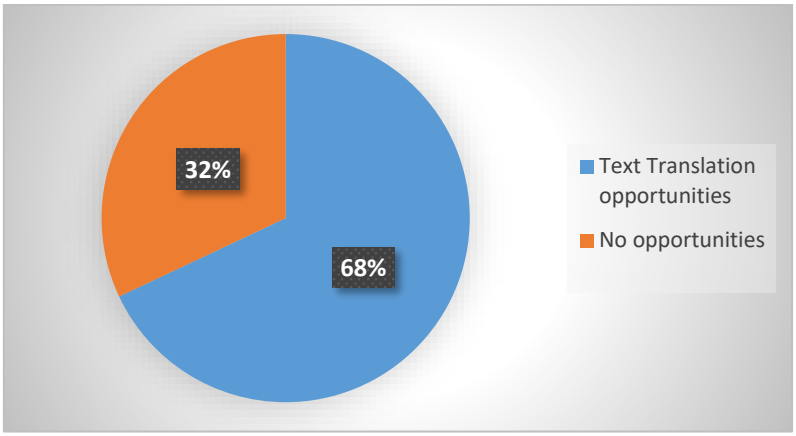
Although the disparity between text translation and the other two modalities is substantial, further investigation is needed to examine whether these findings are consistent with those derived from the translated texts offered. Examining this aspect is important because the two indicators represent different dimensions of translation practice. Completed translation tasks may reflect translators' actual preferences, especially when volunteering is involved, whereas translated texts offered indicate the availability of translation opportunities and prevailing market demand.

Types of Texts Offered to Translation Graduates

Text Translation

The third inspected aspect concerns graduates' access to opportunities within the text-based translation industry, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Text Translation Opportunities



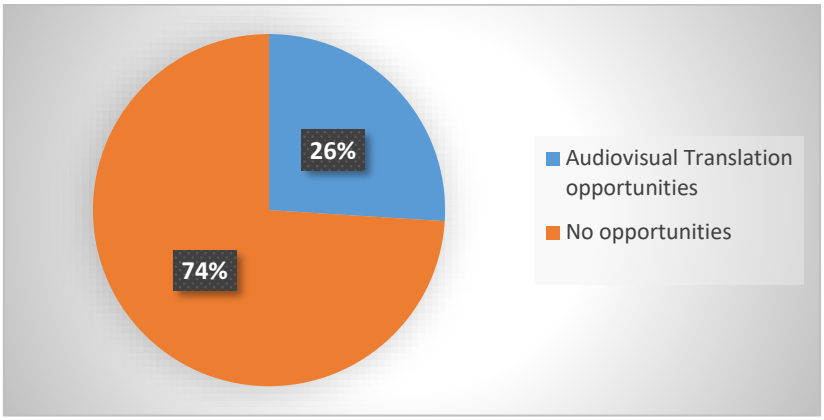
The findings show that of the 38 Saudi translation graduates surveyed, 26 respondents (68%) reported having been afforded opportunities within the text translation industry, whereas 12 participants (32%) indicated that they had not received such opportunities. The difference between these groups suggests a moderately favourable yet uneven level of industry engagement among graduates.

While the fact that more than half of the participants secured opportunities reflects a growing demand for text translation–related services and the expanding role of multilingual communication within the Kingdom, the substantial proportion of graduates who reported no access to professional opportunities highlights persistent barriers to entry into the sector. These barriers may include limited availability of entry-level positions or insufficient professional networking channels, among other reasons.

Audiovisual Translation

The fourth inspected aspect is regarding graduates' access to opportunities within the audiovisual translation industry, as can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4
Audiovisual Translation Opportunities



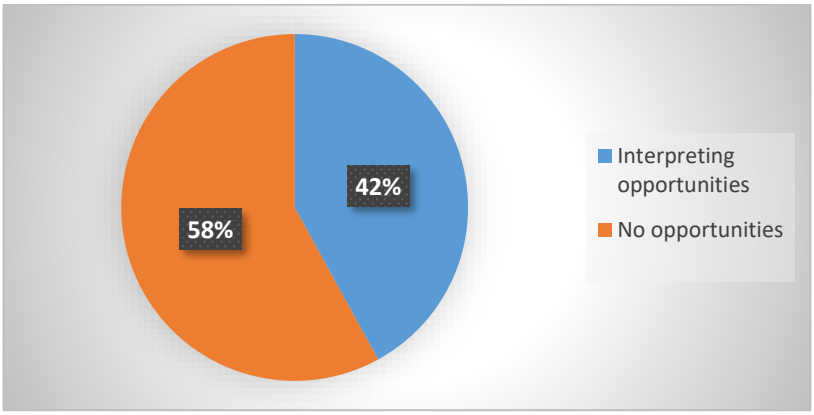
The results show that of the 38 Saudi translation graduates surveyed, only 10 respondents (26%) reported being approached or offered opportunities in the subtitling sector, whereas 28 participants (74%) indicated they had never received such opportunities.

The marked disparity between these groups, amounting to a difference of 48 percentage points, suggests that access to the audiovisual translation industry remains relatively limited for translation graduates. Despite the rapid growth of digital media platforms, streaming services, and audiovisual content consumption within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the findings indicate that opportunities in this field have not expanded sufficiently to engage a substantial proportion of qualified graduates. The comparatively low level of industry participation may reflect a shortage of specialized training, limited awareness of career pathways in audiovisual translation, or a concentration of subtitling and dubbing work within a small number of organizations and service providers.

Interpreting

Another examined aspect is graduates' access to opportunities within the interpreting industry, as can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5
Interpreting Opportunities



The findings show that of the 38 Saudi translation graduates surveyed, 16 respondents (42%) reported having been approached or offered opportunities in the interpreting sector, whereas 22 participants (58%) indicated that they had not received such opportunities.

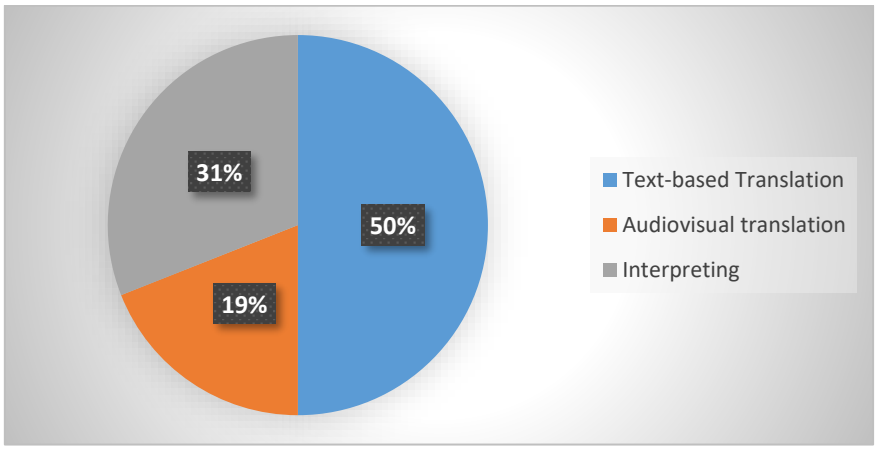
The results ultimately suggest that interpreting offers comparatively greater professional accessibility than some other specialized translation fields. This is perhaps due to the high demand for multilingual communication in governmental institutions, international business environments, health care settings, educational sectors, and large-scale national initiatives associated with Saudi Arabia's ongoing economic and social development. Nevertheless, more than half of respondents reported no access to interpreting opportunities, indicating that barriers to entry remain evident, potentially because professional interpreting requires specialized competencies and practical experience.

Comparison of Opportunities Across Text, Audiovisual Translation, and Interpreting

A cross-modal comparison of translation opportunities reveals several interesting findings, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Opportunities Across Text, Audiovisual Translation, and Interpreting



The findings suggest that translation opportunities and market demand remain largely concentrated in conventional written translation services, which account for 50% of the tasks offered. This dominance likely reflects ongoing needs among governmental institutions, educational sectors, and private organizations for document translation and written communication. Interpreting follows at 31%, indicating substantial demand for oral language services across various professional settings. In contrast, audiovisual translation represents a smaller share of available opportunities at only 19%. This comparatively lower proportion may be attributed to the specialized nature of the field, which often requires technical expertise, familiarity with industry-specific software, and additional training, making it less accessible to recent graduates and entry-level practitioners.

Translation Compensation Rates

Determinants of Payment Rates

The findings on the factors that influence the payment rates identify several key determinants, including the project type, length, word count, complexity, and time limitations or urgency. The prominence of these factors suggests that graduates employ a multifaceted and market-oriented approach to pricing rather than relying on a fixed or standardized rate

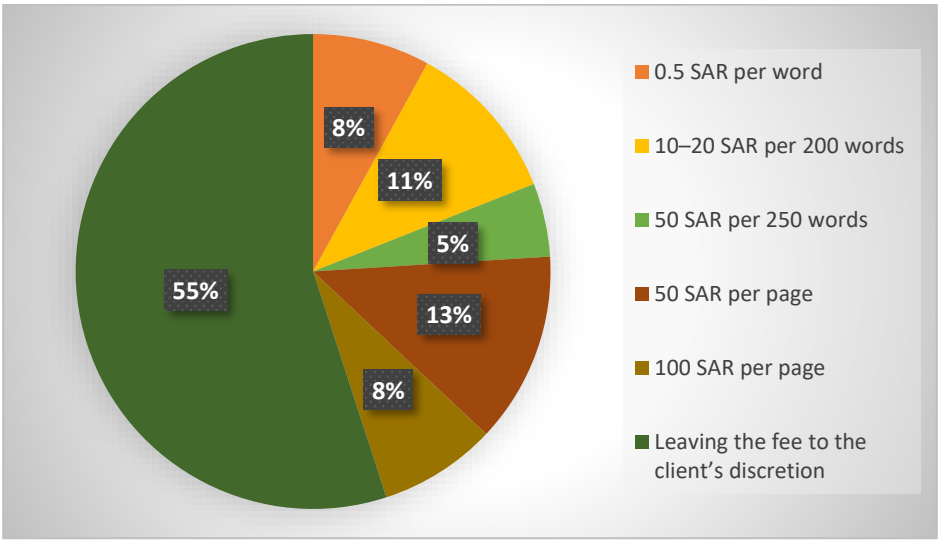
structure. In particular, considerations such as project complexity and urgency indicate an awareness of the cognitive demands, specialized expertise, and time investment required to complete high-quality translation work. Similarly, the inclusion of project word count and length reflects the widespread adoption of industry-standard pricing practices commonly observed in professional translation markets worldwide. The importance attributed to project type further highlights the recognition that different translation domains, such as legal, technical, medical, audiovisual, or literary translation, require varying levels of subject-matter expertise and consequently warrant differentiated compensation.

These findings suggest that Saudi translation graduates possess an emerging understanding of professional pricing mechanisms and value-based service provision, reflecting the maturation of the translation sector within the Kingdom. Moreover, the results indicate a growing alignment between graduates' professional practices and international standards, highlighting the evolution of translation from a purely linguistic activity into a specialized knowledge-based profession shaped by market demands, project specifications, and client expectations.

Variations in Payment Rates

Regarding pricing practices among Saudi translation graduates, the reported rates vary considerably, indicating a lack of full standardization in how translation services are valued and monetized, as shown in Figure 7. The majority of respondents (n = 21, 55%) reported leaving the fee to the client's discretion. Other pricing models included 50 SAR per 250 words (n = 2), 10–20 SAR per 200 words (n = 4), 50 SAR per page (n = 5), 100 SAR per page (n = 3), and 0.5 SAR per word (n = 3).

Figure 7
Variations in Payment Rates



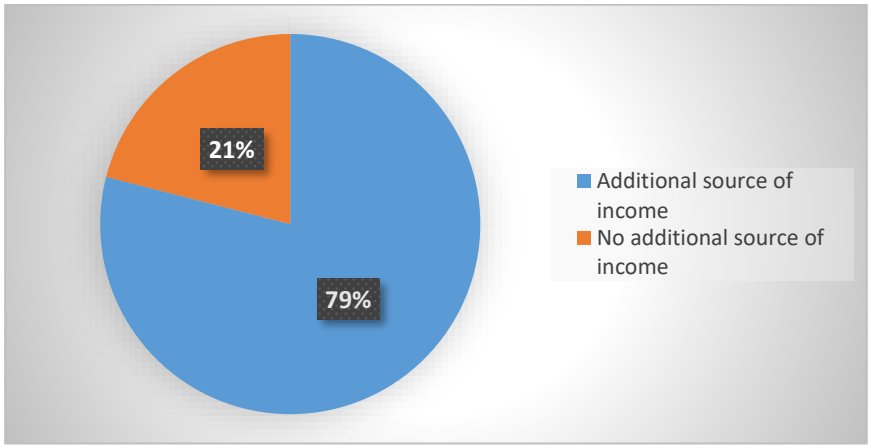
Although each rate was reported by a small number of participants, the diversity of pricing structures highlights the coexistence of both word-based and flat-rate approaches within the emerging professional practices of graduates. This variability suggests that translation pricing in Saudi Arabia remains in a developmental stage, where individual experience, client negotiation, and project type may significantly influence rate determination rather than a unified market standard.

These findings are consistent with previous studies highlighting the challenges of professionalization within the translation industry, particularly the absence of universally recognized professional standards and consistent pricing mechanisms (Chan & Liu, 2013; Drugan, 2017; Hlavac, 2013; Kafi et al., 2018; Kang & Shunmugam, 2014). As Dam and Zethsen (2010) further observe, compensation in the translation profession is often variable and unstable, with remuneration rates shaped by prevailing market conditions rather than standardized regulatory frameworks or professional guidelines. The presence of per-word, per-page, and lump-sum pricing models reflects partial alignment with international translation industry practices; however, the inconsistency across responses also points to limited regulatory or institutional guidance governing pricing conventions.

Additional Sources of Income

The findings concerning the availability of alternative sources of income among Saudi translation graduates provide important perceptions about the current economic realities of the translation profession in Saudi Arabia. As shown in Figure 8, a substantial majority of participants (n = 30, 79%) reported having an additional source of income alongside their translation-related activities, whereas only eight respondents (21%) indicated that translation constituted their sole source of income.

Figure 8
Availability of Additional Source of Income



This considerable disparity suggests that many graduates may not yet be able to rely exclusively on translation work for financial stability despite the growing demand for language services within the Kingdom. The alternative occupations reported by participants included positions such as administrative assistants, English language teachers, and human resources personnel in health care institutions, reflecting the transferability of the linguistic, communication, and intercultural competencies acquired through translation education.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that many translation graduates pursue careers beyond the translation sector, drawing upon their multilingual and intercultural communication skills in a variety of related professions (Al-Jarf, 2021; Hao & Pym, 2023; Torres Hostench, 2013). The prevalence of supplementary employment may

indicate that translation opportunities are often irregular, project based, or insufficiently remunerative to support full-time professional engagement. At the same time, the diversity of alternative career paths demonstrates the versatility of translation graduates and their ability to apply their skills across multiple sectors of the labour market. Taken together, these findings suggest that while the translation industry in Saudi Arabia continues to expand, it has not yet matured to the extent that it can consistently provide sustainable full-time employment for the majority of graduates.

Desired Professional Development and Additional Training

While all participants expressed contentment with the education they received, they also indicated a need for additional training. Participants were allowed to select multiple answers to identify all the areas in which they felt they needed further training, resulting in a total of 54 responses. As shown in Table 1, the most frequently identified area for further professional development was general practical field training, selected by 16 respondents (30%). This finding suggests a possible gap between theoretical instruction and the practical competencies required in professional translation environments.

It also aligns with previous research identifying a persistent gap between the competencies developed through translator-training programs and those required in professional settings, suggesting that translation curricula do not always equip graduates with the knowledge and skills demanded by contemporary translation practice (Di Mango, 2018; Int, 2005; Kafi et al., 2018). The graduates' strong preference for practical training therefore highlights the importance of strengthening the connection between academic instruction and professional practice to better prepare graduates for the demands of the translation industry.

Furthermore, 12 participants (22%) identified interpreting and CAT tools as areas requiring further training, indicating an equal level of perceived need for enhanced competence in these

domains. The need for additional training in CAT tools is consistent with previous research highlighting a mismatch between university training and industry requirements regarding technological competence. Although graduates may acquire theoretical knowledge of translation technologies, they may lack sufficient practical experience with industry-standard CAT tools and real-world translation workflows (Aldossary, 2023). This gap is particularly significant as employers increasingly emphasize digital competence and the effective use of productivity-enhancing technologies. The participants' responses therefore highlight the importance of providing more hands-on training in both interpreting and computer-assisted translation to better align academic preparation with professional expectations.

Table 1
Desired Additional Training

Desired additional training	Number of respondents	Percentage
General field training	16	30%
Interpreting training	12	22%
CAT tools training	12	22%
Subtitling	4	7%
Localization	4	7%
Post-editing	2	4%
Political translation	2	4%
Project-based training	1	2%
Business-related skills	1	2%

Beyond these primary categories, subtitling and localization were each identified by four participants (7%) as areas requiring further training. This finding highlights the need to equip graduates with specialized skills to meet the demands of these fields, which extend beyond those of general translation practice. As Almohizea (2025) notes, audiovisual translation and interpreting require advanced cognitive, technical, and communicative competencies. The participants' responses therefore suggest that greater emphasis on specialized training in

subtitling and localization could help bridge the gap between general translation education and the specific competencies required to enter these professional sectors.

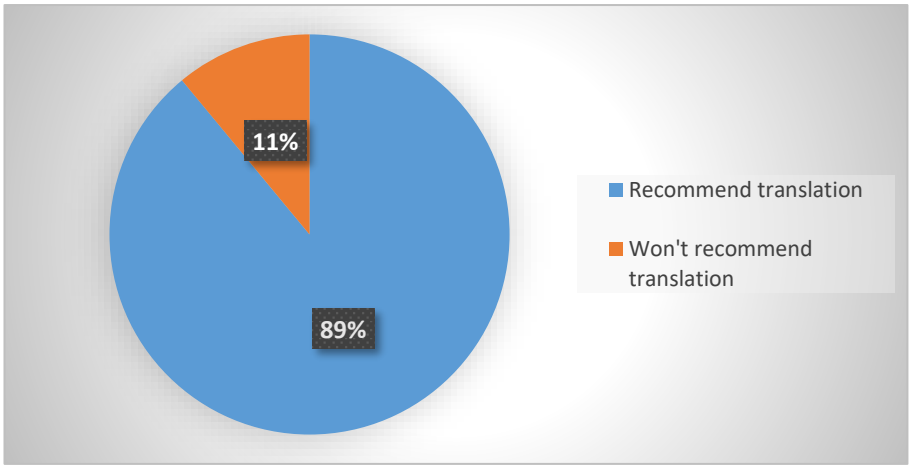
Post-editing and political translation were each cited by two participants (n = 2, 4%), while project-based training and business-related skills were each identified by one participant (n = 1, 2%) as areas for further development. These responses indicate graduates' awareness of the increasingly multifaceted nature of the translation profession, which extends beyond linguistic competence to encompass technological proficiency, subject-specific expertise, entrepreneurial skills, and ongoing professional development.

Propensity to Recommend the Translation Field

The results regarding graduates' willingness to recommend translation as a field of study and profession provide significant insight into the perceived status of the translation industry in Saudi Arabia. As can be seen in Figure 9, the overwhelming majority (*n* = 34, 89%) reported that they would recommend translation, whereas only four respondents (11%) indicated that they would not.

Figure 9

Willingness to Recommend Translation as a Field of Study and Profession



This marked disparity suggests a broadly positive evaluation of the discipline despite the structural and professional challenges identified in other dimensions of the study. The strong

inclination to recommend translation reflects graduates' recognition of the field's intellectual value; its relevance to Saudi Arabia's increasing multilingual and global engagement; and the transferable skills acquired through translation education, including linguistic precision, intercultural competence, and specialized communication abilities.

Further qualitative responses provide deeper insight into the reasons underlying these positive perceptions, which can be seen in Table 2. The most frequently cited reason was that translation is a fun and rewarding profession for individuals who are passionate about languages and intercultural communication. Participants also highlighted the field's diverse and expanding opportunities, particularly in light of major national and international initiatives such as Expo 2030 and the FIFA World Cup 2034. Other respondents emphasized the flexibility of translation work and its adaptable pace, while some viewed translation as a good source of income and an enjoyable hobby. Several participants noted that the profession supports cross-cultural communication and provides valuable language exposure and professional experience.

Table 2
Reasons for Recommending Translation as a Profession

Reasons	Number of respondents	Percentage
Fun and rewarding profession	11	32%
Expanding opportunities	7	20%
Flexibility with an adaptable pace	6	18%
Good source of income	3	9%
Cross-cultural communication	3	9%
Language exposure	2	6%
Enjoyable hobby	2	6%

Conversely, the small minority of 4 participants who would not recommend the field shared their concerns regarding limited employment stability, uneven access to industry opportunities, and variability in remuneration and professional advancement. Nevertheless, the overall

predominance of positive recommendations indicates that translation is perceived as a meaningful and worthwhile academic and professional pathway within the Saudi context.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of the translation profession in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of Saudi translation graduates. Overall, they indicate that while the translation sector is expanding and increasingly integrated into various professional domains, it remains structurally uneven in several respects.

The dominance of text-based translation, relatively limited engagement in audiovisual translation, and moderate access to interpreting and industry opportunities all point to a profession that is still developing in terms of diversification and labour market absorption. This highlights the need for greater collaboration between academic institutions and the translation industry to enhance specialized training and facilitate broader access to emerging opportunities in audiovisual translation and interpreting. Moreover, the varying levels of professional engagement, alongside the significant proportion of graduates relying on additional income sources, highlights ongoing challenges related to employment stability and sustainable career development within the field. This points to the need for enhanced practical training, stronger industry partnerships, and targeted career development initiatives to improve graduates' employability and access to sustainable translation work.

The translation industry in Saudi Arabia may benefit from stronger collaboration with academic institutions to create structured internship opportunities and clearer professional pathways for graduates. The variability in pricing practices further highlights the absence of a fully standardized professional framework and suggests a need for professional bodies or regulatory frameworks that could contribute to the standardization of pricing practices and the enhancement of professional norms within the sector. There is a need also for professional bodies to enhance opportunities offered to graduates, especially in specialized translation such

as audiovisual and interpreting. The strong perceived need for additional training, particularly in field experience, interpreting, and CAT tools, signals a gap between academic preparation and industry expectancies. Therefore, universities offering translation programs may need to reassess curriculum design to place greater emphasis on practice-based courses, industry placements, and technological competencies that align with current market demands.

Additionally, as in numerous professional fields, ongoing professional growth is essential for translators to achieve long-term career success. Therefore, translation students should actively pursue opportunities to expand their expertise and refine their competencies rather than relying solely on the formal education and training provided by their academic programs. Lastly, the findings suggest that while the translation industry in Saudi Arabia is still evolving and faces certain structural limitations, it maintains a strong reputational standing among graduates, reinforcing its continued relevance in the Kingdom's expanding knowledge and communication sectors.

For future research, it is recommended that larger-scale studies be conducted to include a more diverse sample of translation professionals across different universities and regions of Saudi Arabia and varying levels of experience. Further qualitative research could also provide deeper insight into the lived experiences of translation graduates particularly regarding career progression, job satisfaction, and barriers to entry in specialized fields such as audiovisual translation and interpreting. Additionally, longitudinal studies would be valuable in tracking how the translation profession evolves in response to ongoing economic diversification and technological advancement in the Kingdom.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Disclosure

The author declares that no AI tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript>

Bio

Dr. Abeer Alfaify is an Associate Professor of Translation Studies in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, at King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She earned her PhD in Translation from the University of Leeds, UK. She currently serves as the Head of the Partnership Committee and is an active member of the Research and Innovation Unit within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

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