The Gap between Translator Training and the Translation Industry in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to evaluate the translation industry in Saudi Arabia in order to identify the professional contexts for which universities should be preparing translators. Following a review of the current state of the industry, the article examines the types of translation organizations found in the country and investigates the demands of today's translation market in Saudi Arabia. The most striking finding was that there is a huge gap between academic training and the requirements of the Saudi translation market. This study provides new beneficial insights for improving university translator-training programmes. It is suggested that the training programmes need to be constructed specifically to meet the demands of the Saudi translation market.
Keywords: Saudi translation market, translation competences, translation industry, translator training

Translation Competences
Before undertaking a more thorough investigation of the different interpretations of what constitutes this fundamental professional skillset, it is helpful to consider the definition of 'competence' and to address the inconsistency in the application of this term amongst scholars. Process in the Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation PACTE (2002) considers translation competence to be "the underlying system of knowledge, abilities and attitudes required to be able to translate" (p.43). Frequently, translation competence is described as knowledge of at least two languages and typically of at least two sub-competencies.

The division amongst scholars is largely attributable to the complex nature of translation, with a myriad of influencing factors at play in a variety of ways, depending on context, culture, situation, etc. Another relevant factor is the erroneous notion that command of a foreign language is sufficient to enable a person to translate well. Although knowledge of a foreign language is obviously a basic prerequisite for any translator, translation involves a number of other skills to produce a professional result. As Neubert (2000) aptly summarizes, "any attempt at defining competence must take into account the sheer complexity of the demands that are made on the cognitive faculties and skills of the translator ". (p.4)

In its most basic definition, translation competence is "the knowledge and the skills the translator must possess in order to carry out a translation" (Bell,1991, p. 43). While this indeed encapsulates the basic concept as translation competence goes significantly further than a rewrite of the source text into the target language. Rather, a translator must comprehend the contextual situation of the text and be able to reproduce it in the target language; as well, the modern reality of translation is teamwork-based, and not purely the work of an individual.

Learning to translate involves many factors, including the acquisition of translation skills, the development of translation techniques, and the adoption of translation strategies that allow the translator to translate a text effectively (Constanza, 2002). As Salinas (2007) argues, there is a particular set of skills that instructors or translators need to help student translators to develop, including linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, research techniques, translation techniques, and the professional aspects of translation, which include interpersonal skills and time management, quality assurance, project management, and autonomy. Several studies have produced accounts of basic translator skills. Abdellah (2010, p. 18), for instance, recommends four macro-skills: "reading comprehension, researching, analysing and composing". Each of these areas needs to be worked on by instructors and their students to ensure that translation graduates have the necessary knowledge in all areas to become professional translators in real-world situations. Abdellah's four macro-skills are insufficient, however, to produce 'professional translators'. There are other skills to be learned in a translation course, and many other strategies to be acquired to achieve this end, as suggested by other translation scholars. It is necessary to improve the teaching of translation to mold translators for current market needs and ensure that they remain at the cutting edge of the discipline of translation (Salinas, 2007; Gouadec, 2000). It would also be useful to develop translation pedagogy, guided by market demand. Klein-Braley (1996, p. 17) is a proponent of this view and has stated, 'one pragmatic reason [for taking this approach] is that a steady supply of students through the universities, drawn by the prospect of marketable vocational skills, is likely to ensure translators' job security. But at a more abstract

level, we believe that accountability to our own professional ethos should motivate us to teach students those things which we believe to be useful and valuable to them in their future professions'. We believe that this is true, and the instructor of translation is required to encourage (his/her) students to adhere to this professional ethos. The primary objective of translation courses in universities should be to provide translators with the skills they need to function as professionals, but this is only one small part of the teaching of translation (Kiraly, 1995).

In this regard, as Kiraly (1995) points out, to teach translation students, we must first ask what skills and knowledge professional translators require and then determine how these skills and this knowledge can be most effectively transmitted to students. The education of translators must constantly be about the development of translation as a discipline. Kiraly's statement is, however, rather general, since he does not specify what skills and what kind of knowledge are required. In our view, the main weakness lies in the fact that translation lacks an effective overall pedagogy because educators do not look sufficiently at professional needs, and consequently produce graduates who are not fully suited to the real world of professional translation (Gabr, 2002). This is increasingly the case as new technologies change the ways in which translation is done in real-world situations (Salinas, 2007). Pym (1998, p. 112), for example, claims that "the market for translation is ultimately determined by available technology and therefore a professional translator...should physically possess basic computer technology". He concludes that a translator cannot possibly work "as a professional without a computer". Yet such technological tools bring their own problems. In addition, simply having a computer clearly does not provide a solution to translation problems at different levels of language.

According to Harmer (2007) and Baer and Koby (2003), in real learning situations, instructors assume the role of facilitators and learners become involved in completing real-world translation tasks. Learners become more motivated and learn more effectively. They also acquire more cultural sensitivity and non-verbal means of communication. In this way, as Gabr (2001) highlights, learners can improve their translation capacity through their exposure to real-world situations. Debates surround the issue of how to combine real-world teaching situations with higher-level cognitive processing, with the instructor acting as a facilitator and imparting declarative and procedural knowledge (Baer and Koby, 2003). In this regard, there are many different opinions about how translation should be taught and how technology can be used to assist the process. The teaching of translation is a complicated matter, with instructors needing constantly to ask themselves how most effectively to teach the concepts and skills their students need (Baer & Koby, 2003).

The teaching of translation is marred by the lack of a clear set of pedagogical principles, with the development of new technologies designed to aid in the translation and communication of translated texts often adding more confusion. As argued by Baer and Koby (2003), translation teaching could move forward using a collaborative construct involving groups of students with an instructor as a facilitator. This approach teaches students about new ways of working in the discipline of translation with the new modes of communication (such as the Internet). Such proactive approaches to teaching, involving direct participation from students, encourage them to develop the skills necessary to function as translators in the real world.

As Colina and Lee (2003) note, there is no reason for translation pedagogy to be dominated by anecdotal evidence and unscientific approaches. Reviews of empirical and theoretical evidence of classroom teaching can be undertaken to shape lesson and curriculum design. It is necessary, however, to define a goal for teaching. This could be the acquisition of communicative translational competence, understood as 'the ability to interact appropriately and adequately as an active participant in communicative translation tasks' (Kiraly, 1990, p.215).

Ressurrecció et al. (2008) list five competencies for a translator: language, textual, subject, cultural and transfer. The interaction among these competencies is precisely what distinguishes translation from other areas of communication. Translation requires a clear understanding of what is needed, an understanding of who the participants are, and an understanding of how the target text should be delivered (Colina, 2003).

In order for someone to act as a competent translator, skills such as researching, analysis, composition, awareness of the ethics of translation, and awareness of the relationship between language and culture are required, beyond simply being able to translate a text from one language to another. A translation instructor needs to have these various kinds of skills just to meet the common requirements of the industry. The design of the translation curriculum should be established on empirical and theoretical bases. In translation curriculum design, text typology and genre types need to be introduced in a pedagogically sound curriculum together with a theoretical foundation. By considering genre and text type in particular, students' translation competencies can be enhanced. These two factors are related to each other, and applied translation classrooms need to put theory into practice in order to train translators to be able to justify why one translation approach rather than another is adopted for a given translation problem or genre. Students need to understand the link between theory and practice and how to apply the former to the latter.

Instructors, therefore, need to teach a number of communicative competences, not only the ability to translate from language one to language two (Colina & Lee, 2003). As Bell (1991, p. 41) has argued, there is a need for translator communicative competence, which can be defined as "the knowledge and ability possessed by the translator which permits him/her to create communicative acts – discourse – which are not only (and not necessarily) grammatical...but also socially acceptable". Communicative competence can therefore be understood as the ability not only to interpret and express meanings but also to negotiate these meanings. In order to give a translation life, the translator needs to interpret meaning in the original text, express this meaning in the target text and then negotiate between the source and the target text in order to satisfy the requirements of the client. Translation is thus a complex task. It is important to realise this when thinking about the design of the pedagogy of translation courses and the ways in which instructors deliver teaching about translation.

Colina (2003) argues that the teaching of translation should include the integration of expert behaviours as one of its main goals, in order to provide students with the skills they need to become experts in cross-cultural communication. This expert behaviour includes such aspects as encouraging self-confidence and self-awareness and the ability to look at one's work in an objective manner (Colina, 2003). It also includes skills such as being able to discuss a translation

solution via email or in front of teams (Kiraly, 1995). Accordingly, expert behaviour "is not a personality trait, rather it is acquired role playing" (Kussmual, 1995, p.33). The PACTE group (2003, p55) claims that "translation competence as a whole is a construct that cannot be observed directly. We can observe behaviour, but not complex mental operations, which can only be accessed indirectly through the activities".

An Overview of the Translation Industry in Saudi Arabia

Fatani, (2009) believes that: "The entry of Saudi Arabia into the World Trade Organisation...has made translating and interpreting services a rapidly growing area in Saudi Arabia with excellent employment opportunities for trained interpreters" (pp. 2-3). Other factors are also involved here of course, including, as noted by Fatani, "the establishment of economic centres in many parts of the Kingdom...[and] the diversified and large number of sectors that have recently entered into strategic partnership with Microsoft" (2009, p. 2). Additionally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has contributed significantly to the field of translation. It has created an international award for distinguished works of translation and prominent institutions, called the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Award for Translation.

However, the need for effective translation services in Saudi Arabia has led to a need for equally effective academic translation courses that can rise to the challenges of private companies and government departments, the tourist and pilgrimage industry, and relief organisations. ElShafei (2014,146) indicates that the "weakness in students' translation can in turn affect the quality of their preparation for [the] labour market, resulting from the lack of well-designed courses of translation". The role of curriculum planners should involve "narrowing the gap between what the labour market needs from the modern translator and the courses offered by training institutions, universities and colleges" (ElShafei, 2014, p145). Gabr (2001) asserts that in order to evaluate translator training programmes, the translation market's needs should be identified. Subsequently, incorporating students' views and descriptive evaluations of teaching methods, approaches, and materials, and identifying objectives of courses related to market needs, will ensure that courses can be assessed effectively for positive outcomes (Gaber, 2001). The importance of the industry is highlighted by Harabi (2009), who recognises the centrality of the transfer of knowledge to economic development. In order to examine undergraduate translator training programmes in the Kingdom, it is therefore necessary to understand and examine the historical foundations of the industry and current training programmes.

The State of the Translation Industry in Saudi Arabia

There is a paucity of research on the translation industry and translation production in Saudi Arabia. Al-Nasser (1998) indicates that ,"Translation of Books into Arabic in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia", that over a period of 62 years, 502 books were translated into Arabic in Saudi Arabia. Alkhatib (2005) finds that the number of translated Arabic books from the establishment of Saudi Arabia in 1955 until 2004 was 1,260. A statistical survey conducted in the King Fahad National Library indicates that the total number of books translated into Arabic between 1966 and 2007 was 2,200, making for an average of 52 books translated per year. In 2012, the King Saud University Translation Centre developed a plan to translate 250 books over five years. In 2014, another statistical survey was conducted in the King Fahad National Library, indicating that the total number of literary books translated into Arabic during that year was 100.

Harabi (2009, 210) examines the structure of the translation industry in Saudi Arabia, stating that "the role of labour can be evaluated as poor. The most sizaable group in the industrial labour force is that of the guest worker. The Saudialization policy adopted by the government to replace the foreign labour force by a national labour force [has] not realise[d] a notable success in the industry". The role of capital, and local demand for translated books, however, can be evaluated as good (Harabi, 2009). Unfortunately, the actual number of translators and interpreters in Saudi Arabia cannot be determined, due to the absence of an official commercial register documenting the field and also due to the lack of a single central register of approved professional translators, or to the lack of any regulation of translation activity.

Demands of the Translation Market in Saudi Arabia
"Full-time jobs in translation agencies, or government and commercial organisations (in-house service) are available and in demand" (Fatani, 2009, p.3). However, most government-sector providers require an in-house translator, whereas the private sector prefers freelancers (personal communication with copyright administrator in Obeikan Bookshop, 2015). Further, the private sector requires qualified translators who are able to translate in an efficient way. Alkhatib (2005, p,32) claims that that there is a deficiency "in the number of expert translators qualified [in Saudi Arabia] ....These translators must have the ability to translate the ideas in a precise manner, easy style and [in] comprehensive sentences". In fact, as noted in Section 2.3, the number of translators and interpreters in Saudi Arabia cannot be precisely determined due to the absence of an official commercial register documenting the field.

The demand for translators has definitely grown due to a number of particular needs. During the Hajj, millions of pilgrims come to Saudi Arabia every year, bringing a diversity of languages. Communication needs at Saudi airports, and compounds where these people stay, require the use of interpreters and translators. Taibi (2014, p.59) claims that "research conducted into the needs of pilgrims shows that there are still many gaps to be filled and that pilgrims face significant challenges in administrative procedures as well as in access to information on public services".

Al-Faifi (2000) explains some of these needs. He states that the Ministries of Defence, Interior, Islamic Affairs and Information make wide use of translators, as they deal with documents in other languages. A similar need exists in hospitals and community centres, where foreign doctors and consultants need the services of translators to help them understand medical reports, leaflets, booklets, and pamphlets. In the courts, where legal documents may need to be translated for expatriate companies and individuals, and in the General Presidency of the Committee for the Promotion and Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, translation of documents is also necessary. A further need exists within the Islamic Relief Organisation, which has numerous offices outside of the Kingdom in which English is the common language.

Courts in Saudi Arabia suffer from a shortage of Saudi translators. This is due to the lack of regulation of the practice of translation in Saudi Arabia and the absence of a mechanism that determines the proficiency and competence of translators working under the umbrella of the Ministry of Justice. There is a high demand for professional translators in Tagalog, Indonesian,

English, Urdu, Thai, Bengali, Sinhalese, Pashto, Swahili, Amharic, and Vietnamese (Alharbi, 2015). These languages correspond to the cultures of origin of most of the guest workers.
Lawyer Waleed Hamzah (personal communication, (2016) claims that there is a clear paucity of translators in the courts, compelling many judges to postpone hearings until a translator becomes available. Hamzah also points out that foreign defendants typically ask for translators from their respective embassies; the translator assists the defendant with all of his/her language requirements and translates all inquiries made by the judge involved in the defendant's case. However, this translator is not always considered an official court translator. Hamzah suggests creating centres or departments in each city for training translators for judicial hearings, as this will contribute to eliminating translation-related difficulties during trials. Alharbi (2015) suggests that translators could be awarded a licence to practise professional translation after swearing to translate all foreign words faithfully (Alharbi, 2015). This standard is practiced in most Western Countries with large scale needs for translation, in relation to any aspect of legally binding translation or court work (Albi & Ramos 2013).

Fatani (2009) asserts that there is a high demand for qualified translators in the Saudi Electricity Company, Aramco (officially, the Saudi Arabian Oil Company), the Al-shura Council (the Saudi equivalent of parliament) and the Islamic Development Bank. She claims that the changeover to translation technology has meant that the use of such technology has become a standard part of the training of professional translators employed by these companies. They require translators to be familiar with and able to use translation technology tools to speed up the process and reduce costs.

The nature and demands of the translation market in Saudi Arabia require trainees to have a sufficiently advanced set of skills to focus fully on translation. Atari (2012) notes that students would benefit from being taught specific language skills as well as being provided with specific training in text contextualisation and inferential reasoning, as these would support consistency of approach and reduce errors in translation.
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Translators need to be bilingual and bicultural at a high level (personal communication with copyright administrators in Obeikan Bookshop, 2015). A bilingual person is someone who "uses at least two languages with some degree of proficiency, whereas a bicultural [person] is described a person who knows the habits, beliefs, customs, etc. of two different social groups" (Richards & Schmidt, 2003, p54). Moreover, a balance between theory and practice is required to help translators become more aware of the translation process. The other skills that are needed are reliable, competent output under pressure; self-awareness; subject expertise; research competence; fluency in L1 and L2; and an understanding of text type and genre appropriate style/register and conventions (personal communication relationship manager in King Saud University Translation Centre, 2015). Time management, project management, and computer skills are required as well (personal communication with copyright administrator in Obeikan Bookshop, 2015). The market also requires professional translators who can use translation tools such as computer-assisted translation and machine translation. The Saudi market has a demand for several text-types. Fatani (2009) found in her survey that "84% of respondents stated that hospitals and embassies, for instance, require specialisation in medical and diplomatic translation, as well, 88% require an ability to translate simultaneously, two skills that are hardly

addressed in the Saudi curriculum. Another 73% stated that translation bureaus require the ability to translate texts in different fields".

The Saudi market also needs expert translators in particular fields, such as medical, legal, humanities, computer software and hardware, religion, and engineering (personalcommunication, relationship manager in King Saud University). Fatani (2009) claims that Saudi universalities should prepare students for changes in the labour market. She states that "what has changed in the labour market is that an overwhelming variety of markets exists today (as opposed to 20 years ago). This is reflected in the contents of translator-training programmes with courses on legal translation, commercial translation, financial translation, subtitling, multimedia translation, localization, translation using voice recognition systems, etc" (Fatani, 2009, p.7).

As already noted, the market for translation encompasses numerous industries in the Kingdom, and thus trainees need to be well-versed not just in different languages, but also in technical or sector-specific sub-languages to ensure effective translations. Furthermore, if they are not well-versed in the use of translation software to support their work, this can lead to slower productivity rates and misinterpretation. Maybe note, it may not be possible or indeed sensible to train translators to work in a single specialist field; it can be more useful for the individual, and for the industry, to train translators to develop learning and research strategies to enable them to adapt a skills set to new domains as the need arises, combining research, textual and language competence with the ability to apply their understanding of the role of translation theory in their practice in different specialist domains.

Training Translators in Saudi Universities

Gouadec (2000) states:

> [T]ranslators should be trained at university, not simply taught at university, and then trained on the job. This is because the university is the only place where people have the time and willingness to insist on proper methodologies and strategies whereas on-the-job activities are much too sensitive to the pressures of time-to-market, productivity, and economic survival. It is essential that anyone entering the job market be properly armed to withstand unreasonable influences. (p. 6)

Within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, there are 24 public universities, including two universities that offer translator training as a bachelor degree (King Saud University and King Abdulaziz University), and other institutions that provide translation modules within bachelor's degrees in English, such as King Khalid University, Taif University, Jazan University, Taibah University, Tabuk University, Jubail University College, Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, and University of Dammam. Universities that offer translation as a module indicate that one of their programme objectives or module objectives is to help students to become translators. The programmes offered by these universities will be critically analysed in chapter six. As Fatani notes, translator training at Saudi universities has not kept pace with technological developments in the translation industry:

> Unfortunately, despite mammoth changes in the Saudi workplace and despite the fact that all industrial companies now use sophisticated software and tools in all areas of document production, including translation, these changes in the working environments have not yet been fully reflected in the training of translators...at Saudi universities (Fatani, 2007, p. 1).

Subsequent research carried out by Atari (2012) also indicates that these shortcomings remain unchanged. Fatani (2007) and Atari (2012) suggest that certain factors stand in the way of progress within the field. Fatani, for example, identifies the problem as being "much more than poor computer and English language skills on the part of translators" (2007, p.15). In fact, her research reveals that there are a number of far more serious reasons behind the general lack of progress. This also indicates that many people have 'entrenched misconceptions' specifically with regard to the English language. Surprisingly, five years later, Atari found similar results to Fatani, indicating that many of these issues would appear not to have been sufficiently addressed. Indeed, Atari concludes that "translator training in Arab university English departments continues to be overshadowed by various impediments" (2012, p.2), which he identifies as follows: "misconceptions regarding the real nature of translation; lack of a common teaching ideology among trainers; erroneous assumptions with regard to students' bilingual competence; and, perhaps most pertinently, incongruities between the training programmes themselves and real workplace expectations" (2012, p.2).

A Possibly Relevant Model in Terms of Market Demands for Translation Competence in Saudi Arabia

A common trend amongst theorists is the expansion of multicomponent models that incorporate an ever-increasing number of skills, proficiencies, and sub-components that are drawn into a wish-list for translator training. To meet the demands of the contemporary professional environment, it is envisaged that technology will play an ever-expanding role as it seeks to complement more traditional methods of approaching translation. There are schools of thought that regard embracing further components as counterintuitive because they believe that playing catch-up with market demand is a disadvantage, and prefer instead a simpler model for rapid technological advances and changes within the translation industry (Pym, 2003). However, this section argues that with such penetrating globalisation, the market for more sophisticated technology will drive innovation to such a degree that some competencies will be rendered obsolete. For example, if we consider some of the EMT competences, elements of technological, thematic, information mining, intercultural and translation service provision all contain sub-components that could be revolutionised by ICT.

This is not to undervalue the raw skills required in translation, but instead merely to accentuate the role that technology will inevitably play. Students will still require a base line of competencies, many of which have been discussed above, though it is not sufficient to state that "model x" with additional "competence y" provides the best model. In recognition of its rapidly growing translation industry, Saudi Arabia needs a comprehensive and modern approach to ensure that market demand is met and the industry continues to witness increased growth. At this

stage, it would be useful to remind ourselves of the shortcomings within the current system, to clearly allow us to identify a model that best suits Saudi Arabia. As stated by Pym (2009), some of the most useful contributions from research in translator training are those that highlight failings. In summary, the failings and, in turn, the skills needed or requiring improvement are suggested to be:

1. Specific language skills
2. Specific training in text contextualisation and inferential reasoning in support of consistency of approaches and reducing errors in translation
3. Reliable, competent bilingual and bicultural translators
4. Competent output under pressure
5. Self-awareness
6. Subject expertise
7. Research competence
8. Fluency in L1 and L2
9. Understanding of text-type and genre-specific style/register and
10. Time management
11. Project management
12. Computer skills
13. Specialisation in different types of translation
14. Ability to translate simultaneously

However, as Pym (2009, p.9) highlights, in compiling a separate list of findings for areas requiring improvement, it is 'precarious to jump from these findings to actual pedagogical practice'. In arriving at this view, he cites small study samples, overlaps in findings, instances in which findings are contradictory, and the ability of methodology to affect the cognitive process. More recent research has already started to suggest ways to manage this potential flaw, for example ElShafei (2014, p.146) states that the 'weakness in students' translation can in turn affect the quality of their preparation for [the] labour market, resulting from the lack of well-designed courses for translation'. Along with individual competences, we must examine their wider application in terms of the need for translation within Saudi Arabia, it being evident from research that Saudi Arabia has a requirement for translators both in a general capacity for the tourist industry (pilgrimage to Hajj, communication at airports), and also within specialised fields such as medicine (hospitals and community centres where foreign doctors work), law (court documents for expatriates), and government (Ministries of Defence, Interior and Islamic Affairs).

Translation competence is a key concept and has wide-ranging applications, such as in determining the framework for curriculum design, forming a basis for evaluation of both novice and professional translators, and determining the ability to qualify translation products in education or in the profession. The debate will no doubt continue to evolve regarding whether a common approach can be determined – with, however, the large number of contextual factors in any given situation suggesting that such a reality is some way off.

Conclusion

This study identified the features of the current translation market in Saudi Arabia. A thorough literature review on translation competence was conducted to obtain credible information about the market's needs and the skills that translators currently have or need to acquire. The results show evidence of how translator-training programmes in the Kingdom have failed to keep up with developments in translation studies. The study then provided an appropriate model in terms of market demands for translation competence in Saudi Arabia.

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