



# INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF GOOGLE TRANSLATE UTILIZATION AS A TRANSLINGUAL TOOL IN WRITING CLASS

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## Abstract

This study aims to determine how students feel about utilizing Google Translate as a translating tool when writing in EFL classes. Ten English education majors in their seventh semester participated in this phenomenological case study. Data was collected from three participants who were specially chosen based on their responses to the online questionnaire, as well as an online questionnaire distributed to all participants. The data analysis showed that using Google Translate for EFL writing was favourably received. Furthermore, they thought Google Translate was helpful since it helped them translate their writing and enhance their vocabulary. It appears that utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of online translation tools helps EFL students overcome some of the difficulties they have while translating their written work. According to this study, incorporating AI-based technology into EFL writing will be beneficial in various ways. However, further research is needed to determine the relative impact of each element influencing students' use of AI-based translation tools, particularly Google Translate.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Online questioner, Online translation, Phenomenological case study, Vocabulary enhancement

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing is an activity to share feelings, ideas, experiences, and comments with other people. Organization, mechanics, language, and terminology are all important components of successful and effective writing (Okasha and Hamdi, 2014; Ozdemir & Aydin, 2015). Writing for academic purposes can be a difficult, emotional, and complicated (Rahimi and Zhang 2018). Writing skills are critical for teaching EFL; but, due to time constraints and a high student-to-teacher ratio, many learners of EFL are missing the opportunity to rehearse writing, receive feedback from their teachers, or consult with teacher.

In general, EFL students frequently struggle to produce the same results as native writers due to variables in their first language (L1). Writers who are learning English as a foreign language instinctively make links between their native language and English (Druce, 2012; Weijen et al., 2009). This mental process of finding similarities and differences between languages should be supported, not discouraged, in order to facilitate language learning (Leonardi, 2010). In the last few decades, language translation has become a leading idea

in multilingual education. The theory of using translation between multiple languages has risen to prominence and become predominant in the field of teaching students who speak more than one language. This viewpoint is consistent with the translanguaging technique, which holds that multilingual individuals can assimilate and integrate various language-assistance technologies to form their voice (Canagarajah, 2011). Translingualism as a pedagogy strongly endorses teaching practices that combine two or more languages in the classroom.

Translingualism as a pedagogy strongly encourages teaching practices that combine two or more languages in the classroom. Translanguaging is an educational technique that encourages pupils to communicate and learn using their complete linguistic repertoire (Flores and Schissel, 2014). The use of students' first language (L1) while writing in a second language (L2) has been explored for several purposes, such as planning out writing (Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2002), generating ideas and content (Beare & Bourdages, 2007; Knutson, 2006), solving language problems (Centeno-Cortes & Jimenez, 2004), and preventing cognitive overload (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Knutson, 2006). Studies comparing translation techniques to initial approaches for L2 writing have shown that translation strategies can help students improve their L2 writing (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Lee, 2020; Tavakoli et al., 2014). Overall, translation between L1 and L2 during the writing process may provide benefits over just starting to write directly in L2. As a result, EFL students are increasingly using digital multimodal technologies, such as Google Translate.

The growth and advancement of new technologies, information systems, and communication methods, like online machine translation (MT) software (for example, Google Translate), have now become resources for second language learners. Google Translate, known for its ease of use and speed, is a popular translation tool. The evolution of these innovative technologies has made machine translation readily available for language learners. According to studies, in general, online translators (OTs), and Google Translate (GT) specifically, are the most widely used technological aids for writing assistance when students are completing L2 writing tasks (Clifford et al., 2013; Garcia & Pena, 2011; Jolley & Maimone, 2015). Out of all the technology tools available, online translation services, especially Google Translate, are the predominant resources that language learners turn to for help with writing in a second language. The constant advancement of technology, particularly in education, has influenced EFL students by increasing access to necessary technology. Machine translation (MT) greatly decreases the amount of time needed to look up and consult other resources, while still preserving the quality of the result (Daems et al., 2016). Google Neural Machine Translation (GNMT) is a new iteration of Google Translate launched in 2016 that utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities. GNMT reduces research time and maintains outcome quality through its advanced AI technology.

Although several research has examined the use of Google Translate in EFL writing classrooms, most of these studies focused on Google Translate before the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technology. While some studies have examined the use of Google Translate for EFL writing instruction, most researched its use before the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities. There has been limited research on utilizing the AI-powered version of Google Translate in EFL classrooms. Since Google Translate implemented advanced AI functions in recent years, there have been few studies focusing on this issue. Many are still unfamiliar with some of the newer AI-enabled features in Google Translate. In reality, leveraging AI in EFL writing lessons has

significant benefits and advantages for learning a second language (L2). Previous research on Google Translate often involved EFL students, who tend to have stronger English abilities compared to students in other majors. However, more studies are needed with diverse participants to obtain reliable findings on using Google Translate for L2 learning. There has been minimal research on employing Google Translate as a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tool in EFL writing. It remains unclear whether Google Translate, as a translation aid, can influence L2 writing. Therefore, this study aimed to address a knowledge gap and provide deeper insight into Google Translate as a translation tool in EFL writing instruction. Lee (2020) has claimed that more sufficient empirical investigations are required to evaluate the educational usefulness of Google Translate for L2 writing the primary goal of this study is to examine how Google Translate, as a Translingual tool, enhances the English writing performance of Indonesian EFL students, specifically those majoring in English education. There are two main research questions addressed in this study:

1. What are students' perspectives on the impact of Google Translate as a Translingual computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tool for EFL writing?
2. How is Google Translate utilized as a Translingual CALL tool in terms of EFL writing results?

The two main research questions investigate students' perceptions of Google Translate for EFL writing as well as the actual use and effectiveness of Google Translate as a CALL translation tool in improving EFL writing performance.

## **METHOD**

This research took a qualitative approach, mainly through the case study technique. Researchers can discover crucial features that emerge from the open process by employing the case study technique, which often involves making observations and conducting interviews (Yin, 2009). Descriptive qualitative research uses words rather than numbers to explain and evaluate student perceptions. This research aims to investigate Indonesian students' perspectives on using Google Translate as a translingual translation tool in EFL writing. Ten undergraduate students majoring in English Education at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra were chosen to participate in this study based on their impressions of the frequency with which they used Google Translate and their thoughts on its use. Instruments used in this study include questionnaires and interviews. According to Tsai (2019), the questionnaire was provided to students to elicit their perceptions about using Google Translate. The questionnaire is carefully prepared to ensure the consistency and quality of the statements. The questionnaire comprises ten statements regarding agreeing or disagreeing with using Google Translate. At the same time, the interview includes five questions about the benefits and drawbacks of using Google Translate in EFL writing. Interviews were performed utilizing voice notes on a smartphone with participants.

Data collection in this research was carried out in several stages: first, making statements for the questionnaire's closed-opened and preparing questions for the interview; second, distributing questionnaires to ten selected participants and conducting interviews with three selected participants; third, asking participants to fill out the ten questionnaires that have been allocated; Fourth, collect the questionnaires that have been answered. After data gathering, the data is processed to answer research questions. When analyzing data, researchers use a variety of analytical procedures, including reviewing and analyzing all

responses, sorting the data, organizing, coding, and analyzing data to create research topics, and describing the analytical data to acquire findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The authors were referring to the aim of this study, which is to portray Indonesian learners' perception of utilizing Google Translate as a Translingual computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tool to assist with EFL writing. The goal of this research is to examine how Indonesian students view and experience the use of Google Translate as a translation tool across languages for improving their English writing abilities. Data for the first study question were gathered through the questionnaire and interview portions, in which respondents were asked to answer questions about their impressions of using Google Translate in EFL writing. With a high proportion of agree and strongly agree responses to each question (figure 1), As a result, most students had favourable responses regarding the use of Google Translate as a translation aid in their EFL writing class. Overall, English education majors use Google Translate to translate their writing between Indonesian and English in both directions, as well as to check the meanings of unknown language. The students generally had positive attitudes about utilizing Google Translate as a translation tool for their EFL writing, using it to translate between languages and understand unfamiliar vocabulary. They believe that GT is beneficial in solving their writing since it improves their vocabulary and boosts their confidence in the quality of the translation.

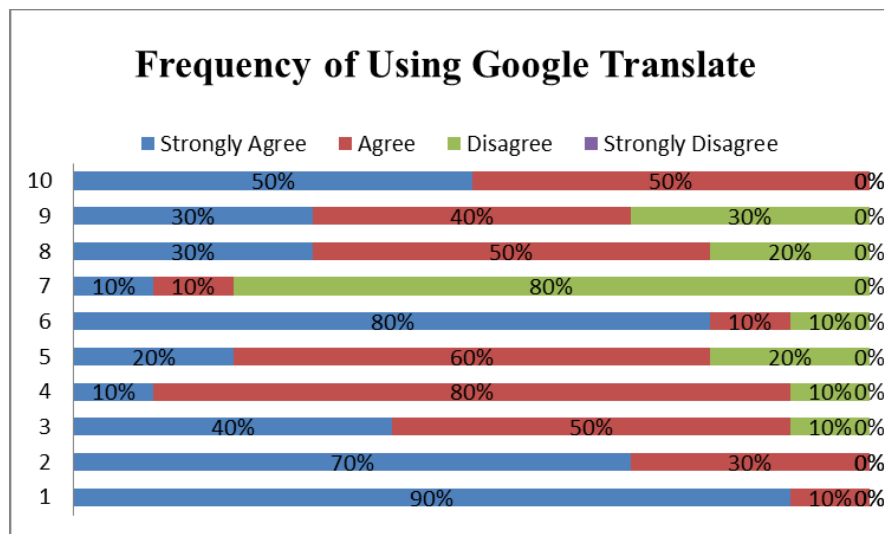


Figure 1. The frequency of participants' using Google Translate

The statistics in Figure 1 reveal that the majority of the students (n=9) strongly agreed, and some (n=8) participants agreed that Google Translate is very beneficial in their language studies, implying that the majority of the participants (n=10) responded positively to the statement. The students generally acknowledged and agreed with the first statement, "Google Translate is very useful to help me in my language class." The second complaint claimed that students frequently translate my class activities with Google Translate to grasp the material. This remark elicited answers from half of the research participants (n=7) who strongly agreed, and (n=3) participants agreed. It can be assumed that students frequently utilize Google Translate as a translation tool to understand text in-class activities; in this case, participants responded positively.

Most participants (n=9) responded positively to the third statement regarding using Google Translate, which is always used to find the meaning of a word. This can be divided into (n=4) participants who strongly agree and (n=5) participants who stated agree, although in this case, only one participant said disagree. The fourth statement, about using GT to find the meaning of a word that has many definitions, received a reasonably positive response; as many as (n = 8) chose to agree, as many as (n = 1) chose strongly agree, and participants (n = 1) chose to disagree; thus, the majority of participants agreed with the statement.

The fifth statement said that participants found it challenging to choose the appropriate meaning for a given situation. According to the table above, most participants responded negatively, with (n=8) strongly agreeing and (n=1) agreeing with the statement. However, (n=1) participants disagreed with the statement. The sixth assertion demonstrates that when students struggle to understand the meaning of an English word, they use Google Translate and strongly agree. This is supported by the questionnaire findings, which show that (n=8) participants strongly agreed, (n=1) agreed, and only 1 participant disagreed with the statement. In the seventh statement, (n=8) participants disagreed, whereas (n=1) people strongly agreed and agreed with the statement "Google Translate does not give them the exact meaning that they want." This signifies that practically all participants disagree with the statement.

Furthermore, (n=5) participants agreed with the statement "When students translate a word, they look at the first meaning given in the column," with (n=3) strongly agreeing and (n=2) disagreeing. Half of the participants responded positively to this statement. The following statement was agreed upon by (n=4) participants, who stated that when translating a term, the parts of speech provided are used. The statement received a somewhat positive response despite the fact that (n=3) participants strongly agreed and (n=3) others disapproved. In the end, when translating, students refer to the given situation. This statement received a balanced response, with (n=5) participants strongly agreeing and (n=5) agreeing with this statement; it can be said that this statement received a positive response from the participants.

### **Students' experiences regarding utilizing Google Translate for EFL writing.**

In this section, researchers interviewed students on their perceptions of using Google Translate as a translation tool for their writing. Google Translate is a translation service that has been widely discussed for many years, particularly in education. Interviews were performed with three students majoring in English teaching, asking them about their perceptions of the results of their writing's translation using Google Translate.

#### ***Straightforward to translate students' writing.***

Based on data obtained from several sources, participants found that Google Translate was a translation application that was easy to use to translate their writing. Student confessions in the following matters support this statement:

*"Google Translate is a translation tool that is more practical than other translation tools; you don't need to download the Google Translate application, just use the Google Translate website via the Google website, you can do the translation." (Student 1, Interview)*

Based on the student's report, using Google Translate as a translation tool for their writing is the most accessible and practical medium to use. In this case, users do not need another application to translate their writing. They said that Google Translate is more beneficial

than other translation tools because it can be accessed via the Google website without downloading additional applications. One of the advantages of Google Translate is that it is easy to use practically and does not require different applications, although what we know now is that Google Translate also has its application, but translation tool users can use Google Translate without the application.

### ***Challenges of using Google Translate in students' writing.***

Google Translate is not just simple to utilize, but Google Translate also poses several challenges for students. It is not uncommon for the translation results provided by Google Translate to be inaccurate and contain errors in grammar, morphology, and syntax, so this requires participants to revise the translation results using Google Translate. The following student confessions support this statement:

*"When translating on Google Translate, I don't take all the complete sentences because sometimes the results given are inaccurate and don't fit the context, so I will revise the results by using another AI tool to revise them." (Student 2, Interview)*

Based on the explanation from student two above, Google Translate not only provides advantages for its use but also has disadvantages that they can feel. This is a challenge for them in using Google Translate to translate their writing. There are sentences that sometimes the results do not match the context of the sentence, so that they do not entirely take the sentence from the Google Translate translation results. Sometimes, they find Indonesian translations that are not connected to the context and then write English grammar when the translation is not correct, so students will revise the translation results. Participants also believed that Google Translate was less accurate when translating their writing. According to studies, one of the reasons is that machine translation (MT) technology has not advanced enough yet to accurately convey the author's intended meaning. In fact, MT itself can introduce errors if learners are unable to recognize and correct mistakes produced by MT. Indeed, MT itself might cause errors if the learner fails to identify and remedy MT-generated errors. MT-generated errors and fix them themselves (Chon et al., 2020). Several words did not fit the context, so they had to alter the Google Translate translations. This conclusion shows that although Google Translate can be a practical tool, users must remain careful and critical of the results and be ready to make improvements to ensure accuracy and suitability for the intended context.

### ***Enhancing the quality of student translation accuracy***

Some participants thought using Google Translate could improve the quality of their translation results. Google Translate's translation results are appropriate because the quality has increased. Apart from that, they also reported that translation results using Google Translate could increase brand confidence. The following student confessions support this statement:

*"I think Google Translate is quite helpful for me in translating; sometimes the translation results from Google Translate give me confidence because this tool is easy to use and practical, even though sometimes I have to revise the results." (student 3, interview)*

Student 3 reported that Google Translate was quite helpful for participants in translating their writing. Google Translate is a simple translation tool that enhances writers' confidence. This is because Google Translate includes capabilities such as direct type translation, camera translation, voice translation, offline translation, and simple tools for improving vocabulary and sentence structure, as well as pronunciation. The online option

of Google Translate produces better translation results than the offline mode, and they recommend that we use the online mode to translate the sentences. However, the participants reported that the offline mode in Google Translate was quite helpful, particularly when they did not have an internet connection or data (Ammade et al., 2023). However, Google Translate has limitations, such as failing to understand colloquial phrasing, which might lead to deadly translation errors.

In conclusion, while responses varied somewhat, most students were quite positive about utilizing Google Translate as a translation aid in EFL writing classes, though they cited slightly different advantages. However, the students have commented that while Google Translate is superior in terms of vocabulary, it has a few grammatical faults, raising concerns about its accuracy.

The findings indicate that utilizing Google Translate for EFL writing can assist Indonesian students, especially English majors, in generating new ideas or concepts, acquiring new vocabulary and phrases, enhancing their language usage, and refining their writing style. Google Translate, a simple and practical translation tool, includes easy-to-use features that help students translate and boost their trust in the results, which is consistent with the findings of Tsai (2020). However, as Google Translate becomes more extensively utilized in the EFL context, this study investigates the effects of utilizing Google Translate as an effective Translingual computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tool for EFL writing. To begin, using Google Translate is a useful and efficient translanguaging tool to promote independent and self-directed learning for EFL students to succeed in English writing tasks, especially those with limited English proficiency. It can build their confidence and motivation. Secondly, moderate use of students' first language (L1) during planning and drafting can be a helpful resource by reducing anxiety and cognitive load.

However, it should be emphasized that Google Translate has restrictions that present a problem for translingualism. Google Translate's translation results are frequently wrong; this conclusion is consistent with Tsai's (2020) observation that teachers and students are wary of Google Translate's translation accuracy due to previous experiences or impressions. Earlier experiences with Google Translate produced translated results. Teachers realize that while Google Translate can produce rapid and easy translation results, the grammar is frequently imprecise. Despite these restrictions, teachers believe Google Translate is a valuable tool for learning and practicing grammar and translation abilities. Students, on the other hand, consider Google Translate as a beneficial tool for testing words and phrases, and they believe it can aid in language acquisition. However, some students may struggle to utilize Google Translate efficiently and submit translations without editing, raising concerns about academic honesty. So, when using Google Translate, students must revise their translations to produce quality translation writing.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this study found that all participants agree that using Google Translate can help improve the quality of their translation writing. Students value Google Translate for its user-friendliness, usefulness, and ability to grow their vocabulary, which gives them more confidence in their writing. However, pupils encounter difficulties with Google Translate, making it difficult to use. The restrictions, such as the outcomes of translation using Google Translate, remain uncertain because it is rare to uncover frequently inaccurate grammar, forcing them to improve their writing. Even though the accuracy of Google Translate translation results remains questionable, respondents believe this tool is

still relatively good and handy to use, particularly for individuals with low English skills. Because Google Translate cannot read and understand material correctly, students should use this tool cautiously and pay close attention to the translation results. Due to the limited scope of this research topic, it is suggested that future research focus on other aspects of Google Translate, such as comparing the precision and dependability of Google Translate's translation functions to other translation tools when utilized as a translingual computer-assisted language learning (CALL) aid for EFL writing.

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