



EFL Students' Perception of Google Translate as a Translation Tool

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Abstract

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of the use of Google Translate in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). In the context of globalization and digitalization, digital translation tools such as Google Translate have become an important component in the language learning process. Qualitative research methods are used to obtain an in-depth understanding of how students at STAI Nurul Islam Mojokerto, English Language Education Study Program view the effectiveness and usefulness of Google Translate. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with 50 students from semesters V and VII. The results showed that students often used Google Translate to facilitate text comprehension and complete assignments, but also had concerns about accuracy and reliance on the tool. These findings indicate that while Google Translate offers convenience and efficiency, its use needs to be balanced with authentic language practice to avoid a negative impact on the development of deep language skills. This research provides important insights into how digital translation technology affects the language learning experience and suggests the need for adjustments in teaching methods to optimize the use of translation tools in English learning.

Keywords: Google Translate, English Learning, Student Perceptions, Qualitative Research, Educational Technology

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and digitalization, mastery of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is becoming increasingly important. In response to this need, technology has played a key role in providing tools that support the language learning process (Kurniawan & Yusuf, 2021). Google Translate, as one of the most widely used translation tools in the world, has become an inevitable resource for EFL students in understanding and producing English texts (Liu & Wang, 2023). However, students' perceptions of Google Translate as a translation tool are often complex and diverse, reflecting a variety of learning experiences and outcomes (Chiu, 2022; Zhang & Li, 2023).

The use of Google Translate in the context of EFL raises important questions about how students perceive its effectiveness and usefulness in their learning process (Kurniawan & Yusuf, 2021). EFL students may rely on Google Translate for a variety of tasks, from simple word and phrase translation to initial drafting of essays (Liu & Wang, 2023). This dependence on digital tools can affect the way students interact with the target language, both positively





and negatively, as revealed in research on the impact of translation technology on language quality and learning motivation (Chiu, 2022; Zhang & Li, 2023). Therefore, it is important to explore how students perceive these tools and their impact on their language learning (Smith, 2023).

Related research has shown that EFL students often use Google Translate as a means to overcome language barriers and accelerate the learning process (Kurniawan & Yusuf, 2021; Liu & Wang, 2023). However, there are also concerns that overuse may hinder the development of deep language skills and reduce opportunities for authentic language practice (Chiu, 2022). Therefore, it is important to understand how students assess the accuracy, reliability, and effectiveness of Google Translate in their academic context (Smith, 2023; Zhang & Li, 2023).

Theoretical Review

Translation

Translation is a complex process that involves transferring meaning from one language to another, with the aim of making the text or speech understandable to the reader or listener in the target language. This process not only involves literal word-for-word translation but also requires a deep understanding of the context, culture, and nuances of the source language as well as the target language. According to Munday (2016), translation is an activity that requires high linguistic and interpretive skills to ensure that the meaning, style, and function of the original text can be maintained in the target language. This process involves a series of steps that include text analysis, meaning transfer, and text adjustment to ensure that the message conveyed remains relevant and effective in different cultural and linguistic contexts (Baker, 2018).

In translation, fidelity to the original text is often the main concern, but the translator must also consider the needs and expectations of the target audience. This requires adjustments not only in terms of language but also in terms of culture and context. For example, what is considered polite or appropriate in one culture may not apply in another. Therefore, effective translation must be able to balance between fidelity to the original text and adaptation to the target audience (Hatim & Munday, 2021).

Different types of translation have been identified, each with different goals and approaches. Literal translation, often also referred to as literal translation, is a method in which text is translated word for word with the aim of preserving the structure and terminology of the source language as much as possible. This approach is often used in technical or scientific texts where terminology accuracy is critical (Gile, 2009). However, literal translation can cause the target text to feel stiff or unnatural, especially if the sentence structure or idioms in the source language do not have a direct equivalent in the target language.



On the other hand, dynamic, or functional, translation emphasizes the conveying of the meaning and function of the original text, ignoring the literal structure to achieve a more natural outcome in the target language. This approach is often applied in literary translations or promotional materials where the main purpose is to make the text feel natural and persuasive to the target reader (Nida & Taber, 1969). Dynamic translation seeks to create the same effect in the target language as achieved in the source language, although this can lead to significant adjustments in structure and terminology.

Idiomatic translation is an approach that emphasizes the translation of idiomatic expressions and cultural nuances from the source language to the target language. This translation is often necessary when the source language contains idioms or expressions that do not have a direct equivalent in the target language, and the translator must find a way to convey the same meaning in an appropriate way in the context of the target culture (Munday, 2016).

Moreover, machine translation, which involves the use of software or algorithms to produce automatic translations, has become increasingly common with technological advances. Although machine translation offers speed and efficiency, its quality often depends on the complexity of the text and the ability of the machine system to understand context and nuance (Koehn, 2020). While not always on par with human translation in terms of accuracy and quality, machine translation can be a useful tool in contexts where translation speed and volume are required.

Google Translate

Google Translate is a technology-based translation service developed by Google, which allows users to automatically translate text, documents, and websites from one language into another. First launched in 2006, Google Translate uses natural language processing algorithms and machine learning techniques to translate text in more than 100 languages (Google, 2023). This service initially used rules-based and statistical translation methods, but since 2016, Google Translate has adopted a deep learning-based approach, namely neural machine translation (NMT), which significantly improved the accuracy and quality of translation (Wu et al., 2016).

NMT technology in Google Translate utilizes neural networks to understand the context of sentences and produce more natural and coherent translations compared to previous methods that relied more on statistics and rigid rules (Bahdanau et al., 2015). With NMT, Google Translate not only translates word for word but also considers sentence structure and overall context, leading to more relevant and context-appropriate translations. However, despite many advances, Google Translate still has limitations, such as difficulty in translating idioms, special cultural expressions, and technical terms with high accuracy (Joulin et al., 2017).



The use of Google Translate has become very widespread, from personal applications to professional use. It offers convenience for individuals who are not fluent in a particular language, helping them communicate and understand content in a foreign language. On the other hand, there are also concerns regarding the reliability and accuracy of the resulting translations, especially in the context of official documents or technical texts that require highly precise translations (Koehn & Knowles, 2017). Despite this, Google Translate remains a very useful and accessible tool for many people around the world, constantly evolving through algorithm updates and technological improvements.

Perception

Perception in the context of English learning includes how students understand, assess, and respond to various elements of the language learning process, including teaching methods, materials, and tools such as Google Translate. This perception plays an important role in determining student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. As Brown (2007) explains, students' perceptions of their learning experiences can influence how they interact with the target language and how effectively they assimilate new language skills.

One important aspect of perception in English learning is how students perceive the effectiveness of the teaching methods used. For example, if students feel that a communicative or task-based approach is more relevant to their needs and more helpful in achieving learning goals, they are likely to be more engaged and motivated (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Students' perceptions of various teaching methods can affect their attitudes towards English learning, which in turn impacts their progress.

In addition, students' perceptions of language aids, such as Google Translate, also affect how they learn English. For example, research by Kurniawan and Yusuf (2021) shows that EFL students often use Google Translate to help in understanding the text and completing assignments, but they also have concerns about the accuracy and potential reliance on the tool. This perception reflects how students evaluate the benefits and limitations of digital translation tools in supporting their learning process.

Students' perceptions of the English learning experience are also influenced by social and cultural factors. For example, Fiske and Taylor (1991) suggest that individual interpretations of social interaction can influence how they participate and feel comfortable in a learning environment. Students who feel that they are not accepted or supported in the context of English classes may experience obstacles in their learning process, even though they have adequate cognitive abilities.

Therefore, understanding students' perceptions of various aspects of English learning is essential for the development of more effective teaching methods and for improving the overall learning experience. By identifying how students assess and respond to various



elements of the learning process, educators can make adjustments that support students' needs and expectations, which can ultimately improve their English learning outcomes (Brown, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

METHOD

The research method used to examine students' perceptions of the use of Google Translate is a qualitative method. Researchers aimed to explore the thoughts of research subjects regarding the use of Google Translate. With this approach, it is expected that students' perceptions of the use of Google Translate at STAI Nurul Islam Mojokerto English Education Study Program can be described more thoroughly and in depth.

This study collected data from students of the English Language Education Study Program, because most of the lecture material was in English. The instruments used in this study were questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires and interviews were compiled based on established guidelines to determine students' perceptions of the use of Google Translate in translating English language materials.

The sample selection technique used is random sampling, because preliminary studies show that almost all students of the English Language Education Study Program are accustomed to using Google Translate in their learning activities. The research subjects consisted of 50 students in semesters V and VII.

Data analysis in this study was carried out in stages to ensure a deep and valid understanding of students' perceptions of the use of Google Translate. The analysis process begins by analyzing the data obtained from the questionnaire, which provides an overview of students' views and attitudes towards the tool. This questionnaire data was then analyzed to identify patterns, trends, and key themes related to their perceptions (Creswell, 2014). After the data from the questionnaire is analyzed, the next step is to analyze the data obtained from the interview. Interviews provide additional context and deeper insight, and allow researchers to explore individual views and experiences in more detail (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

If the results of the initial analysis of the questionnaire and interview data are inadequate or unsatisfactory, the researcher conducts additional interviews to obtain more complete and credible information. This process ensures that the data collected accurately reflects the views and experiences of students. Researchers may conduct follow-up interviews with the same subjects or with additional subjects to ensure that the findings obtained are not only representative but also in-depth and comprehensive (Flick, 2014).

Activities in analyzing data include several important steps: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data reduction involves filtering and simplifying information to eliminate irrelevant elements, so that researchers can focus on important and significant information (Miles & Huberman, 1994).



The presentation of data is carried out to organize information in a format that facilitates further understanding and analysis, such as tables, graphs, or narratives. Finally, drawing conclusions and verification involves interpreting the data that has been presented to draw conclusions based on valid and reliable findings. This process also includes verification to ensure that the results of the analysis are consistent and free from bias, thus providing accurate insight into students' perceptions of the use of Google Translate in English learning (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed that students' perceptions of the use of Google Translate in the context of learning English showed various views. Based on data collected from questionnaires and interviews, it was revealed that most EFL students at STAI Nurul Islam Mojokerto, English Education Study Program used Google Translate to assist them in understanding and translating English language materials. This finding is in line with previous research which shows that translation tools such as Google Translate are often used to overcome language barriers and accelerate the learning process (Kurniawan & Yusuf, 2021; Liu & Wang, 2023).

However, the study also identified some concerns related to reliance on Google Translate. Students report that while these tools are helpful in understanding text and completing tasks, there are concerns that overuse may hinder the development of deep language skills. Some students feel that these tools may not always be accurate in translating technical or idiomatic terms, which can negatively impact their language understanding (Chiu, 2022). In addition, concerns about translation quality and potential reliance on these tools reflect broader challenges regarding the use of technology in language learning (Smith, 2023).

Data analysis shows that students have diverse views on the effectiveness of Google Translate. Some students consider this tool to be very useful for certain tasks, such as translating difficult phrases or sentences, while others feel that this tool is not always reliable for more complex translations or in academic contexts that require high accuracy (Zhang & Li, 2023). This perception reflects the complexity of using translation tools in the learning process, where students must balance between utilizing the ease of technology and developing language skills independently (Kurniawan & Yusuf, 2021).

This study also highlights that although Google Translate provides easy access to information, it is important for students to understand the limitations of this tool and not rely entirely on technology for their language learning process. Researchers suggest the need for a more balanced approach, where technology is used as a support tool, not as a substitute, in developing deeper and authentic language skills (Chiu, 2022; Liu & Wang, 2023). Thus, an understanding of student perceptions of the use of Google Translate can



help educators to design more effective teaching strategies and support a more holistic English learning process.

CONCLUSION

In the increasingly advanced digital era, technologies such as Google Translate play a significant role in supporting the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL). The results of this study revealed that although Google Translate provides great convenience for students in translating and understanding English-language materials, the use of this tool also poses various challenges. Students' perception of Google Translate shows that this tool has benefits in overcoming language barriers and accelerating the learning process. However, there are also concerns regarding translation accuracy and potential dependencies that can hinder the development of deep language skills. These findings emphasize the importance of understanding students' views and the impact of the use of translation technology on the language learning process.

The study also highlights the need to strike a balance between leveraging technology and developing language skills independently. With translation tools constantly evolving, it is important for educators to integrate technology effectively in the English learning curriculum. This ensures that technology is used as a supportive tool, not as a substitute for essential language skills.

Based on the results of this study, several suggestions can be submitted to improve the use of Google Translate in the context of learning English.

First, educators are advised to provide training to students on how to use Google Translate effectively, including understanding the limitations and potential errors that may occur. This can help students to use the tool more wisely and reduce dependence on technology.

Second, it is important for educators to integrate activities that actively encourage the use of the target language, such as group discussions, essay writing, and speaking practices, that do not rely solely on translation tools. With this approach, students can develop more in-depth and authentic language skills, while still utilizing technology as a tool.

Third, further research can be conducted to explore innovative ways of integrating translation technology into the learning process, as well as to evaluate its impact on various aspects of language learning. Additional research can provide deeper insights into how technology can be optimized to support English language teaching and learning more effectively.

By following these suggestions, it is hoped that the use of Google Translate and similar technologies can be more beneficial for EFL students, improve the overall quality of English learning, and support the achievement of their academic goals.



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