Exploring the Use of Google Translate in English Language Learning for Non-English Students at the University of Bengkulu

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Abstract

Learning another language is still difficult for students, particularly non-English department students. Students find various resources to help them study English, and Google Translate (GT) is a valuable tool that has quickly become a favorite among them. The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of electrical engineering students regarding the use of Google Translate to learn English. There are two objectives: (1) to figure out how frequently learners use GT in their learning, and (2) to evaluate how GT influences their learning. In this study, a descriptive qualitative method was applied. 30 Electrical Study Program students at the Faculty of Engineering and 30 Accounting Study Program students at the Faculty of Economic and Business in the University of Bengkulu were chosen as research participants. The instrument of the research was the questionnaire with three indicators, i.e., frequency of using Google Translate, the function of using Google Translate in learning English, and the issues found in using Google Translate. The findings proved that using GT as a translation tool for learning English can improve their vocabulary abilities. Besides, GT can detect grammatical faults and semantic inaccuracies. However, Google Translate has some issues, such as errors in translating a certain context. After discussing the students' perspectives of GT and its role in learning, it is believed that GT can be a valuable resource for learners to strengthen their language skills in the future.

Keywords: Exploring, Google Translate, English Language Learning, Non-English Students

Introduction

In the contemporary era, machine translation was developed to facilitate the convenient assessment of foreign languagesGoogle Translate (GT), created by Google in 2010, is currently the most widely used translation engine. According to data collected by Google in March 2021, Pitman (2021) estimates that a billion people worldwide have access to this translation technology. Google Translate supports over a hundred languages. Because this translation app is so widely used, most students have used it before. Some students use GT to improve their skills in the classroom. There are many benefits to using Google Translate (Habeeb, 2020). Additionally, a study looked at how students felt about using GT for online English learning (Khotimah et al., 2021). The majority of students exhibited a favourable impression of this online machine translation. GT is the prevalent translation method employed by language learners.

Students who study languages are exposed to new ideas. They might face difficulties like language translation. The most popular online translation tool these days is Google Translate. This translation technique has already been researched by many academics. According to Winiharti et al. (2021), this study looks at how GT affects Indonesian instructors' academic writing. Data for this study will be gathered from undergraduate professors' academic texts. The lecturers from different disciplines wrote all of the texts. Two approaches to data analysis are used in this study: form and meaning. The findings showed that the translation of the GT and its original language are constructed similarly. While some

definitions are still vague, others are fairly accurate. A comparative study of GT was carried out by Ghasemi and Hashmian (2016). Using Google Translate, this study examined the differences in translations from Persian to English and from English to Persian. One hundred sentences were chosen for interpretation in this analysis of the error analysis model. The results of the study showed that the quality of GT translations from Persian to English and from English to Persian did not differ in terms of error rates. Additionally, errors in active and passive voice were the least common, while lexicosemantic errors were the most frequent.

Although the GT is the most prevalent translation tool, numerous studies have been undertaken regarding students' perceptions of utilising this machine translation. A study in Saudi Arabia examined EFL university students' attitudes towards the use of GT (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017). This study aims to examine the effects of employing GT on students' attitudes. This study involved 92 EFL students at Aljouf University majoring in English. A questionnaire was the tool used in this study. The results of the study showed that most people used GT. Additionally, the results showed that GT is primarily used in a number of tasks, such as understanding new vocabulary, finishing writing assignments, and reading an English course textbook. According to Jaganathan, Hamzah, and Subramaniam (2014), most EFL students' use of the GT led to the EFL class activities. The study examined how EFL students felt about using GT. In their classroom setting, they pinpointed the exact contextual semantics. The researcher's goal was to find out how EFL students recognise methods for using GT to determine particular meanings.

Numerous studies have looked at how GT affects students' learning. Tuzcu (2021) investigated how GT affected low proficiency learners' writing in a quasi-experimental study. This study looked at how GT affected students' creativity during the writing pre-editing stage. Pre-test and post-test evaluations were part of the experiment, and significant differences were found. However, the results of the study showed that GT was a great tool for low proficiency EFL learners to improve their writing assignments. A different study carried out in Thailand looked at how EFL students behaved and thought about using GT in English writing (Chompurach, 2021).

Interviews and two writing exercises were the two methods of data collection used in the study. According to the study's findings, most students believe that the GT tool will help them with their writing, but some believe that this translation tool causes their writing to have unclear meanings. However, the idea of banning GT in English writing is contested by EFL students. Furthermore, Habeeb's (2020) study looked at how GT was used by Iraqi students. In order to conduct this study, the researcher gave survey questionnaires to fifty undergraduate students from Iraq. The data collection response showed that GT had some benefits and drawbacks. Despite being affordable, easily accessible, and enabling quick translation, GT also results in some translation errors.

Recently, there has been discussion about what EFL students think about using Google Translate (GT). Sagita, Jamaliah, and Balqis (2021) investigated the attitudes of EFL students regarding the use of GT. The study's findings indicate that the majority of Jabal Ghafur University English majors use translation to get around their language learning challenges. GT served as a reference tool to assist students in determining pronunciation, synonyms, antonyms, and vocabulary meanings. Simultaneously, the findings demonstrated that EFL students have a favourable attitude towards the use of this machine translation (Google Translate).

According to a related study, EFL students firmly believe that GT is a useful tool despite its inherent flaws and disadvantages. Additionally, the opinions of EFL students regarding the use of GT in online English learning have been investigated (Khotimah et al., 2021). The results of the study showed that EFL students had a positive opinion of GT as a tool for learning English. Students' experiences using this tool in their academic learning process accounted for the majority of their positive feedback.

This study seeks to examine EFL learners' perceptions of utilising Google Translate (GT). Numerous prior studies indicated that students held a favourable view of the usage of GT, while the translation in this machine translation continued to exhibit specific errors. Nonetheless, the majority of researchers cited in the literature review have not performed comparison studies regarding learners' perceptions across other nations concerning the use of GT. This paper will address two research questions:

1. What are the frequency differences among students utilising Google Translate for non-English learners?
2. To what extent does Google Translate (GT) impact individuals who are not proficient in English?

Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative descriptive methodology. The study was carried out at the University of Bengkulu in Indonesia. The total number of participants in this study consists of 60 students from the accounting and electronic study programs. The rationale for selecting samples from these two study programs lies in the fact that they consist of non-English students who are engaged in international programs. Therefore, students must be able to demonstrate competence in English.

The questionnaire modifies the concepts presented by Alhaisoni & Alhaysony (2017) and Sujarwo (2020). An online questionnaire (Google Form) is utilised to gather the perceptions of the participants. To explore the depth of information regarding learners' perceptions of using the GT, the questionnaires were structured into two sections: (1) the frequency of GT usage and (2) the function of using Google Translation, and (3) the issues in using the Google Translation.

The initial section includes two enquiries, one of which is: (1) Have you ever utilised Google Translate as a tool for learning English? (2) How frequently do you utilise Google Translate? In the second section, there are questions including: (3) What roles does Google Translate play in your learning (vocabulary, sentences, and paragraphs)? (4) What are your thoughts on the idea that "Google Translate could assist students in enhancing their learning"? (5) What challenges do you typically encounter when utilising Google Translate?

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The frequency differences among students utilising Google Translate for non-English learners

Based on findings, all respondents (100%) affirmed Google Translate as an aid in their English language acquisition. They viewed that the tool perceived accessibility and efficacy among non-native English-speaking students, aiming to enhance their English ability. Google Translate indicates is not just a supplementary tool, but a fundamental component of their academic practices. Google Translate serves as an effective tool for translating unfamiliar words, sentences, and entire paragraphs.

Electrical engineering students who engage with specific material in English often face terminology not commonly addressed in normal English classes. Google Translate facilitates the immediate translation of unknown terms and phrases, so the students are able to improve their academic vocabulary and capacity to connect with materials pertinent to their disciplines. Besides facilitating vocabulary enhancement, Google Translate is essential for aiding students in understanding academic texts characterized by complex terminology. The technology assists students unfamiliar with academic English literature by dismantling complicated language obstacles, enabling improved comprehension of full paragraphs or articles without discouragement from linguistic challenges. Educators and academic institutions can enhance student support by offering training on the efficient integration of resources such as Google Translate into language studies.

Google Translate (GT) impacts individuals who are not proficient in English

Five indicators will be explored in this section: (1) frequent employed the Google Translate in learning English, (2) the function of Google Translate in learning English, (3) assessment of Google Translate's efficacy in education, (4) possible advantages for non-English students, and (5) problems in using Google Translate.

(1) Frequently Employed Google Translate in Learning English

Students favour the use of Google Translate for studying English. A substantial percentage of participants used Google Translate, signifying that students incorporated it into their English study. The majority of students utilize a rapid reference tool for vocabulary translation and understanding, especially during reading assignments and while deciphering uncommon terminology encountered in their studies.
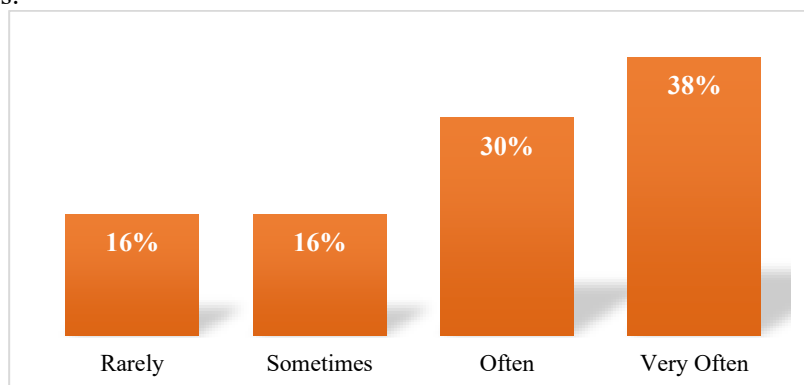

Figure 1. The use of GT to learn vocabulary

(2) Function in English Language Acquisition

Students regarded Google Translate as an essential tool for understanding difficult or unfamiliar English terminology, idioms, and sentences. The accessibility of mobile devices allows for immediate use, hence improving comprehension in real time during lectures or while completing tasks. Students also found the tool useful for basic sentence building while attempting to communicate in English.
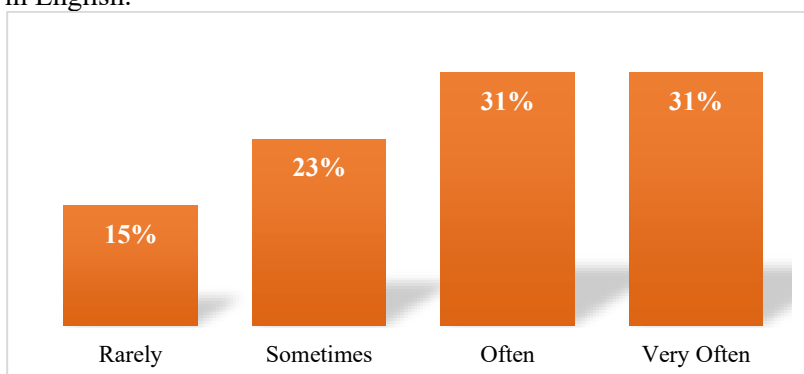

Figure 2. The use of GT to understand sentences

(3) Assessment of Google Translate's Efficacy in Education

Students typically regard Google Translate as a useful, but limited, tool for language acquisition. Although it improves vocabulary and fundamental language understanding, some students believe it falls short in providing full explanations of grammar and syntax in a paragraph, which are critical for advanced language acquisition.
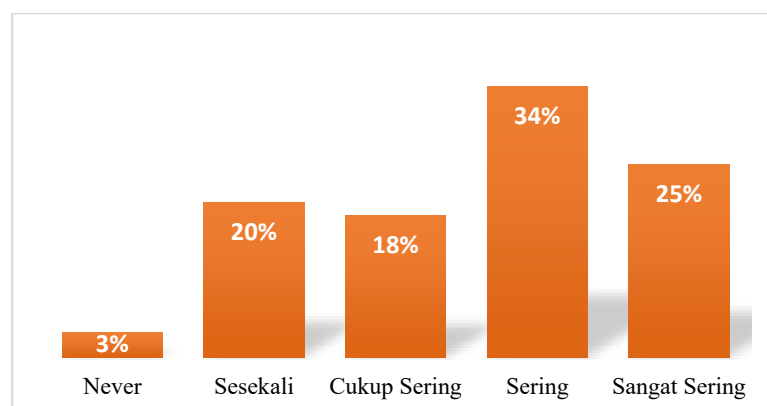
Figure 3. The use of GT to understand the paragraph

(4)   Possible advantages for non-English students

Students believe that Google Translate may significantly aid learners by providing rapid translations and improving vocabulary acquisition. A significant percentage of respondents indicate that it fosters a sense of autonomy, enabling them to engage with English literature with greater confidence.

(5)   Problems in using Google Translate

Inaccuracies are the most common problems in using GT, especially with certain expressions and intricate sentence constructions. Students indicated that Google Translate often finds problems with context-specific translations, leading to misinterpretations. Many of the participants said that over dependence on Google Translate could hinder their capacity to independently acquire language and grammar skills.
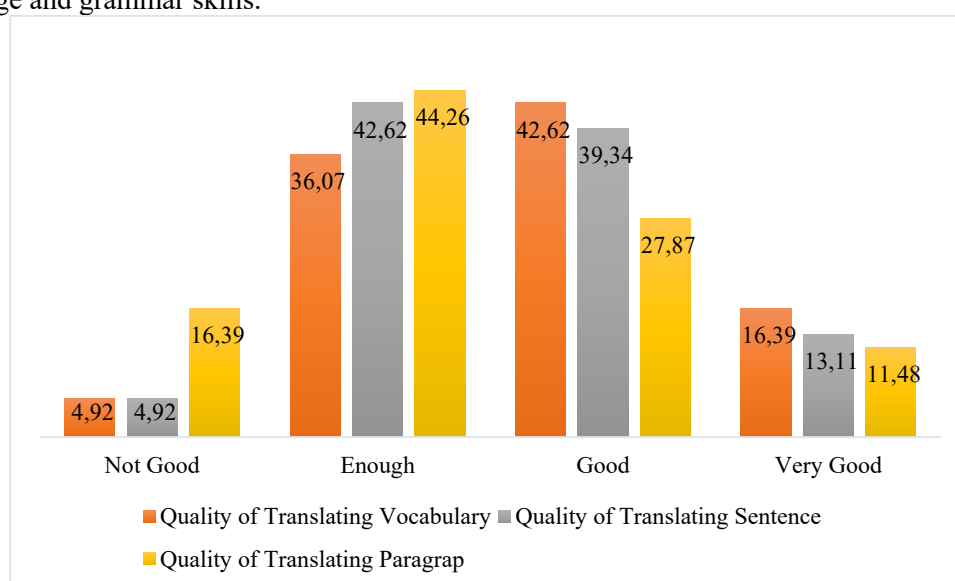

Figure 4. Problems in using Google Translate

Discussion

Not all translations produce flawless outcomes because they are produced by machines. Stymne (2011) asserts that statistical machine translation systems have a significant disadvantage in that they rely on a target language model to generate accurate target language texts, frequently producing grammatically incorrect output, and employ little to no grammatical understanding. When it comes to translating writings that employ a certain type of syntax, structure, context, or even ambiguity, the translation tool is totally blind and frequently fails.

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The quality of GT translations has been the subject of numerous investigations. Mistranslation is the most frequent issue brought on by GT (Lotz & Rensburg, 2014). Additionally, the GT output still exhibits errors at different levels, ranging from the discourse level (Groves & Mundt 2015) to the word level (Vidhayasai, Keyuravong, & Bunsom 2015), and sentence level (Chen, Acosta, & Barry 2016). Additionally, GT displays distinct outcomes for various text genres (Allue, 2017). In this situation, translating one kind of text may yield greater results than translating another.

In general, the results show that Google Translate uses literal translation. It is evident from the overall translations of sentences that faithfully preserve the original language's structures. There are very few expressions that employ multiple forms. GT has translated primarily literally, despite a plan of addition and substitution. A few words are translated incorrectly, but overall, the messages seem to be quite appropriate in terms of meaning. Based on these results, it can be concluded that GT still needs work, particularly in the areas of forms and context-based meaning, as it is currently unable to recognize the themes or context of the text. Because this machine is still translating literally, it is important to carefully consider that the structure in the SL must be examined before the source text is entered into GT. Therefore, for a better translation, the text in the source language needs to be well-formed.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Google Translate has drawbacks. Though it doesn't always provide accurate translations, it could be able to assist users in understanding the basic gist of writings written in foreign languages. The study's findings also confirm that Google Translate does not always produce an accurate translation of the source material, which might have raised serious issues with passenger safety and legal issues. Google Translate can only be utilized on a single-word basis, but it still needs extensive revision and users' cautious, reasonable judgment. Users need to be mindful of potential issues, such as words with several meanings, words with particular connotations in particular circumstances, words that the software does not recognize, phrases with varying degrees of formality, and so forth. Word ordering in Thai and English requires careful study at the syntactic level. Discourse issues ought to be abolished in line with the elimination of the two levels of error.

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