

## The EFL Students' Perceptions of Google Translate in a Translation Classroom

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## Abstract

Google Translate has facilitated language learning. It is also one of the tools assisting in a translation classroom. The present study aimed at studying the use of Google Translate by EFL students in a translation classroom and exploring the students' perceptions of using Google Translate. 143 English major students participated in the study were chosen by purposive sampling. They were the students in translation class in the semester of data collection. The questionnaire was adapted from Axelina and Setiawan (2021) and Khotimah, Wahyudin, and Rohbiah (2021). The questionnaire was developed into the five-point Likert rating scale. The data were analyzed statistically by mean, standard deviation, and rating scale interpretation. The result showed a positive perception of Google Translate from the students. It is used as a tool in a translation classroom and assists in language learning.

**KEYWORDS:** translation, Google Translate, perception, language learning

## Introduction

At present, most up-to-date information is published in English. It is the language that has played an increasingly important role in both oral and written communication. English facilitates the exchange of information in different fields including news, information, business, education, and entertainment among people. Although English is an important language for bridging the gap

between people who come from different nations and speak different languages (Sinaga, 2018), not all people are capable of English. Because of the language, people might find some difficulties gaining that knowledge since it requires much effort and time. Translation becomes material for people who want to access information, especially written information. It is the process to convert from one language (the source language) to another (the target language). Translation has a huge impact on knowledge and cross-cultural communication in the current globalized world. People can find it easier to understand or learn the knowledge by getting a translated edition of the information. Additionally, time spent understanding the original language is reduced when the translated edition is involved.

With the advancement of technology, Google Translate is a machine that assists in translating from one language to another. Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017), Chandra and Yuyun (2018), Yanti and Meka (2019) claimed that it has become one of the most widely used online translation resources. The system can translate text, including words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and discourse (Farzi, 2016). Google Translate is simple to use and the translated version also reveals immediately whenever and wherever there is an Internet connection. Therefore, instead of requiring people to carry a heavy English dictionary, Google Translate can be used immediately and practically.

In a classroom context, Google Translate is also used among



different classes (Khotimah, Wahyudin & Rohbiah, 2021). Many studies found some advantages when Google Translate is employed in a classroom (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017; Herlina, Dewanti, & Lustiyantie, 2019; Yanti & Meka, 2019). Khotimah, Wahyudin and Rohbiah (2021) and Purnama (2022) claimed that Google Translate can help students improve their vocabulary learning and grammatical knowledge. The application could assist students to notice the language use after translating to the English version. Giannetti (2016) confirmed that if students can identify and notice similarities and differences between their L1 and the target language which is English, they could acquire that knowledge. When the knowledge is obtained, students may translate text without support from Google Translate (Khotimah, Wahyudin & Rohbiah, 2021). Furthermore, Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017), Herlina, Dewanti and Lustiyantie (2019), Yanti and Meka (2019) added that translating by Google Translate can save time and increase students' self-confidence.

However, some opposed the use of Google Translate in language learning (Bahri & Mahadi, 2016; Khotimah, Wahyudin & Rohbiah, 2021; Medvedev, 2016). They argued that Google Translate does not improve language knowledge. Case (2015) and Clifford, Merschel & Munné (2013) mentioned that compared to the printed dictionary, Google Translate does not provide any alternative words. This may affect their vocabulary size since they cannot learn any new words. Additionally, Baihaqi and Mulyana (2021) and Medvedev (2016) claimed that the result from Google Translate is incorrect and

the translated sentences are often messy, so it is not appropriate to employ Google Translate in language learning (Sukkhwan, 2014). Garcia and Pena (2011) mentioned that Google Translate leads the students to fix their memory on the translated version. If the translated version is incorrect, students would remember or stick with that pattern. Hence, students might produce the language inaccurately. Moreover, Axelina and Setiawan (2021) found a serious effect of Google Translate that it may lead to plagiarism.

Translation class is one of the classes that Google Translate is employed. However, Khotimah, Wahyudin and Rohbiah (2021) found some problems in using Google Translate in the translation class. Google Translate provides fast and quick results, and students relied on Google Translate without trying to think or translate themselves. They did not use their thinking process in translation. Hence, when students are asked to translate without this application, they would not have much confidence to complete the result. According to previous studies, Google Translate provides both advantages and disadvantages in language learning. However, it is considered one of the popular tools helping in the learning process. Similarly, the students involved in the study frequently use Google Translate as a tool in learning. Therefore, the present study enriched the knowledge of using Google Translate in translation classes by investigating the use of Google Translate by EFL students in translation classrooms and examining their perceptions towards using Google Translate.

## Objectives

The objective of the study was to investigate the use of Google Translate by EFL students in a translation classroom and explore the students' perceptions of using Google Translate.

## Methodology

### Population and sample

The sample group involved 143 English major students studying at a university. Purposive sampling was employed because the study investigated the use of Google Translate in the translation classroom. Therefore, the students were selected as they were studying Translation at the semester of the data collection. They were asked to translate both English to Thai and Thai to English in the class and they used Google Translate in class. They were Thai who did not have any experience in an L2 environment and had studied English for more than four years. Most of them used Google Translate when learning English.

## Research instrument

A questionnaire was designed to investigate the use and the perceptions towards Google Translate by EFL students in the translation classroom. The questionnaire was adapted from Axelina and Setiawan (2021) and Khotimah, Wahyudin and Rohbiah (2021) who developed a questionnaire to investigate the perceptions of using Google Translate. The statements of the questionnaire covered

two main points: the use and the perception of Google Translate. The statement number 1-10 focus on the use of Google Translate while the statement number 11-22 relate to the perception of Google Translate. The questionnaire was developed into the five-point Likert rating scale and each item of the statements were translated into Thai to avoid misunderstanding. Then the questionnaire was sent to the experts for validation. The reliability of the questionnaire was at 0.916.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was developed into an online-based questionnaire and it was given to the participants by the link or QR code. Before collecting the data, the consent form was sent to the students to ask their permission. After that, the data from the questionnaire were statistically analyzed by using mean, standard deviation, and five-point Likert rating scale interpretation. The data from the 5-Likert rating scales was interpreted as 5.00 – 4.20 means strongly agree, 4.19 – 3.40 means agree, 3.39 – 2.60 means neutral, 2.59 – 1.80 means disagree, and 1.79 – 1.00 means strongly disagree.

## Results

**Table 1:** the students' perceptions towards Google Translate

Statements	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1. I use Google Translate instead of an online/offline dictionary.	3.99	0.87	agree
2. I use Google Translate for translating word by word.	3.82	0.86	agree
3. I use Google Translate to translate a phrase.	3.01	1.19	neutral
4. I use Google Translate to translate a clause.	3.45	0.95	agree
5. I use Google Translate for translating sentence by sentence.	3.74	0.90	agree
6. I use Google Translate for translating paragraph by paragraph.	3.57	1.02	agree
7. I use Google Translate to translate parts of an essay/article/story consisting of two paragraphs or more.	3.64	1.15	agree
8. I use Google Translate to check synonyms.	3.46	1.00	agree
9. I use Google Translate to check collocations.	3.11	1.09	neutral
10. After translating by Google Translate, I always checked the translated version for its correctness and appropriateness.	4.08	0.90	agree
11. Google Translate helps improve my translation skills.	3.59	0.88	agree
12. In translation class, I always use Google Translate.	3.74	0.92	agree
13. I have the Google Translate application on my phone that is always available for use.	4.01	1.12	agree
14. Google Translate can translate text effectively.	3.22	0.89	neutral
15. Google Translate results are the same as in the dictionary.	3.15	0.95	neutral

Statements	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
16. Google Translate really helps me in every translation process.	3.26	0.98	neutral
17. I can't translate without using Google Translate.	3.03	1.09	neutral
18. Google Translate makes the sentence structure smooth.	3.70	0.98	agree
19. Google Translate cannot translate English text correctly.	3.99	0.87	neutral
20. Google Translate can be a good medium translation tool in the translation class.	3.36	0.97	neutral
21. Google Translate makes me lazy open the dictionary.	3.69	1.12	agree
22. Google Translate makes me lazy to learn structure (Grammar/tenses).	2.91	1.20	neutral
	3.52	1.00	agree

## Conclusion

The students use and have a positive perception towards Google Translate. The students employ Google Translate for their translation needs. The students are cautious when they use Google Translate as they accentuate the validating translated content for accuracy and appropriateness. Moreover, Google Translate is popular as a substitute for traditional dictionaries due to its convenience for quick lexical reference. Interestingly, besides translating at word and sentence levels, the students also use Google Translate to translate longer paragraphs. This indicates that they are concerned to maintain coherence and precision in complex text structures. Google Translate

varied contributions to language learning and translation. Its benefits range from assisting with quick translation needs to improving language learning experiences. However, it is important to consider possible risks connected to accuracy and the decrease of independent language skills.

## Discussion

The use and perception of Google Translate are profoundly shaped by its role as a technology in bridging language barriers. Google Translate is a program that has risen to recognition, becoming one of the most extensively used internet language translation resources. Like Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017), Chandra and Yuyun (2018) and Yanti and Meka (2019), Google Translate's pivotal role in contemporary language dynamics. The tool's adaptability is demonstrated by its ability to quickly translate a wide range of content, including words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and even discourse. The instant availability of translated versions, facilitated by an internet connection, adds to its practicality, effectively substituting the need for cumbersome traditional dictionaries. Its usefulness is increased by the instant availability of translated versions made possible by an internet connection, effectively eliminating the need for large classical dictionaries.

Google Translate is widely used in educational settings, including classrooms and other formal learning environments. The findings are consistent with Khotimah, Wahyudin and Rohbiah (2021),

Herlina, Dewanti and Lustiyantie (2019), and Yanti and Meka (2019), who demonstrate different perspectives towards Google Translate. The use of Google Translate can contribute to vocabulary development and grammatical knowledge highlighting its beneficial characteristics. It facilitates the process of identifying differences in language and patterns in translation. Its importance in creating greater understanding between the target and native languages is highlighted by Giannetti (2016). Despite these advantages, concerned issues must be taken seriously (Bahri & Mahadi, 2016; Khotimah, Wahyudin, & Rohbiah, 2021; Medvedev, 2016). The main complaints focus on Google Translate's ability to hinder vocabulary expansion, errors, and even unintended plagiarism, which presents difficulties for acquiring autonomous language abilities.

Google Translate is well-known in translation classes. Although it offers an instant solution, the simplicity of its use may unintentionally reduce critical thinking and autonomous translation abilities. This conflict between convenience and academic integrity is reflected in the study's findings. The former demonstrates a purposeful yet careful approach by the students, as evidenced by cross-checking translated text for accuracy and using it as a lexical reference. The latter represents a varied range of perceptions. The importance of the tool in improving translation abilities and maintaining cohesive sentence patterns is emphasized. However, there are concerns about its accuracy and ability to encourage reliance on it.

These results provide light on Google Translate's varied influence. It provides helpful assistance in a variety of translations while simultaneously highlighting important issues regarding its validity and correctness. This technical assistance interacts with the goal for independent linguistic proficiency, encouraging a careful approach to its usage.

### Suggestions

These insights have valuable implications for language educators and learners alike. Emphasizing the significance of cross-checking translations for accuracy and appropriateness is vital, as it instills quality assurance practices and prevents potential errors. Utilizing Google Translate as a tool for quick lexical reference and in refining translation skills can be encouraged. For educators, integrating Google Translate into formal learning environments while being cautious of overreliance can enhance its educational potential. This should be balanced with fostering traditional language learning approaches to maintain students' ability to comprehend language structures. The findings also highlight the need to address concerns about accuracy and potential laziness, as these aspects might impact learners' language development negatively. In essence, these results should guide a balanced integration of Google Translate, combining its convenience with the preservation of language learning quality and skills.

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