



Students' Experiences in Using the Google Translate Application at Khairun University

Ernawati Laendang¹, Sutaryo Sutaryo², Yetty Yetty³

^{1,2,3} English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Khairun, Indonesia
Email: ernawatilaendang60@gmail.com; sutaryo@unkhair.ac.id; yetty@unkhair.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Students' experiences;
Google Translate;
Translation machine;
English learning.

Article history:

Received 2025-09-23
Revised 2026-04-22
Accepted 2026-05-30

ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore students' experiences in using the Google Translate application to support English language learning at Khairun University. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method involving ten fourth-semester students from the English Language Education Study Program as participants, selected through a purposive sampling technique. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The result revealed that most students used Google Translate to understand English texts, translate sentences, complete assignments, and expand vocabulary. The application was perceived as practical, fast, and easy to use, with the text translation features being the most frequently utilized. However, challenges such as inaccurate translations, contextual errors, and overdependence on the application were also identified. Students reported that while Google Translate supported their comprehension and learning, it should be complemented by other resources, such as dictionaries, to enhance translation accuracy and reduce reliance on technology. The research concludes that Google Translate provides significant benefits in facilitating English learning but requires critical use and integration with traditional learning tools to optimize.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Yetty
English Education Study Program, Universitas Khairun, Indonesia; yetty@unkhair.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Translation is the process of transferring meaning from one language to another to convey messages accurately and understandably to the reader in the target language. This process



does not only involve word-for-word substitution, but also requires a deep understanding of sentence structure, cultural context, and the intent of the original text. In translation, a translator must be able to maintain the meaning, style, and tone of the source text so that it remains appropriate in the target language. Therefore, translation is a complex and important activity, especially in the context of cross-cultural communication and foreign language learning. (Nida & Taber, 1982; Newmark, 1988).

To make it easy for the students to translate, translation tools assist translators in producing accurate, effective, and efficient translations. One of the main tools is a bilingual dictionary (such as an English Indonesian dictionary), which functions to find the appropriate equivalent words in the target language. In addition, a monolingual dictionary is also important as it provides explanations of word meanings in the source language, allowing translators to better understand the context of usage. Nowadays, the use of technology such as Google Translate is increasingly utilized by students in their academic life. Automatic translation engines like Google Translate or DeepL can be used to translate texts quickly, although the results often need to be revised to fit the appropriate context. Furthermore, Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools such as SDL Trados or MemoQ serve to store translation memories and glossaries, which help maintain consistency of terms in long or repetitive documents. A parallel corpus, which is a collection of texts and their translations, is also a helpful tool for observing how certain terms or sentences are translated in various contexts. Lastly, grammar and spell-checking software, such as Grammarly, help ensure that the translation output is free from linguistic errors. By utilizing these various tools, translators can improve both the quality and efficiency of the translation process “(Schaffner, 2004; Bowke, 2002; Hutchins, 2005).

The advent of new electronic tools and technologies has profoundly transformed earlier methodologies, providing both language learners and teachers with new avenues to explore in the field of language learning (Tabatabaei & Gui, 2010). Indeed, millions of people around the world use the service for translation daily, and a growing number of language learners are using it for language learning purposes. Some scholars (Dagiliene, 2012; Cook, 2010) believed that due to the needs and realities of the current globalized world, there is a revival of translation approaches to language learning and teaching. Within the last few years, one technology that has amply helped learners to develop their language learning skills is Google Translate, or GT.

Google Translate is a free machine translation service made available by Google for translating texts and messages from one language into another. Currently, it is accessible through a web interface along with smartphone apps/interfaces and application programming interfaces (APIs) that can fit into new software. As of 2016, GT supports more than 100 languages (Google Translate, 2016). Google Translate is based on Statistical Machine Translation, which works by analyzing hundreds of millions of natural bilingual text pairs



(Koehn, 2009). These natural pairs can serve as authentic examples of language use from the languages involved. In a study of the writings of a group of beginner learners with low language proficiency, Garcia & Pena (2011) found that these learners could benefit from using machine translation more than the high proficiency learners, and there was evidence that they preferred to use it even against the will of their instructors. Interestingly, they discovered that using machine translation also helps beginner learners to better communicate among themselves.

Josefsson (2011) stated that some people use Google Translate, especially students. She concluded that as a supporting tool on students' mobile phones, Google Translate performed better than the traditional dictionaries with its higher speed and accuracy, particularly for the translation of collocations, phrases, and technical words. Concerning the reading comprehension of the passages they worked on, it also provided a general gist of the meaning of the text.

Most recently, Groves & Mundt (2015) stressed the implications of using machine translation technologies like Google Translate for doing tasks and assignments in second language learning. In a study of a sample of students of English for academic writing, they asked the participants were asked to write an essay in their own native language, and then these essays were translated using Google Translate, which showed that the machine translation version, while having errors and weaknesses, was comprehensible and close to the minimum level demanded by most institutions for university admission. In fact, the authors of the study believe that Google Translate can have a great influence on the teaching of Languages for Academic Purposes for both the students and their teachers; hence, instructors in the field of language teaching need to work with, not against, these technologies.

People use Google Translate because of the convenience and speed it offers in translating various languages. This application is especially helpful for those who lack proficiency in foreign languages, whether in academic, professional, or everyday contexts. Additionally, Google Translate supports many languages and is accessible for free, making it a practical solution for many users around the world. According to Hutchins (2005), machine translation tools, such as Google Translate, allow users to grasp the essence of a foreign text without needing to deeply understand the language. With features like text, voice, and image translation, Google Translate is increasingly popular as an efficient tool for cross-language communication.

Google Translate has various advantages that make it popular among students, university learners, and the public. One of its main strengths is the ease of access and speed in translating various languages instantly. This tool also supports more than a hundred languages and is continuously updated by its developers, making it useful in both academic and everyday contexts. In addition, features such as voice input, camera translation, and offline access make Google Translate even more flexible to use anytime and anywhere. However, Google



Translate also has several weaknesses that need to be considered. One of the main drawbacks is its limited ability to understand the full context of a sentence, especially in complex texts or those containing figurative language. The translations produced are sometimes inaccurate or sound unnatural because the process is done automatically by a machine. Therefore, although it is very helpful, users are advised to double-check the translation results and not rely entirely on this tool, especially in academic contexts that require language precision" (Hutchins, 2005; Alhamzah et al., 2021; Suwarnan, 2022).

Based on the background above, the researcher conducted research with the title "Students' Experience in using Google Translate Application".

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Nababan (1997), translation is a series of processes performed by a translator as they transmit messages from the source language to the target language. When translating, the translator must be cautious because a mistranslation might cause meaning from the source language to be lost in the target language, resulting in a less pleasant translation output. According to Larson (1998), the purpose of translation is to transmit the meaning of the text from the source language to the target language rather than the form. The translation process includes examining the text in the source language to discover the diction, grammatical structure, and context; determining the meaning of the text; and locating the natural counterpart of the text in the target language. The translation process, according to Nida and Taber (1969), is separated into three stages.

Machine translation tools such as Google Translate, DeepL Translator, and Microsoft Translator are tools that can instantly translate text from one language to another. Google Translate supports more than 100 languages and is equipped with features such as voice translation, image translation, and handwriting input.

Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools such as SDL Trados Studio, MemoQ, and Wordfast are commonly used by professional translators. These tools come with features like translation memory and terminology management, which are very helpful for maintaining consistency in long documents.

In the modern era, the field of translation has undergone significant changes influenced by technological advancements. Translation is no longer limited to manual processes but has integrated various technological tools to support and enhance the efficiency and accuracy of language conversion. According to Hutchins and Somers (1992), translation technology refers to the application of computer-based tools and systems that assist human translators in the translation process.

Affective factors, in this case, emotions, such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence significantly affect language learning. Krashen (1982) highlights the role of the "affective filter,"



which can either facilitate or hinder language acquisition depending on the learner's emotional state.

Google Translate is one of the most used machine translations (MT) tools among students due to its accessibility and ease of use. However, despite its popularity, students often encounter various challenges when relying on this tool for academic purposes, especially in translating complex texts" (Hutchins, 2005; Alhamzah et al., 2021).

According to Hutchins and Somers (1992), machine translation systems like Google Translate are primarily designed to provide a general understanding of a text rather than producing fully accurate and contextually appropriate translations. This becomes a challenge for students who expect precise translations for academic writing or comprehension.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a Descriptive-Qualitative method. According to Williams (1995), qualitative research is an effort by researchers to collect data based on natural settings. Of course, because it is done naturally or naturally, the results of the research are scientific and can be accounted for. The researcher obtained the data from the English Language Education Study Program of Khairun University.

This research was carried out in May 2025. The subjects of the research were the fourth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program who had a Translation class. The subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which is a non-probability sampling method where participants are deliberately chosen based on specific characteristics and relevance to the research objectives. In this case, the participants were ten fourth-semester students from class A.

The researcher conducted an interview guide by the students. This guide was made in the form of a question list that the researcher asked. The questionnaire was based on the technique used (audiovisual aids). The researcher recorded the oral responses of the students during the interview as raw data of the research, and the recording was transcribed into written form. The goal of the interview was to further investigate why those students rejected the benefit of audiovisual aids. An interview was used as a data collection technique when the researcher wanted to conduct a preliminary study to find problems that need to be investigated, and also if the researcher wanted to determine if the responses of respondents were more in-depth and the number of respondents (Sugiyono, 2011).

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), data analysis in qualitative research is carried out interactively and continuously throughout the research process. The data analysis flow consists of three main stages that are interconnected and occur in a cyclical manner, namely: 1). Data Condensation, 2). Data Display, 3). Conclusion Drawing and Verification.



FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data for this research were obtained through interviews. The interview research was conducted in May. This study involved 10 Fourth Semester students from Class A, Khairun University. The data analysis is presented in the interview process as follows. The interview results revealed several themes related to students' experiences in using the Google Translate application and the challenges faced when using it.

The Interview Result

This section elaborates on students' experiences regarding the use of the Google Translate application in translation classes and highlights several themes related to their experiences and challenges in using Google Translate.

Students' Experiences

Thus, students' experiences in using Google Translate may influence their foreign language learning abilities, either positively or negatively, depending on how wisely they utilize the application. The results of the students' interviews are presented as follows:

Q: In what situation do you usually use the Google Translate application?

"To translate sentences that I do not understand, because it only explains the meaning, not the comprehension. (1.09-1.2)"

Student 4, Answer No. 1

"I always use Google Translate when I translate sentences, and I don't understand the sentences. (0.44-0.50)"

Student 5, Answer No. 1

"During learning activities, for assignments, and outside of class." (0.42-0.45)

Student 6, Answer No. 1

Thus, it can be concluded that most students feel that Google Translate provides translations that are relatively easy to understand, although some respondents believe word-by-word translation may be more effective depending on the context.

Google Translate is frequently used by students, particularly when they encounter sentences or texts they do not understand, both during academic tasks and beyond. The text translation feature is the most dominant, though some students prefer the camera feature. Overall, students consider the translation results from Google Translate easy to understand, although in some cases, word-by-word translation is seen as more effective for better comprehension.

Benefits and Challenges

The results of the student interviews are as follows:

Q: What is the biggest benefit you gain from using the Google Translate application?

"Fast, easy translation, many languages, free, fast, and easily accessible via the app or website. (1.14-1.18)"

Student 6, Answer No. 4



"The biggest benefit is that things we didn't know, we can now understand by using Google Translate. (1.40-1.49)"

Student 7, Answer No. 4

"Probably like translating some words. (2.11-2.13)"

Student 3, Answer No. 4

The majority of students stated that they use alternative solutions when encountering inaccurate translation results from Google Translate. The most common approach is consulting a dictionary, either physical or digital. Some students also use other AI-based translation applications, such as Grammarly, to compare and achieve more accurate results. Others emphasized the importance of checking sentence context and comparing translations with other sources to ensure the correct meaning. Therefore, although Google Translate offers convenience, students still feel the need to validate translations through dictionaries, other apps, or by understanding the broader context.

Impact on Learning

The results of the student interviews are as follows:

Q: Does using Google Translate help you understand your English lessons better?

"Yes. (2.11-2.13)"

Student 10, Answer No. 7

"No, sometimes not, I learn more from movies, songs, and others. (2.49-2.58)"

Student 8, Answer No. 7

"Yes, of course it is better. (2.00-1.00)"

Student 6, Answer No. 7

"Yes, it helps, but it is better to use a dictionary. (3.07-3.08)"

Most students stated that Google Translate helps them better understand English lessons by facilitating translation, expanding vocabulary, and aiding comprehension of unfamiliar words or sentences. Some also experienced improvement in English skills through regular use of the application. However, concerns remain regarding translation accuracy, leading some students to recommend combining Google Translate with dictionaries for a more precise understanding. Learning through other media, such as films or music, was also mentioned as beneficial.

Overall, Google Translate provides significant benefits in supporting English learning for students, but it should be complemented by other resources to enhance accuracy and avoid excessive reliance.

Evaluation and Suggestion

The results of student interviews are as follows:

Q: Overall, how would you rate the Google Translate application?

"Overall, I think it's good." (3.48-3.53)

Student 3, Answer No. 10



"Very good and very easy to use." (2.14-2.19)

Student 9, Answer No. 10

"Very good." (2.36-2.45)

Student 10, Answer No. 10

Overall, Google Translate is considered a very helpful, user-friendly, and practical application for supporting English language learning. Nevertheless, some students suggest avoiding over-reliance on it and recommend balancing its use with dictionaries or other learning resources to improve translation accuracy and understanding. The application is more widely preferred over dictionaries or other apps, though individual preferences vary. The findings of this study regarding students' experiences in using Google Translate (GT) as a tool to support English learning at Khairun University are consistent with several previous studies that investigated the role of GT in language learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results regarding students' experiences in using the Google Translate application at Khairun University, several conclusions can be drawn. Most students use Google Translate as a practical and accessible tool to assist them in understanding English materials, translating texts, completing assignments, and learning new vocabulary. The text translation feature is the most frequently used, followed by other features such as camera translation for specific needs. Students generally perceive Google Translate as easy to use, fast, and helpful for understanding sentences or words they do not comprehend, especially when facing difficulties with academic texts, journal articles, or learning materials written in English. The benefits of using Google Translate include quick translations, ease of accessing foreign language meanings, increased vocabulary knowledge, and greater confidence in understanding English texts. Some students also reported that their English proficiency has improved using the application. Despite its advantages, students face several challenges when using Google Translate. These include inaccurate translations for complex sentences, limitations in understanding idiomatic expressions or technical terms, and a risk of overdependence, which can hinder independent language learning and grammar mastery. To overcome inaccurate translations, students commonly combine Google Translate with dictionaries or other AI-based applications, check the context, and compare translation results with other reliable sources. Most students believe that Google Translate positively contributes to their English language learning but emphasize the need to use it wisely. Overdependence on this tool without verifying the translation results may lead to misunderstandings or hinder language development. In general, students prefer using Google Translate over traditional dictionaries due to its speed, practicality, and convenience. However, several students recommend combining both Google Translate and dictionaries to improve translation accuracy and understanding.



REFERENCES

- Alhaisoni, E., & Alhaysony, M. (2017). An investigation of Saudi EFL university students' attitudes towards the use of Google Translate. *International Journal of English Language Education*, 5(1), 72–82.
- Alhamzah, F., Maulidina, N., & Sari, R. A. (2021). Students' perceptions on using Google Translate in writing activity. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 105–113.
- Alley, M. (2015). *The craft of scientific communication*. Springer.
- Bahdanau, D., Cho, K., & Bengio, Y. (2016). Neural machine translation by jointly learning to align and translate. arXiv preprint arXiv:1409.0473.
- Bahri, H., & Mahadi, T. S. T. (2016). Google Translate as a supplementary tool for learning Malay: A study at Universiti Sains Malaysia. *KEMANUSIAN: The Asian Journal of Humanities*, 23(1), 45–64.
- Bowker, L. (2002). *Computer-aided translation technology: A practical introduction*. University of Ottawa Press.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching (4th ed.)*. Longman.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy (3rd ed.)*. Pearson Education.
- Caswell, D. (2020). Google Translate in 2020: Features and limitations. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8(2), 15–28.
- Chan, S. H. C., & Ang, L. H. (2017). Students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of Google Translate in translating activities. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 1–6.
- Clifford, J., Merschel, L., & Munné, J. (2013). Surveying the landscape: What is the role of machine translation in language learning? *The French Review*, 86(4), 89–101.
- Cook, G. (2010). *Translation in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Dagilienè, I. (2012). Translation as a learning method in English language teaching. *Studies about Languages*, (21), 124–129.
- Garcia, I., & Pena, M. I. (2011). Machine translation-assisted language learning: Writing for beginners. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 24(5), 471–487.
- Google Translate Help. (2023). About Google Translate. Retrieved from <https://support.google.com/translate/>
- Groves, M., & Mundt, K. (2015). Friend or foe? Google Translate in language for academic purposes. *English for Specific Purposes*, 37, 112–121.
- House, J. (2009). *Translation*. Oxford University Press.
- Hutchins, W. J. (2005). The history of machine translation in a nutshell. Retrieved from <https://www.hutchinsweb.me.uk/Nutshell-2005.pdf>



- Hutchins, W. J., & Somers, H. L. (1992). *An introduction to machine translation*. Academic Press.
- Jin, L., & Deifell, E. (2013). Foreign language learners' use and perception of online dictionaries. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 9(4), 515–529.
- Josefsson, E. (2011). English translations in vocational education: Students' strategies and attitudes. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 10(1), 107–131.
- Kenny, D. (2017). *Machine translation for everyone: Benefits and limitations*. Routledge.
- Koehn, P. (2009). *Statistical machine translation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
- Larson, M. L. (1998). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence*. University Press of America.
- Macduff, C. (2017). Language technology and its impact in Indonesia. *Journal of Translation Studies*, 11(3), 87–98.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Prentice Hall.
- Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a science of translating: With special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating*. Brill.
- Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R. (1969). *The theory and practice of translation*. Brill.
- Niño, A. (2009). Machine translation in foreign language learning: Language learners' and tutors' perceptions. *ReCALL*, 21(2), 241–258.
- Nugraha, S., Ratnawati, S., & Surachmat, A. (2018). Students' perception in using Google Translate as a learning tool. *Journal of English Teaching*, 8(1), 55–63.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Newbury House.
- Pritchard, R. (2008). Metacognition and learning. *Education*, 128(4), 644–648.
- Pujiati, H. (2017). Students' perception toward Google Translate in academic writing. *Journal of English Language Studies*, 2(2), 30–42.
- Ribeiro, A. (2020). Digital literacy and translation studies. *Translation & Interpreting Studies*, 15(1), 114–133.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching (2nd ed.)*. Cambridge University Press.