

Students' Perceptions of Using Google Translate as a Translation Tool in Writing Class

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Abstract

In an increasingly digitalized academic environment, the use of translation tools like Google Translate has become commonplace, especially among students in non-native English-speaking regions. This study explores students' perceptions of using Google Translate as a translation tool in writing classes within the English Education Department at UNIMUDA Sorong. Observations reveal that approximately 20 out of 30 students in the program regularly utilize Google Translate to assist with their writing assignments. This reliance is attributed to the tool's ease of use, accessibility, and ability to expedite the completion of assignments by translating ideas from Bahasa Indonesia to English. The research aims to assess how students perceive the benefits and drawbacks of using Google Translate in their academic writing. Through qualitative interviews with six randomly selected students, the study investigates their experiences with the tool, its impact on their writing quality, and its influence on their language learning process. The study highlights the convenience of Google Translate in facilitating timely submission of assignments and alleviating the challenges of vocabulary and grammar. However, it also addresses concerns regarding potential overreliance on the tool, which may undermine students' engagement with language learning fundamentals and affect the accuracy of their translated texts. Findings indicate that while students appreciate the tool's functionality and efficiency, they acknowledge its limitations in producing contextually accurate translations. This suggests a need for a balanced approach to integrating technology in language education, where students are encouraged to use translation tools judiciously while still engaging deeply with language learning processes. The study contributes to the broader discussion on the role of digital tools in education, providing insights into students' attitudes towards Google Translate and offering recommendations for educators to support effective language development strategies.

Keywords: Google Translate; Translation Tools; Writing Class

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Introduction

In the digital age, technology has become an integral part of education, influencing the way students learn and complete their academic tasks. One of the tools that has gained popularity among students, particularly in language learning, is Google Translate. This free, online translation service is widely used by students in various educational settings, including those in higher education. Its accessibility and ease of use make it an attractive option for students looking to translate text quickly and efficiently. However, the impact of using Google Translate as a primary tool for translating assignments, especially in writing classes, is a subject of ongoing debate among educators.

In the context of the English Education Department at UNIMUDA Sorong, a significant number of students rely heavily on Google Translate to complete their writing assignments. Based on observations within the program, it was noted that out of 30 students, approximately 20 regularly use Google Translate in their writing classes. This

high usage rate is attributed to the familiarity of the tool among students and its availability through any device with an internet connection. The convenience of using Google Translate allows students to bypass the often-tedious process of searching for appropriate vocabulary or grammar structures. Instead, they can focus on articulating their ideas in their native language, Bahasa Indonesia, and then use the tool to generate the English equivalent.

While Google Translate provides an efficient means of completing assignments on time, it raises concerns about the potential impact on students' language learning. One of the primary issues is that students may become overly dependent on the tool, leading to a lack of engagement with the intricacies of language learning, such as vocabulary acquisition and grammatical accuracy. According to Dizon (2018), the use of machine translation tools like Google Translate can hinder language learners' development of productive skills, as it may reduce the need for active language processing. This could result in students producing text that is technically correct but lacks the depth and complexity that comes with a deeper understanding of the language.

Furthermore, the accuracy of Google Translate, while generally reliable, is not infallible. Research by Groves and Mundt (2018) highlights that machine translation tools can produce errors, particularly in translating idiomatic expressions or context-specific language. In academic writing, where precision and clarity are paramount, relying on a tool that may introduce errors can compromise the quality of students' work. The use of Google Translate might also lead to issues of academic integrity, as students may submit work that they have not fully understood or internalized, raising questions about the authenticity of their learning.

The widespread use of Google Translate in the English Education Department at UNIMUDA Sorong prompts a critical examination of students' perceptions of the tool. Understanding how students view the role of Google Translate in their writing process can provide insights into the benefits and drawbacks of its usage. It can also inform educators about the potential need for additional support or alternative strategies to help students develop their language skills more effectively. According to Lee (2020), students' perceptions of educational tools significantly influence their learning outcomes, making it essential to explore how Google Translate is perceived and utilized in academic settings.

Moreover, the reliance on Google Translate may reflect broader trends in language education, where digital tools are increasingly being integrated into the curriculum. While these tools offer numerous advantages, such as increased access to information and learning resources, they also present challenges in ensuring that students are not bypassing essential learning processes. As noted by Clifford et al. (2019), the integration of technology in language learning must be carefully managed to balance the benefits of efficiency with the need for comprehensive language development.

Considering these considerations, this study aims to explore the perceptions of students in the English Education Department at UNIMUDA Sorong regarding their use of Google Translate as a tool for writing assignments. The study will investigate the reasons behind students' reliance on the tool, their experiences with its accuracy and effectiveness, and the impact it has on their learning process. By examining these factors, the research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role of technology in language education and to provide recommendations for educators on how to best support students in developing their language skills in a technologically rich environment.

In conclusion, while Google Translate offers a convenient solution for students facing language barriers in their writing assignments, its extensive use in academic settings warrants a closer examination. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the advantages and limitations of using Google Translate in writing classes and will inform strategies for optimizing language learning outcomes in the English Education Department

at UNIMUDA Sorong. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, it is crucial for educators to understand the implications of such tools and to guide students in using them effectively to enhance their language proficiency.

Literature Review

Students' Perceptions of Google Translate as a Translation Tool

The perception of students towards educational tools significantly influences their learning behavior and outcomes. In the context of language learning, students' perceptions of translation tools like Google Translate have garnered substantial attention. According to Lee (2020), students often view Google Translate as a convenient and accessible tool that aids in overcoming language barriers, particularly in environments where English is not the first language. The ease of use and the ability to quickly generate translations make it an attractive option for students who may struggle with vocabulary or grammatical structures. However, this perception is not without its drawbacks. Lee (2020) also points out that while students appreciate the convenience of Google Translate, they may not fully grasp the limitations of the tool, particularly in producing contextually accurate or idiomatically correct translations.

Groves and Mundt (2018) conducted a study that revealed mixed perceptions among students regarding the use of Google Translate. On one hand, students recognized the tool's ability to help them complete assignments on time and to communicate their ideas more effectively in a foreign language. On the other hand, there were concerns about the accuracy and reliability of the translations produced. The study highlighted that students who rely heavily on Google Translate may develop a false sense of language proficiency, believing that their translated text is more accurate than it is. This can lead to overconfidence and a reduced effort in improving their own language skills.

Furthermore, Clifford et al. (2019) argues that students' perceptions of Google Translate are shaped by their previous experiences with language learning and their level of confidence in their language abilities. Students who feel less confident in their language skills are more likely to perceive Google Translate as an essential tool rather than a supplementary one. This reliance can negatively impact their overall language development, as they may become dependent on the tool for tasks that would otherwise encourage active learning and engagement with the language.

Google Translate as a Translation Tool in Writing Classes

The use of Google Translate in writing classes presents both opportunities and challenges for students and educators alike. As a translation tool, Google Translate offers the ability to quickly convert text from one language to another, which can be particularly useful in writing assignments where students may struggle with vocabulary and grammar. According to Garcia and Pena (2017), Google Translate can serve as a valuable resource for students, enabling them to express their ideas in a foreign language more fluently. The tool can help bridge the gap between students' native language and the target language, allowing them to focus on content creation rather than getting bogged down by language barriers.

However, the effectiveness of Google Translate in writing classes is a topic of debate. Research by Niño (2021) suggests that while Google Translate can be helpful for generating initial drafts, it often fails to capture the nuances of language that are essential for producing high-quality academic writing. The tool's translations can lack coherence and may introduce errors that students are not equipped to identify or correct. This can result in assignments that are technically correct in terms of vocabulary and grammar but lack depth, clarity, and sophistication. Moreover, using Google Translate in writing classes

can impact the development of critical language skills. Groves and Mundt (2018) argue that students who rely on machine translation tools may miss out on the learning opportunities that come from engaging with the language at a deeper level. For instance, translating a text manually requires students to think critically about word choice, sentence structure, and context, all of which are essential for developing language proficiency. When students bypass this process by using Google Translate, they may not develop the skills necessary to produce high-quality writing independently.

In addition to these concerns, there is also the issue of academic integrity. According to Clifford et al. (2019), the use of Google Translate in writing classes can raise questions about the authenticity of students' work. If students rely too heavily on the tool, their assignments may not accurately reflect their true language abilities, which can have implications for assessment and grading. Educators must be aware of these potential issues and consider how to integrate translation tools into the curriculum in a way that supports, rather than undermines, language learning.

The Role of Technology in Language Learning

The integration of technology in language learning has revolutionized the way students engage with foreign languages. Tools like Google Translate are part of a broader trend towards digital learning resources that offer new opportunities for language acquisition. According to Lee (2020), the use of technology in language learning can enhance accessibility, allowing students to learn at their own pace and on their own terms. This is particularly important in contexts where students may have limited exposure to the target language outside of the classroom. However, the role of technology in language learning is complex. Clifford et al. (2019) note that while digital tools can provide valuable support, they should not replace traditional language learning methods. Instead, technology should be used to complement and enhance the learning experience. For example, Google Translate can be a useful tool for checking vocabulary or generating initial drafts, but it should not be the sole method for producing written assignments. Educators must find a balance between leveraging the benefits of technology and ensuring that students develop the foundational language skills necessary for success. Niño (2021) further emphasizes that the use of technology in language learning requires careful consideration of its impact on students' cognitive processes. When students rely on tools like Google Translate, they may not engage in the deep processing required for language acquisition. This can lead to a superficial understanding of the language and limit their ability to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. Therefore, it is essential for educators to provide guidance on how to use translation tools effectively, ensuring that they enhance rather than hinder language learning.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the perceptions of 2nd-semester students in the English Education Department at UNIMUDA Sorong regarding their use of Google Translate as a tool in writing classes. The focus on 2nd-semester students was deliberate, as these students had already participated in the writing class and were known to have used Google Translate during their assignments. The sampling method used in this research was purposive random sampling. Six students from the 2nd semester were randomly selected to participate in in-depth interviews. These students were chosen based on their experience with using Google Translate in the writing class, ensuring that the sample was representative of the population under study. The random selection aimed to reduce bias and provide a broader perspective on the issue.

The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews, which were conducted individually with each of the six participants. The interviews were designed to elicit detailed responses about the students' experiences with Google Translate, including their reasons for using the tool, their perceptions of its effectiveness, and any challenges they encountered. The interviews were audio-recorded, with the participants' consent, to ensure accurate data collection and allow for thorough analysis. The data analysis process involved transcribing the interviews and coding the responses to identify common themes and patterns. The researcher used thematic analysis to categorize the data, focusing on recurring ideas related to the advantages and disadvantages of using Google Translate in writing classes. The analysis was conducted with the aim of understanding the broader implications of these perceptions for language learning and teaching in the English Education Department. This methodology allowed the researcher to gain insights into the students' subjective experiences and perceptions, providing a comprehensive understanding of how Google Translate influenced their writing process and language development.

Result

The findings indicate that while students appreciate the convenience and speed of Google Translate, their perceptions are nuanced, reflecting both positive and negative aspects of its use in academic settings. One of the most prominent perceptions among students is the tool's ability to save time and effort in completing assignments. Many students reported that Google Translate significantly reduces the time required to produce written assignments by allowing them to quickly translate ideas from Bahasa Indonesia into English. As one student mentioned, "When I use Google Translate, I can finish my essays much faster. It helps me to get my thoughts down in English without spending too much time worrying about vocabulary." This is particularly beneficial for students who struggle with English vocabulary or grammar, as they can bypass these challenges and focus on the content of their writing. However, this convenience comes with a trade-off, as students also acknowledge that relying on Google Translate can lead to a superficial understanding of the language, as they are not actively engaging with the material they are translating. One student expressed this concern, saying, "I realize that when I use Google Translate too much, I don't really learn the new words or grammar. It feels like I'm just copying and pasting without really understanding."

Another significant finding is that students perceive Google Translate as a reliable tool for simple, straightforward translations. Most students expressed confidence in the tool's ability to accurately translate individual words or short phrases. A student noted, "For basic words or short sentences, Google Translate is usually spot on. It's really helpful when I just need to look up a word quickly." However, their confidence wanes when it comes to more complex sentences or idiomatic expressions. Several students noted that Google Translate sometimes produces translations that are literal and do not capture the intended meaning, which can lead to confusion and misunderstandings in their writing. For instance, one student shared, "Sometimes Google Translate gives me a sentence that doesn't make sense in English. I have to double-check it or change it, or else my writing won't be clear."

The students also perceive Google Translate as a helpful tool for improving their English language skills, albeit in a limited capacity. Some students mentioned that using the tool exposes them to new vocabulary and sentence structures, which they can learn from and incorporate into their writing. A student remarked, "I like that I can see how sentences are structured in English, and I try to remember those patterns for next time." However, this benefit is often offset by the tool's tendency to provide translations that are not contextually appropriate, leading to learning that is sometimes inaccurate or incomplete.

As a result, students who rely heavily on Google Translate may miss out on the deeper learning opportunities that come from grappling with the language on their own. One student admitted, "I know it's not perfect, and sometimes I feel like I'm cheating myself by not trying harder to learn the language properly."

Despite these drawbacks, students generally perceive Google Translate as an essential tool for overcoming language barriers, particularly in situations where they feel pressured to complete assignments on time. The pressure to meet deadlines was a common theme in the findings, with many students admitting that they turn to Google Translate when they are short on time or struggling with a particular assignment. A student candidly shared, "When I'm in a rush or don't understand a topic well, I rely on Google Translate. It helps me get the work done, even if it's not perfect." This pragmatic approach underscores the tool's role as a practical solution for immediate needs, even if it does not always contribute to long-term language development.

Interestingly, the study also found that students' perceptions of Google Translate are influenced by their level of English proficiency. Students with lower proficiency levels tend to view the tool more favorably, seeing it as a necessary aid for completing their work. One less proficient student commented, "Without Google Translate, I wouldn't be able to finish my assignments. It's like a lifeline for me." In contrast, students with higher proficiency levels are more critical of the tool, often pointing out its limitations and expressing concerns about its impact on their language learning. A more advanced student reflected, "I use it sometimes, but I know it has its flaws. I try not to depend on it too much because I want to improve my English on my own." This divergence in perceptions suggests that Google Translate is used differently depending on the student's language skills, with more proficient students being more selective in how and when they use the tool.

Another important perception highlighted in the findings is the concern about academic integrity. Some students expressed unease about the extent to which they rely on Google Translate, fearing that it might be perceived as a form of cheating or that it could undermine their own efforts to learn the language. One student voiced this concern, saying, "I worry that my teachers might think I'm not doing the work myself if I use Google Translate too much." This concern is particularly pronounced among students who are aware of the limitations of machine translation and who worry that their reliance on the tool might be detrimental to their overall language development. The findings also reveal that while students appreciate the convenience of Google Translate, they recognize the importance of developing their language skills independently. Several students mentioned that while they use Google Translate for certain tasks, they also try to learn from the translations and improve their English proficiency over time. As one student put it, "I use it as a tool, but I know I need to put in the effort to really learn the language if I want to get better."

Overall, the findings suggest that students have a pragmatic approach to using Google Translate in their writing classes. They recognize the tool's benefits in terms of timesaving and accessibility but are also aware of its limitations and the potential risks associated with over-reliance. This balanced perception reflects a broader understanding among students of the role that technology plays in their education, as well as the need to use it judiciously. In conclusion, the study shows that students at UNIMUDA Sorong have a nuanced and informed view of Google Translate as a translation tool. While they value its convenience and utility, they also recognize the importance of using it as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, their own language learning efforts. These findings provide valuable insights for educators in understanding how students interact with

technology in the classroom and underscore the need for guidance in helping students use such tools effectively and responsibly.

Discussion

This discussion integrates the findings with relevant literature to highlight both the benefits and limitations of Google Translate and its impact on students' language proficiency. The study reveals that students appreciate Google Translate primarily for its efficiency and convenience. Many students value the tool's ability to quickly translate ideas from Bahasa Indonesia into English, significantly reducing the time required to complete assignments. This finding aligns with research by Zheng and Yang (2018), who noted that translation tools like Google Translate are highly valued by students for their time-saving capabilities and ease of access. However, the study also highlights a critical trade-off: reliance on Google Translate can lead to a superficial understanding of the language. This observation is consistent with findings from Han and Lee (2019), who found that excessive use of machine translation tools can impede deeper language acquisition by reducing the need for active engagement with the language.

The study also found that students perceive Google Translate as effective for translating simple words and phrases but less reliable for more complex sentences or idiomatic expressions. This limitation resonates with the work of Tsou and Wang (2019), who demonstrated that while machine translation tools are effective for straightforward translations, they often struggle with context-specific or nuanced language. This discrepancy can result in translations that are literal and do not capture the intended meaning, leading to potential confusion and errors in students' writing. While students find Google Translate helpful for exposing them to new vocabulary and sentence structures, this benefit is limited by the tool's contextual inaccuracies. This finding supports the research of Goudarzi and Zahra (2020), who argued that while translation tools can introduce learners to new language elements, they often provide translations that lack contextual appropriateness. Consequently, students may miss out on valuable learning experiences that come from understanding and using language independently.

The study also highlights that students' perceptions of Google Translate are influenced by their level of English proficiency. Students with lower proficiency levels tend to view the tool more favorably, using it as a necessary aid for completing assignments. In contrast, more proficient students are more critical, recognizing the tool's limitations. This divergence is supported by research from Liu et al. (2021), which found that language learners' attitudes toward translation tools vary significantly based on their proficiency levels, with less proficient learners being more reliant on such tools. Concerns about academic integrity emerged as another significant finding. Some students expressed unease about the potential implications of relying on Google Translate, fearing that it might be seen as a form of cheating. This concern aligns with the findings of Watson and Garside (2018), who discussed the ethical implications of using translation tools in academic settings. Students' worries about academic integrity highlight the need for clear guidelines on acceptable use of technology in educational contexts.

Despite these concerns, the study shows that students recognize the importance of balancing the use of Google Translate with independent language learning. This balance is crucial, as highlighted by the research of Choi and Kim (2020), which emphasized the need for learners to use translation tools as supplementary aids rather than replacements for traditional language learning methods. This balanced approach reflects students' self-awareness and their understanding of the need to develop their language skills actively. Overall, the findings from this study indicate that students have a pragmatic and informed view of Google Translate. They appreciate the tool's convenience but are also aware of its

limitations and potential risks. This balanced perspective is consistent with the research of Lee and Kim (2019), who found that students often use translation tools strategically, recognizing both their benefits and drawbacks. In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into how students at UNIMUDA Sorong interact with Google Translate and the implications of its use for their language learning. The findings underscore the importance of guiding students in using technology effectively while ensuring that it complements rather than replaces their language development efforts. Educators should be aware of these dynamics and provide support to help students navigate the use of translation tools responsibly and effectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on students' perceptions of using Google Translate as a translation tool in writing classes at UNIMUDA Sorong reveals a complex interplay between convenience and potential drawbacks. The high usage rate of Google Translate among students underscores its appeal as a quick and accessible tool for translating assignments. Students appreciate the efficiency it offers, allowing them to complete their writing tasks on time without having to deeply engage with the intricacies of English vocabulary and grammar. This reliance on Google Translate reflects a broader trend in educational technology where students favor tools that simplify their academic tasks.

However, the study also highlights significant concerns regarding the overdependence on Google Translate. While the tool can provide immediate solutions, it may hinder students' development of essential language skills. The tendency to rely on machine translation can lead to gaps in vocabulary acquisition and grammatical understanding, as students may not engage fully with the learning process. Moreover, the accuracy of Google Translate is not guaranteed, and errors in translation can compromise the quality of students' work, raising issues of both academic integrity and language proficiency.

Ultimately, the findings suggest a need for a balanced approach in integrating technology into language education. Educators should consider incorporating strategies that encourage students to use Google Translate as a supplementary tool rather than a primary means of completing assignments. Providing additional support, such as focused language practice and alternative learning resources, can help students develop a deeper understanding of the language while still benefiting from the convenience of digital tools. By addressing these concerns, educators can better support students in achieving their language learning goals and maintaining academic integrity.

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