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Saudi EFL Learners' Ability in Literary and Technical Translation: A Correlational Study

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Abstract---Different perspectives invade our mind about the complexity level in translation attributed to text types. A translator may perform better in one type of text in comparison to other text types. This study probed the translation ability of Saudi EFL students in two text types. It also explored whether the participants scored differently in literary or technical text types. Finally, the study measured the correlation between the students' performance in the two text types. A translation test was used to collect data from the Saudi students enrolling at the English language and translation department at Qassim University. Seven students' answers were analyzed and scored out of a maximum score of 24. Findings showed that Saudi EFL students achieve up to 75.70% in the translation of the two text types. Results also showed that there was no difference between students' translation ability attributed to text type (Sig. = .79), though individual performance showed better output in technical translation. Finally, the study indicated the existence of high correlation between students' scores in the literary and technical translation ($R=.867^*$). The study concluded with recommending more investigation to refute the claim that students' translation ability differs across text types.

Keywords---Saudi EFL learners' ability, literary, technical translation.

Introduction

The necessity of translation training programs in the age of globalization is unavoidable, allowing translator candidates to enroll in and fulfill these unavoidable needs in the world. The need for translation has made it possible for the designing of translation training programs and courses to establish translation services that are now used on a daily basis all over the world. A noticeably growing interest in translation programs and in teaching courses of translation at both graduate and undergraduate levels has been expressed at different Arab Universities. There is a

boom in these translation courses and this is remarkably manifested in different teaching courses across the Arab academic diaspora. An increase in research has been seen in this field of translation as a result of the emerging awareness of both the teaching of translation courses and the formation of translation programs/centers (Al-Ahdal, 2020; Al-Hamdalla, 1998; Al-Mijrab, 2005; Gadacha, 2006; Shehab, 2005). However, practice and training in translating have consistently been criticized as being inefficient in the Arab world. For instance, in one study, Egyptian trainees indicated considerable unhappiness with the translation classes they received in their different colleges, according to Gaber's (2001) report. Like, Stejskal (2003) also observed the same kind of dissatisfactory attitude in the minds of translators from Kuwait who later on additionally validated their dissatisfaction in the translation classes that they attended. They claimed that in these classes they found that students have serious issues in translating L1(Arabic) into L2 (English) and vice-versa.

At the same time, given that translation is an important tool for communication, nowadays there are many popular programs and courses run for youths by different renowned universities in Arabic continents (Al-Ahdal et al., 2017; Alfadly & AldeibaniFull, 2013). The main purpose of these courses and programs is to prepare students for translating in the two types of texts, i.e., both technical translations as well as in literacy translation. These moderately intensive graduate courses prepare students for taking up the role of good translators and thus, enable the fulfillment of translation needs in the current world of ongoing technical, educational, and social progress. In addition, very often in the performance of many linguistic tasks, the process of translation is relegated to translators (Khalifa, 2015). So, these types of courses open doors for scholars to work worldwide. Literary and technical translators are in demand in the market. But there are different issues related to translations which were pointed out by different scholars from time to time.

Translation is by nature, a technical process. Consequently, a professional translator must fulfill certain criteria, such as, ample knowledge of both the languages, and appropriate and excellent writing skills. Accuracy, coherence, and cohesion are all to be ensured by the translator, in addition to close maintenance of the concept that the source text is endeavoring to convey. This implies that in a two-text type translation the translator must have good command on both language systems in order to avoid errors and literary mistakes. The steps to follow in the translation process can ideally be:

- To understand and assimilate the meaning a translator wants to convey to its readers.
- The translator should have deep knowledge of the text, at the same time they should detach themselves from actual words. It enables and guides a translator to give more meaning to the thoughts and ideas that an original author wants to convey. Once this depth of knowledge and strategy is achieved, the text must be reinterpreted and adapted according to the target.

Literature Review

Translation is that human activity that facilitates communication or transfer of knowledge between humans placed in different linguistic paradigms. Translation plays an important role in filling up the communication gaps between different nations, among countries, different cultures, etc. as it is an important tool in the transfer of knowledge.

However one may define translation, Al-Darawish (1983) summarizes the challenges in the process as follows:

- No two languages have the same phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic features.
- Languages vary in terms of sentence structure.
- A translator is required to move to the front or the back a variety of elements.
- It is impossible for a translator to gain full control of two foreign languages.

Almost a decade later, El-Zeini (1994) also discovered six key challenges occurring while translating from Arabic to English and vice versa. He identified that lexicon, morphology, syntax, textual differences, rhetorical differences, and pragmatics are the key issues that pose challenges during two text translations. Though these kinds of issues occur in translation, specialized scientific panels can help solve them effectively (Al-Hamdalla, 1998,).

Moharram (2004) conducted a study on students' errors while translating Arabic into English and found a considerable number of these attributable to the inappropriate use of vocabulary, prepositions and gender, meaningless use of words, incorrect use of grammatical forms, use of long and incorrect sentences, and incorrect spelling. Moharram (2004) argued that these problems might be due to the interference of the mother tongue, lack of vocabulary items and cultural differences in terms of concepts and values. Very recently, Khoshafah (2008) confirmed the findings of Moharram (2004), when he analyzed six business documents translated by 20 Yemeni translators. Amongst developments in the last decade, Bahameed (2007) termed these difficulties/problems as 'hindrances' for they hinder translators from moving forward and staying in the same spot and classify the hindrances of Arabic-English translation into lexical, prosodic, structural, and cultural categories.

Jabak (2007), investigated the most common but recurring difficulties facing Arab students in English translation and concluded that lack of grammatical knowledge and lexical issues are the main challenges faced by EFL scholars in the translation process. In 2013, the major challenges faced by fourth-year Linguistic scholars were examined and observed by Al-Sohbani and Muthanna (2013) in the process of Arabic to English translation. The participants in the study were fourth-year English Department scholars, at the Faculty of Arts at Ibb University, Yemen. For data collection, a questionnaire and observation technique were used. Post-observation, they concluded that most of the scholars lacked knowledge of lexis. Moreover, scholars had poor acquaintance with English abbreviations. They were not comfortable while undertaking acronyms translation. Most of them were

bad at their communication skills and were not able to use English words aptly. Additionally, the students had issues arising from poor grammar, which they saw in the improper application of prepositions, the passive voice, the placement of adjectives, the present perfect, and the past simple. It was a big task for these students to find appropriate equivalents. Additionally, they had trouble comprehending the structural differences between Arabic and English. Finally, they had difficulty using linkers and condensing lengthy Arabic sentences. Sentence length was found to be a translation stumbling block in another study. This study was carried out by Mehenni (2010) on the aptitude and competence of Algerian students who were studying the translation of long Arabic sentences into English. Sample collection was done in the English linguistic department of Algerian scholars. Twenty-five scholars from the third-year course were selected from the department of English language for the survey. Data collection was based on the Test technique. Fourteen long Arabic sentences were selected for translation into English sentences. Mehenni observed that most of the scholars employed a variety of translation techniques, including literal, bound- free, and one-to-one translation. When translated into the target language, this word-for-word translation prevailed and altered the precise meaning of the source language (SL) to Target language (TL).

Alfadly and AldeibaniFull (2013) investigated the issues of translating from English into Arabic and vice versa for English linguistics students in the Faculty of Arts at Hadramout University, Yemen. Unlike Al-Sohbani and Muthanna (2013), Alfadly and AldeibaniFull (2013) applied different strategies for the collection of data. They preferred test techniques for the collection of responses. Two sentences were translated from Arabic to English and for English to Arabic translation, five sentences were used in all. During their investigation, they observed fundamental weaknesses in the grammar of the students who participated in the examination. This was mostly illustrated in the use of the wrong tense and the incorrect use of the passive voice.

In 2015, Khalifa investigated translation issues of English-Arabic structures faced by English language scholars in Saudi Arabia. Samples were collected from Saudi students who got enrolled in translation courses at the College of Arts and Community College, Shaqra University. For sample collection, they opted for students' tests, teachers' questionnaires, and interviews with experts. Results showed that Saudi English scholars did not have an adequate understanding of the English grammar and lacked appropriate knowledge of abbreviations. The disparities between Arabic and English may be to blame for this.

Later, in 2016, Al-Karazoun (2016) investigated linguistic errors made by Jordanian EFL undergraduate students, while translating news headlines from Arabic into English and vice versa, the linguistic errors made by Jordanian EFL undergraduate students. A test consisting of news headlines was conducted and data generated were analyzed. The strategy was to translate 30 Arabic news headlines into English and another 30 English headlines into Arabic. In this investigation 60 third and fourth-year Jordanian EFL undergraduate students were involved. Al-Karazoun (2016) observed that concerning the Arabic to English translation, students possessed insufficient knowledge about two text

translations and their knowledge of abbreviations was inadequate due to the disparity between Arabic to English language systems.

Recently, Hussain, and Abdullah (2019) investigated errors in written English essays made by undergraduate Saudi female EFL students at King Khalid University (KKU). The study was conducted with 130 subjects, and the study traced the ratio of the frequency of different types of errors committed by the participants while writing English essays. The results of the investigation indicated that the common errors committed while translation can be divided into four different categories: grammar, lexis, semantics, and mechanics. Out of these four, most of the errors were committed in the category of mechanics which alone accounted for (51.5%) of these. Mechanics errors include punctuation, capitalization and errors related to spelling. The bulk of errors also related to poor and wrong spelling.

Hussain and Abdullah (2019) investigated the common errors made by Saudi female students at King Khalid University (KKU) in English writing and observed 130 undergraduate female scholars. This study traced the ratio of the frequency of occurrence of different categories and kinds of errors that occur during translation. The main aim of this study was to recognize the reasons for the weaknesses in literary and technical translation. The study also tried to find out the appropriate reasons, solutions and proposals for translation.

Literary translation which is used for literary components such as poems and plays calls for correctness of tone and meaning. This not only requires skill with both languages, but also an understanding of literary tones, genre, and approaches. At the same time, learning of these prosodic features of the target language is not an easy task. Refer to Stejskal (2003) that found a similar dissatisfactory attitude in the minds of Kuwaiti translators who additionally demonstrated their disappointment in the translation classes they attended.

A quantitative strategy was used in this investigation. A close-ended questionnaire and a methodically numerical design in which numerical and arithmetical data were used to analyze the output.

Research questions

This study set out to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of Saudi EFL students' ability in textual translation?
- Is there any difference between students' translation ability attributed to text type?
- Is there correlation between students' ability in translating literary and technical texts?

Methodology

Research design

This study uses content analysis for interpretation of data which was collected from seven Saudi EFL students who were asked to undertake translation tasks. The translation output was thereafter analyzed, assessed, and numerically scored. As soon as the content was transferred into scores, correlational design was used to check the degree of connection between the students' ability in translating two text types.

Sample

The seven participants (coded S1-S7) in this study were chosen randomly out of 28 students, all of whom were enrolled at level 8. The participants had already studied translation for two semesters before they participated in the study. The researcher obtained the students' consent before conducting the study. The sample was largely homogenous as all the participants were Saudi nationals with Arabic as the mother tongue and had had exposure to EFL for a minimum of twelve years. The median age of the group fell at 22.5 years. The researcher obtained an approval (letter dated Sep 12, 2022) from the deanship of higher education at Qassim University to conduct this study.

Instrument

A written task in translation was assigned to the students. This was a two-text type of task. The first was a literary text entitled, "The ransom of red chief" whereas the second was a technical text titled, "Evidence-based health benefits of intermittent fasting". This was administered to the students at the end of the semester after they gained considerable information and had adequate practice in translating a variety of text types (Appendix A).

Data analysis

A rubric was used to evaluate the students' translation ability. For the literary translation the text was divided into 7 sentences (Table 1). Each sentence was given 3 marks and the total came to 21. Full marks were allotted for correct output, as such the scores ranged between 0 and 3 depending on the level of preciseness in conveying the meaning. For the technical text, the text was divided into 6 sentences with a score of 4 each and a total of 24 marks (Table 2). To check the validity of the scoring, an inter-rater comparison facility was used. The sentences were evaluated by the researcher and reevaluated after a period of two weeks to check the degree of similarity. A high degree was found in which the similarity rate was .92. SPSS (23 Version) was used to process the findings. In addition to descriptive analysis, i.e., mean scores, standard deviation and percentage, inferential analysis was included. Mann-Whitney test was obtained to show the difference between students' scores in the two text types. Personal correlation coefficient was also applied to find out the correlation between the two variables, i.e., students' scores in literary and technical translation.

Table 1.
Students' scores in the literary translation task

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Total
1. The ransom of red chief.	0	0	3	3	1.5	0	0	7.5
2. It looked like a good thing: but wait till I tell you.	3	3	3	2.5	2.5	1.5	1	16.5
3. We were down South, in Alabama-Bill Driscoll and myself- when this kidnapping idea struck us.	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	18
4. It was, as Bill afterward expressed it, "during a moment of temporary mental apparition", but we did not find that out till later.	2.5	2	3	1.5	1.5	2	2	14.5
5. There was a town down there, as flat as a flannel-cake, and called Summit, of course.	2	1.5	3	3	3	3	3	18.5
6. It contained inhabitants of as deleterious and self-satisfied a class of peasantry as ever clustered around a Maypole.	0.5	1	2.5	1.5	2.5	3	2	13
7. Bill and I had a joint capital of about six hundred dollars, and we needed just two thousand dollars more to pull off a fraudulent town-lot scheme in Western Illinois with.	0	1	3	2.5	2	2	2	12.5
Total	12	13.5	22.5	20	20	20.5	20	

Table 2.
Students' scores in the technical translation task

	S1	2S	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Total
1. Evidence-based health benefits of intermittent fasting	2	0	2	3	4	4	3	18
2. Intermittent fasting is an eating pattern where you cycle between periods of eating and fasting	1	4	4	4	3	4	4	24
3. There are different types of intermittent fasting,	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	25
4. such as the 16/8 and 5:2 methods	2	1	4	4	4	4	4	23
5. Numerous studies show that it can have powerful benefits for your body and brain.	2	3	2	2	3	1	2	15
6. Here are 10 evidence-based health benefits of intermittent fasting.	2	0	3	4	4	4	4	21
Total	12	11	18	21	22	21	21	

Data Analysis and Results

RQ1: What is the level of Saudi EFL students' ability in textual translation?

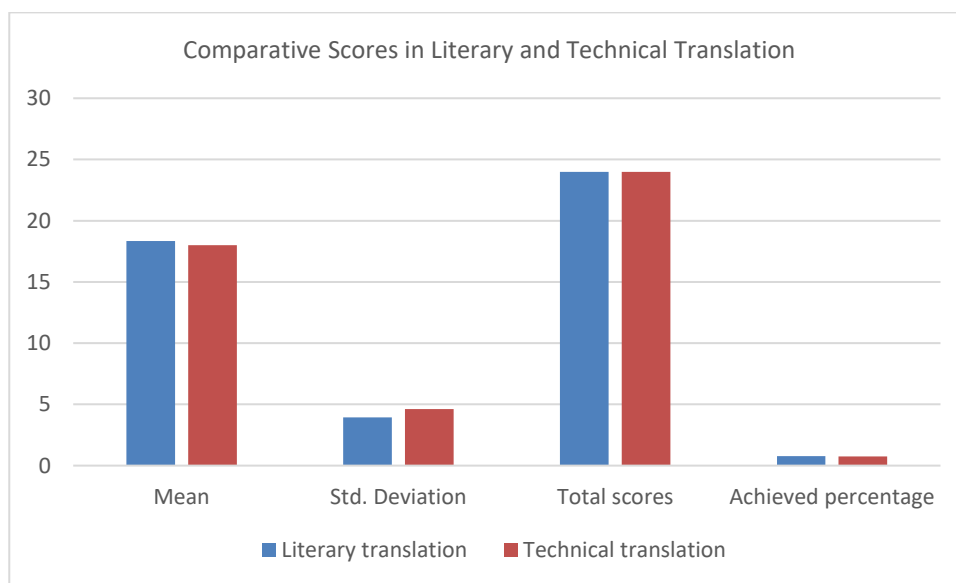
Table 3 shows that Saudi EFL students achieved reasonable success in translating English text into Arabic, achieving a group percentage of 75.70%. In literary translation they scored ($M=18.35$, $Std=3.95$) out of 24. Similarly, the students' success of translating technical text was evaluated; students achieved a mean score of ($M=18.00$, $Std=4.61$). To finish up, students achieved a general mean score of 18.17 out of 24 which is reasonably good.

Table 3.
Students' ability level in translation

Students' scores	Mean	Std. Deviation	Total scores	Achieved percentage
Literary translation	18.35	3.95	24	76.45%
Technical translation	18.00	4.61	24	75%
Total	18.17	4.13	24	75.70%

Figure 1 below represents the comparative descriptive statistics graphically.

Figure 1



RQ2: Is there any significant difference between students' translation ability attributed to text type?

Table 4 indicates that students achieved in the literary text ($M=18.35$) out of 24. They also scored in the technical translation a very similar result (18.00) out of

24. There is a very slight difference which accounts for (0.35) in favor of students in the literary translation. Mann-Whitney test was used to find the difference between the students' scores in the two text types. Table 4 shows that the computed Z value amounted to -.258 while the probability value reached .796. It is higher than the Significant level. It indicates that there is no difference between the students' scores in the two translation types.

Table 4.
Mann-Whitney test to check the differences between the literary and technical translation

Students' scores	Mean	Std. Deviation	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Literary translation	18.35	3.95	-.258	.796
Technical translation	18.00	4.61		

RQ3: Is there correlation between students' ability in translating literary and technical texts?

The study also probed the correlation between students' abilities in translating the two text types. Pearson Correlation as Table 5 shows, was computed at .867* which indicates a high level of correlation. Likely, the probability value shows that the correlation between the two variables is significant. The probability value was computed at .012.

Table 5.
Correlation between students' literary and technical translation

Correlations	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Literary translation	.867*	.012
Technical translation		
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

Discussion

Comparison of data obtained from translation of the two text types brought out some interesting findings. Referring back to table 1 which summarizes students' scores in the literary translation task, group mean readings show that the colloquialism in the title *The ransom of red chief* was the worst translated of the literary translation task. Out of a possible maximum score of 21, the cumulative group score was a measly 7.5 and the average therefore, was 1.02, which is quite low. A slightly better but still poor score was achieved in sentence 6, which it may be noted, consisted of at least three phrases/ lexical items that may be considered 'difficult' for the average Saudi EFL learner (even of a translation course), in addition to complex syntax which expresses a mix of ideas. Sentences 2, 3, and 5 in this text were well translated by the group with the total score being 16.5, 18, and 18 out of a maximum possible of 21. However, referring to table 3 for values of central tendency and standard deviation, the variation in scores is high at 3.95, which means that the performance of all the participants is not

uniform, S3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 doing better than S1, and 2. Analyzing the same trends in the case of the second text which pertains to a technical subject, group performance in all six sentences is fairly good with only sentence 1 and 5 falling under the score of 20 and the remaining four sentences scoring above 20 out of a possible highest score of 24. However, standard deviation is higher in this text at 4.61 than that in the literary text at 3.95. This cannot be explained in the scope of this study as the parameter of individual translation proficiency has not been included here. This may be a subject for inquiry in future studies though. Referring to the data summarized in table 2, the participants scored the highest 4 marks in 20 instances out of 42, a remarkable achievement since in another 9 instances they were awarded a high score of 3. A minute examination of language content in the technical text, however, clearly indicates that not only is the sentence length shorter in this case, the sentence structure is simpler, and the vocabulary included can be termed 'ordinary'.

Conclusion

The study reported that Saudi EFL students achieved a good level of translation ability in technical and literary translation. This finding can be interpreted that translation teaching and learning in the Saudi context are still solid. This is seen in the result of the students in this study. This study showed that students nearly achieved the same in literary and technical texts. These findings refuted many various claims which reported that students may translate different text types differently due to the degree of complexity of each genre. Finally, the study reported strong direct correlation in students' translation of the two different types. According to Nida and Taber (1969) translation "consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style" (p.12). As per Enani and Mazen (1994) translation is an interdisciplinary field that has connections with other fields too like philosophy and linguistics. According to Bell (1991), translation is the substitution of a text in one language for another without changing its literary and technical meaning. The findings of the current study also indicate that technical translation or translation of non-literary text where the translator merely needs to substitute one text for another leads to better translation output. Dickins et al. (2002), opine that translation can be reflected as a process and a product. In the process, certain steps are used in translating the source text (ST), and in product form translation means the evidence of the process which means translation of the overall contents with all explanations and meanings are also included in the latter one. According to Ghazala (2008), translation means a set of linguistic parts which consists of grammar, lexis, style, and phonemics. Additionally, as per Ghazala, translation consists of not only translation of grammar, but the translator must understand its function in forming meaning "making it either easier or more difficult to understand". According to Ghazala (2008), a translation issue is any intricacy encountered during translation that forces us to call for the assistance of any kind. Syntax, terminology, style, or sounds may be the cause of the issue. Findings here reveal that complex or unfamiliar syntax and lexis lead to poorer translation output, whereas text that can be translated word to word ensures better target language text. Knowledge, fluency, and articulation enable the translator to accomplish the artistic challenge that is translation.

Recommendations

The current study showed that the undergraduate students of translation at a Saudi university can undertake both literary and technical translation with at least a moderate degree of accuracy and coherence. However, the difference in performance in literary and technical translation compel certain recommendation as follows:

- Translation of literary text requires the facility of a strong lexical base for the prospective translators. Therefore, authentic vocabulary as against specialized vocabulary training should be rigorously imparted at translation departments.
- Multimodal language training via media aids like feature films with and without subtitles should be introduced into the curriculum.
- Prospective translators should be given wide ranging target language exposure by organizing interactive communicative sessions with native speakers of the target language.
- Prosodic features of language should be overtly taught to the students of translation to empower them for literary translation.

Limitations

Though it served the aim of this study more precisely, the number of participants was one of its limitations as well as strengths. A strength as it allowed the researcher to examine the data more minutely, and a limitation as the gender and age variables were not taken into consideration which limited the application of the results.

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Appendix

1. Translation text

Translate the following texts into Arabic: The Ransom of Red Chief

It looked like a good thing; but wait till I tell you. We were down South, in Alabama--Bill Driscoll and myself--when this kidnapping idea struck us. It was, as Bill afterward expressed it, "during a moment of temporary mental apparition"; but we didn't find that out till later.

There was a town down there, as flat as a flannel-cake, and called Summit, of course. It contained inhabitants of as undeleterious and self-satisfied a class of peasantry as ever clustered around a Maypole. Bill and I had a joint capital of about six hundred dollars, and we needed just two thousand dollars more to pull off a fraudulent town-lot scheme in Western Illinois with.

Evidence-Based Health Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent fasting is an eating pattern where you cycle between periods of eating and fasting. There are many different types of intermittent fasting, such as the 16/8 and 5:2 methods. Numerous studies show that it can have powerful benefits for your body and brain. Here are 10 evidence-based health benefits of intermittent fasting.

2. Translation model

فدية الزعيم الأحمر

بدا الأمر كشيء جيد: لكن انتظر حتى أخبرك. كنا في الجنوب، في ألاباما - أنا وبيبل دريسكول - عندما انقذت في أذهاننا فكرة الاختطاف هذه. كان، كما قال بيل بعد ذلك، "في لحظة من الإدراك الذهني المؤقت"؛ لكننا لم نكتشف ذلك حتى وقت لاحق.

كانت هناك بلدة في الأسفل، مسطحة مثل كعكة الفانيلا، تسمى القمة، بالطبع. احتوت على سكان من طبقة من الفلاحين المسالمين وذوو القناعة، كما كانت دائماً متجمعة حول مايبول. كان لدينا أنا وبيبل رأسمال مشترك يبلغ حوالي ستمائة دولار، واحتجنا إلى ألفي دولار فقط لتنفيذ مخطط احتيالي لمدينة في ولاية إلينوي الغربية

الفوائد الصحية المبنية على الدليل للصيام المتقطع
الصيام المتقطع هو نمط من أنماط الأكل حيث تنتقل بين فترات الأكل والصيام. هناك العديد من الأنواع المختلفة للصيام المتقطع، مثل طريقة 16/8 و 5:2. تظهر العديد من الدراسات احتمالية أن يكون له فوائد كبيرة لجسمك وعقلك. فيما يلي 10 فوائد صحية مبنية على الأدلة للصيام المتقطع.