

Post-Graduate Students' Perceptions on the Utilization of Google Translate

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the students' perceptions of the utilization of Google Translate (GT) as a tool for translation. The participants in this study were 25 Indonesian postgraduate students majoring in English education. This study employed a qualitative research design. The research instruments used were closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires as well as semi-structured interviews. The closed-ended questionnaire focused on students' frequent use of GT, and the open-ended questionnaire focused on the advantages and disadvantages of using GT. During the semi-structured interview, questions are developed based on the participants' responses to questionnaires. This study came up with the finding that all participants use GT as a fast dictionary due to its several advents. The majority of the respondents indicated a high frequency of use of GT in translating simple word levels (word, phrase, sentence), but a low frequency of use in translating discourse (paragraphs and articles). In spite of the fact that GT has several drawbacks, it is believed that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks.

Keywords: *perception; translation; GT; post-graduate students.*

INTRODUCTION

Humans have an unbreakable connection to technological advancement. According to Juwana (2002), human life is inextricably linked to technological development. Thus, technology has become a primary need, especially currently, and its importance cannot be overstated. According to Magnis & Suseno (2005), the key reasons why people cannot reject technology are because humans are unable to fulfill their basic requirements in the absence of technology, and it must be understood that technological culture's triumph is permanent. Humans have no choice but to learn and master technology in order to live a better life. Technology has become embraced as a component of human life for these reasons.

It is unquestionable that technological advancements have had a significant impact on the field of education. Technological innovation has a direct impact on many disciplines and topics of study in the educational environment. When learning a language, it is critical to examine the language's comprehension appropriately. As long as the language is the learners' first language (mother tongue), communicating the intended meaning will be simple. If this is not the case, it will be difficult to fully comprehend and grasp the language.

Generally, students need some assistance in understanding languages other than their mother tongue. Most language learners used to consult dictionaries to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words in another language. This may be time-consuming, and learners may find it difficult to interpret the meanings, especially when translating entire texts. However, new technologies are now being developed to help language learners obtain information and gain new knowledge in another language (Habeeb, 2020).

Because of the recent technological revolution, scholars have focused on Machine Translation tools (MTs) over the last century. Machine Translation, as defined by Yamamoto and cited in

Sukkhwan (2014), is computer software used to translate texts from one language to another. Machine translation tools, particularly Google Translate (GT), have proven to be highly effective in controlling various translation acts. Commonly, GT is used to translate texts from English into the users' first language. Despite its shortcomings in translating various text types (Jolley & Maimone, 2015).

In order to live a better life, it is important to know and understand languages other than your mother tongue, particularly English. The learners, however, may find some difficulties in learning the language due to the lack of vocabulary. Therefore, they need flexible assistance like GT to help them find the meaning of the words, paragraphs, or even text in their first language.

Considering the huge contribution of GT as a tool for translation, the researcher is interested in conducting research focused on the users' perception of GT. There have been several studies conducted related to perceptions of the utilization of GT, with varying results. Yanti & Lesly (2019) revealed that GT is used as a fast dictionary that can help undergraduate students enrich their vocabulary by stating that the translation result of GT must be rechecked given that GT could not be the best medium for translation. Research conducted by Habeeb (2020) on Iraqi undergraduate students showed that GT has some advantages (such as easy access, low cost, quick translation) and disadvantages (like grammatical errors, no proofreading tool, etc.).

Based on previous research, the researcher in this study wants to describe the perception of post-graduate students majoring in English education about GT. Indonesian post-graduate students context was chosen purposefully as the focus of this study because similar developments have not emerged yet in post-graduate contexts. Thus, this research study aims to investigate the Indonesian post-graduate students' perceptions of the utilization of GT as a medium for translation. Moreover, nowadays, post-graduate students tend to deal with scientific texts, both as readers and writers. Even when the students are going to submit their article to journals, it is a must for them to understand the English language, given that most journals use English. Students need to have a good understanding of English in order to avoid misconceptions about the journals' rules. Therefore, the students need GT to help them understand the English language.

METHODS

This study used qualitative as the research design, with closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires as well as semi-structured interviews employed as the research instruments. Ary et al. (2002) stated that instead of dealing with numbers and statistics, qualitative research deals with data that is expressed in words. The data gathered are the experiences and perspectives of the subjects; qualitative research seeks to produce a more accurate depiction of the individuals, things, events, places, conversations, and so forth. Since the author analyzed the questionnaire results and interviews with post-graduate students, the type of methodology used in this study was content analysis. According to Ary et al. (2002), content analysis is the approach of acquiring and examining the text's document. The content includes any message that can be conveyed by words, meaning, images, symbols, concepts, or themes.

Twenty-five post-graduate students majoring in English education at a university in North Sumatra were chosen as research participants based on their frequent use of GT and the benefits and drawbacks of using it.

The research used closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires as well as semi-structured interviews as instruments. The researcher created the questionnaire by adapting ideas from previous studies' instruments (Paramaswari J., Maryam H., & Ilangko S. 2014; Susanto, Riana Devi. 2017, Axelina, 2021) and modifying them to meet the objectives of this study. The questionnaires were well prepared to ensure the standard and quality of the questions. The closed-ended questionnaire consists of nine questions related to the frequent use of GT and 10 questions for the open-ended questionnaire related to the advantages and disadvantages of using GT. While the main questions for the semi-structured interview were developed based on the participants' responses on the online questionnaire, The interview was done by first recording the audio in order to evaluate the information and then saving it in Microsoft Word.

Following the completion of the data collection procedures, the data was analyzed in order to answer the research question. The researcher used several data analysis techniques to analyse the data, including: (1) reading and analysing all responses, (2) sorting the data, (3) organising, coding, and analysing the data, and (4) elaborating the data analysis to obtain the findings (Cresswell, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data in this research was obtained from students' responses to both an online questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Since the research objectives aim to investigate post-graduate students' perceptions of using GT, the questionnaire items are related to the utilization of GT as a tool for translation.

a. Closed-ended Questionnaire

The close-ended questions focused on the frequent use of GT, and the questionnaire provided options adapted from the Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (Never =N, Rarely = R, Sometimes =S, Often =O, and Very Often/Always = VO).

The data presented in this study were obtained from post-graduate students majoring in English education. The students were instructed to choose the answers that were closest to their own. Table 1 shows the percentage of the frequent-used of GT.

Table 1. The Percentage of Frequent-used of GT

No	Questionnaire	N	R	S	O	VO	Have used GT	Frequent- used
							R + S + O + VO	O + VO
1	I use GT to find the meaning of unfamiliar words	-	4%	8%	36%	52%	100%	88%
2	I use GT to check collocations. (e.g., to determine the height of a building, "It is tall" or "It is high")	4%	8%	12%	28%	48%	96%	76%
3	I use GT to search synonyms.	8%	12%	16%	28%	36%	92%	64%
4	I use GT to translate a phrase (e.g. a little girl)	16%	16%	16%	24%	28%	84%	52%
5	I use GT to translate a sentence	16%	16%	20%	24%	24%	84%	48%
6	I use GT to translate a clause	36%	20%	20%	16%	8%	64%	24%
7	I use GT to translate a paragraph	40%	28%	12%	12%	8%	60%	20%
8	I use GT to translate parts of an essay/article consisting of two paragraphs or more.	52%	32%	12%	4%	-	48%	4%
9	I use GT to translate a whole essay/article.	80%	12%	8%	-	-	20%	-

Based on the open-ended questionnaire results shown in Table 1, it can be concluded that the higher the level of English materials, the lower the students' tendencies toward using GT as a medium for translation. A detailed explanation will be presented below.

Participants who frequently use GT had a high tendency to use GT at all word levels, except in translating discourse (parts of an essay or article and the whole essay). A total of a hundred percent of all participants (25 post-graduate students) have experienced using GT to find the meaning of unfamiliar words, with the frequency of use (often and very often) being 88%.

The percentage of GT users checking collocation is 96%, 92% finding synonyms, and 84% translating a phrase, while for frequent use (often and very often), those criteria are 76%, 64%, and 52%, respectively. The percentage of participants who have experience using GT to translate sentences and clauses is 84% and 64%, with frequent use being 48% and 24%, respectively. Meanwhile, for the higher levels (paragraph, parts of an essay, and whole essay), the frequent use of GT is significantly decreased. Despite the fact that most participants have experience using GT to translate those criteria, the percentage of frequent use is declining significantly, which is 20% for paragraphs, 4% for parts of an essay, and 0% for the whole essay. It indicates that most of the participants do not use GT to translate discourse.

b. Open-ended Questionnaire

An open-ended questionnaire is intended to elicit a complete, meaningful response from the subjects based on their own knowledge and feelings. It is the opposite of a closed-ended questionnaire, which encourages a brief or single-word response. In addition, open-ended questionnaires are more objective and less leading than closed-ended questions. In this open-ended questionnaire, students are allowed to express their thoughts on Google Translate in greater depth and detail.

For this open-ended questionnaire, the questions focused on the students' perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of using GT as a medium in translation. The open-ended questionnaire results are presented below.

Table 2. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using GT

Advantages	
Participant	Answer
1	It makes me easy to find the meaning of some words
2	It is very simple to use because it can connect to Google without the need to open and download the application.
3	It assists me in translating unfamiliar words and enriches my vocabulary.
4	GT saves my time and I no longer need to bring manual dictionary
5	It makes easy for me to do my assignments especially for writing.
6	Google Translate assists me in translating words that I am unfamiliar with
7	GT is completely free to use. GT has a camera that can capture text and translate it without the need for typing.
8	GT is faster than other machine translation, and we can translate even paragraphs and longer text.
9	GT is a fast dictionary for me. So I don't need to bring the printed one
10	GT provides more than one word's meaning as well as the word classification (e.g adjective, verb, noun, etc).
Disadvantages	
1	GT can not be used offline
2	The translation results in GT sometimes is not accordance with the context of source language.
3	GT sometimes change the meaning from source language into target language incorrectly
4	I often find some errors in the translation results especially from source language into target language
5	GT makes me lazy to recall words that I forgot
6	The structure of GT is bad
7	Inappropriate context for the translation results, especially for paragraph or longer text.
8	I need to re-check the translation result, both in meaning and grammar
9	Sometimes the word order in GT is unstructured well
10	I become GT-addicted. Finding myself on unknown words I often rely on GT without trying to remember my vocabularies.

Based on the open-ended questionnaire results, it indicates that GT is really helpful because it is easy and fast. Generally, it takes a long time to translate, and it is more difficult when students lack vocabulary. According to the questionnaire, the primary role of GT is to save students time. They don't need to bring or open manual dictionaries to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words. GT is also believed to enrich the students' vocabulary. Furthermore, GT is fast and easy to use because it is easy to access without installing or downloading the application. The students just need to connect to the internet, and GT can be utilized. Besides, GT can also translate sentences, paragraphs, and even text. Something that is more special is that GT has a camera feature that allows translation by just capturing the text that needs to be translated. So the users do not need to type the sentences to be translated. The questionnaire results also indicate that GT is really helpful by providing more than one word's meaning and classification. Therefore, the students can choose the most appropriate words to adopt based on the word classification to be used in their assignments.

It can be concluded that GT has a lot of advantages to help students learn English, particularly. By using GT, the students can do their English assignments easier and faster. Josefsson (2011) stated in his research that as many as 90% of students are helped by GT because it is fast and easy to use. It indicates that Students find GT useful. This result confirms research conducted by Groves & Mundt (2015), who found GT to be a free, web-based machine translation tool that is easy to use. Medvedev (2016) then stated that GT could be used anywhere inside or outside the classroom. As quoted in Case (2015) and pointed out by Pena (2011), GT gives students guidance on what to write.

Besides the adventures, GT also has some disadvantages. The students' perception of the difficulties of GT is making them rely too much on it and too lazy to open a dictionary. Students tend to use GT not only to find the meaning of unfamiliar words but also forgotten words. In other words, the students become too lazy to recall their vocabularies. Due to the simplicity of GT, manual or printed dictionaries have been replaced so far. It is so because not only does it save time, but GT is also easy to access and free. However, the requirement of an internet connection is one of the disadvantages of GT. Students must connect to the internet to utilize the machine translation because GT cannot be used offline.

Other disadvantages of GT are the unstructured words and grammatical errors. The translation results provided by GT are sometimes inaccurate. The GT users need to re-check and fix the translation results (Pena, 2011). Moreover, when GT was used to translate sentences and discourse (paragraphs and essays), students often found inadvertent meaning. In other words, the users need to check again and again to make sure that the meaning is appropriate to the context of the source language. Commonly, GT will provide a translation result that is not in accordance with the context of the source language. As a consequence, there will be misconceptions between the source language and the target language. It is in line with research conducted by Medvedev (2016), which states that the translation results by GT are not accurate when it comes to discourse (long text). This finding is also in accordance with the research of Harris (2010), cited in Baker (2013), which found that using online translators resulted in "a valuable loss of learning how language works or functions".

It is clear from the previous explanation that GT offers both advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, students cannot totally rely on GT in translating, especially in translating paragraphs and longer texts. The users need to be more selective and wiser in utilizing GT.

c. Semi-Structured Interview

This study employed a semi-structured interview to obtain deeper information from participants. Cohen et al. (2007) stated that semi-structured interviews allow researchers greater flexibility in framing questions and allow participants to define their own experiences. On the other hand, Bryman (2008) in Schroedler (2017) explains that a benefit of semi-structured interviews is that participants tend to be more open about their worldviews.

This part provides the students' answers to the interview section that was developed based on their responses to questionnaires. The interview was conducted to get deeper information about the students' perceptions of using GT, including the adventures and disadvantages. In this research, five students were involved in the interview section as representatives from all participants. The following are the students' answers for the interview:

Participant 1

I have used GT for quite some time. I think GT is really helpful for me because I can find unknown words faster and easier. Also, I don't need to bring printed dictionaries because GT is available on my mobile phone, which I can bring anytime and anywhere. Internet connection, however, is the key requirement for utilizing GT.

Participant 2

I really love GT as a tool for translating. GT allowed me to translate words, sentences, paragraphs, or even text, and it is free. However, sometimes I find it difficult to interpret the meaning because GT commonly provides translation results that are not based on the context of the source language. Therefore, I need to re-check and fix the translation provided by GT.

Participant 3

GT helps me so much with my task. It saves me time because GT is easy to access and use. I can always use GT as a tool for translation as long as I have an international connection, without the requirement of downloading or installing the application on my mobile phone.

Participant 4

For discourse, I can't totally believe and adopt what GT translated because I often find some errors in meaning and grammar. So I prefer GT to look for the words meaning and synonyms since GT provides more than one word's meaning together with the word's classification.

Participant 5

GT makes me amazed by its camera feature. It allows its users to capture text that needs to be translated without retyping the words on GT. However, I have ever used GT to translate more than one paragraph of the whole text or article, but the result is inaccurate.

These findings indicate that the respondents shared positive perceptions of the overall benefits of using GT, such as that it helps with all kinds of translations, makes it easy to translate texts, saves time, especially due to the camera feature translation, and is flexible because it can be used anytime and anywhere. Despite its benefits, students see that GT also has some drawbacks. They revealed that GT cannot be utilized offline and provides inaccurate translation both in meaning and grammar, as well as inappropriate context for the source language. These findings are consistent with research findings conducted by Herlina, Dewanti, & Lustiyantie (2019; Lawa, Ate, & Kefa (2022; Wirantaka & Finajah (2021); Axelina & Setiawan (2021; Yanti & Meka (2019; Habeeb (2020) stating that the users of GT need to re-check the translation results produced by GT, without ruling out that they were also really benefited by the presence of GT as media in translation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that GT is a translation tool that is frequently used by post-graduate students majoring in English education. All participants have experience utilizing GT as a medium for translation. They have a high tendency to use GT to translate simple word levels, such as words, collocations, phrases, sentences, and clauses. The students revealed that GT is simple, flexible, and easy to use. It is a free machine translation, and users are not required to download the application. As long as a network connection is available, GT is free to be used and accessed by users. It helps the students because GT acts as an online dictionary that can be used anywhere and anytime. The students stated that they no longer needed to bring the manual dictionary due to the presence of GT. Despite the benefits of using GT, it was also found that GT has some drawbacks, such as the fact that it cannot be used offline, inaccuracies in translation both in meaning and grammar, and inappropriate context in translation results that sometimes change the context of the source language. For the discourse level (paragraphs and longer texts like articles), GT does not appear to be popular among the students to be utilized. It is because when using GT in translating longer text, the result is often inaccurate, with grammatical errors, unstructured words, and inappropriate context between the translation result and the context of the source language. Therefore, most participants in this study preferred to use GT at simple word levels rather than at discourse level one. Since GT has benefits and drawbacks, the users are suggested to be wiser and more selective in utilizing GT as a medium for translation.

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