

# EFL Students' Perception Toward the Use of Google Translate in Translation Class

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## Abstract

This study aims to describe the perceptions of students, find out the obstacles that students face, and explore the ways students solve the obstacles they face when using Google Translate in translation class. It uses a descriptive qualitative research method and interviews 10 students from the English Education Department class of 2019, Faculty of Languages and Literature, Universitas Negeri Makassar. The results show that Google Translate is useful in terms of being able to translate words, paragraphs, documents, pictures, and speech instantly, with the synonym feature helping students adjust the context of the translation, follow the lesson in the classroom, complete assignments, increase confidence in collecting assignments, and improve students' translation skills. However, students are aware that the translation results must be improved and that they should not rely too much on Google Translate. Furthermore, the obstacles the students face in using Google Translate are a stable internet connection, a lack of accuracy, a maximum of 5,000 words, sometimes disordered translation results, and the inability to detect images and voices properly. To overcome the obstacles, students fix the translation results by themselves, asking friends, improving pronunciation, switching to other Google Translate features, and using Grammarly or the Microsoft Word application.

**Keywords:** *Students' perception, Google Translate, Translation class.*

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## 1. Introduction

Technology is one of the supporting tools created to facilitate human activities in various fields. Raja & Nagasubramani (2018) stated that the effect of technology could be seen in every field of human activities, one of which is education. One example of the use of technology in education is in the EFL classes. It can be seen on the internet that the student can access various applications and websites. Various applications and websites have been created to help students learn English quickly and efficiently. Chandra & Yuyun (2018) stated that one of the service products provided by Google that is most popular among students is Google Translate. Since its launch in 2006, many researchers have discussed the use of Google Translate in EFL classes. Chompurach

(2021), found that Google Translate improved students writing quality. A study by Siregar et al. (2021) found that students like Google Translate based on its ease of use, accuracy, and usefulness. Sagita et al. (2021) students used Google Translate as a dictionary, to check synonyms and antonyms of a word. In addition to the advantages offered by Google Translate, it turns out that other studies have found shortcomings felt by EFL students. Brahmana et al. (2020) stated that inaccuracy and incongruity of meaning are the most common obstacles for students. Handayani et al. (2022) stated that students become lazy to translate independently. In another research by Tumbal (2021) Google translate can't translate paragraphs effectively.

Furthermore, based on the findings of those previous studies, the researcher concluded that even though Google Translate is a well-known application, widely used, and has many benefits for EFL students, it still has shortcomings. This makes the researcher interested in researching the perception of EFL students towards the use of Google Translate and wants to specifically focus on research on student perception in the Translation class. Because the researcher found that the previous study focused on EFL students' perception of the use of google translate in EFL classrooms but did not specify which EFL class the use of Google Translate was applied.

Although there was research examined about EFL students' perception of using Google Translate as a medium in translation class by Yanti & Meka (2019) the researcher did not specify the types of students studied. Thus, this research will focus on the perceptions of English Education students from Makassar State University with the criteria: students with a TOEFL score below 550 points. The researcher wanted to know more about students' perceptions of using Google Translate, the obstacles that students face, and how students solve the obstacle they encounter when using Google Translate in the Translation class they have taken.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2. 1. Perception

#### a. Definition of perception

Efron (1969) and Sutrisman (2019) both state that perception is the primary way humans form cognitive contact relationships with the environment. Perception involves the assessment stage of the object it sees, beginning with a response from the senses and then forming a response as a result.

#### b. Types of perception

Robins as cited in Nursafitri (2017), stated that Three factors can influence a person's

perception: personality, situational factors, and factor targets, including unfamiliarity, cues, noise, object proportions, surroundings, accessibility, and comparability. Meanwhile, Toha, cited in Nursafitri (2021), stated that Internal and external factors influence perception, with internal factors related to emotions, behavior, personality, expectations, learning process, agility, mental condition, judgment, and inspiration. External factors come from the family atmosphere, knowledge, environment, intensity, proportions, repetition, ignorance, or familiarity

### 2. 2. Translation

#### a. The Definition of Translation

Newmark (2003) stated that translation is the process of conveying the meaning of a text into another language, but there are also tensions between sound and sense, emphasis, naturalness, figurative and literal, neatness, and accuracy. According to Pinheiro (2015) translating is the process of decoding a written piece of discourse using our private language and context. Meanwhile, Plonska (2014) stated that translation is the action of translating a source text into another language.

#### b. Translation Method

Newmark (2003) identifies six types of translation methods: Word-for-word, Literal translation, Faithful translation, Semantic translation, Free translation, Idiomatic translation, and Communicative translation. Word-for-word translation is used to understand the mechanics of the original language. Literal translation uses the literal technique to translate the SL grammatical structures into their closest TL equivalents. Faithful translation seeks to capture the original's precise contextual meaning within the limits of the TL grammatical structures. Semantic translation compromises on "meaning" when necessary.

## **2. 3. Google Translate**

### **a. Definition of Google Translate**

Yusran (2017) stated that Google Translate is a free machine translation service that can be used to translate sentences, printed papers, and websites. It detects and produces translation results based on the target language of the user.

### **b. Google Translate features**

Octaviani & Yuyun (2018) stated that Google Translate is the most popular neural translation machine among students. It has several features that can help facilitate and speed up the language translation process. These features include typing text and handwriting translation, speech translation, images and camera translation, transcribe translation, document translation, and website translation.

### **c. Google Translate advantages**

Google Translate has many benefits for EFL students, according to Sagita et al. (2021) and Axelina & Setiawan (2021). Mulyani & Afina (2021) also stated that it is beneficial for students' translation activities. Wei (2021) stated that students utilize Google Translate to learn English, while Yanti & Meka (2019) found that the use of Google Translate in the class had a positive impact on the students, allowing them to complete the lecturer's translation task more quickly and easily.

Furthermore, Yanti & Meka (2019) found that students are reluctant to trust Google Translate due to its accuracy. Also, Handayani et al (2022) found that using Google Translate in EFL learning can provide benefits such as improved writing ability, expanded vocabulary, word translation, and effective assistance in learning activities.

### **d. Google Translate disadvantages**

Medvedev (2016) and Brahmana et al. (2020) identified three main challenges students faced when using Google Translate: incorrect connections, lack of accuracy, and dependence

on the service. Tumbal et al (2021) and Axelina & Setiawan (2021) both found that while the service provided many benefits, it can also make students lazy and dependent.

## **3. Research Methodology**

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design and was conducted through Zoom Meeting and WhatsApp from January 17th, 2023, to February 21st, 2023. The data source in this study were 10 students from the State University of Makassar who have TOEFL scores below 550 points and have taken Translation class. there were three main focuses of this study, which are defined into several operational definitions as follows: Perception is a person's thoughts, assumptions, and views of something formed from what has been experienced. Google Translate is a machine translator provided by Google with services to translate languages, websites, documents, photos, and real-time translation into various languages. Translation class is a course for students who study English as their foreign language that focuses on mastering the theory and skills of Translation.

In this study, the researcher used one-to-one interview techniques and in-depth interviews to collect data from the participants. The participants were interviewed individually and the interview questions were developed according to the information provided by the participant. As Guion et al. (2001) stated that in-depth interviews are interview techniques that allow participants to describe answers freely and are not limited to yes and no answers. The interview process is carried out in a flowing manner. That is, the interviewer was not only based on a predetermined list of questions but also add other questions to dig deeper into the information held by the participants.

Furthermore, in collecting the data the researcher applied several steps, such as, choosing a data source that is willing to be a research participant, conducting one-to-one online interviews via Zoom Meeting and WhatsApp, Recorded and compiling the

results of the interview, choosing data that fits the research objectives, summarized the results of data collection. Hence in order to analyze the data, the researcher use the interactive analysis method introduced by Miles and Huberman to process the collected data. As Saleh (2017) stated, in general, the interactive analysis method from Miles and Huberman is often used to implement qualitative data analysis. The collected data was analyzed interactively to the point where the data is saturated. Miles & Huberman as cited in Saleh (2017), stated that the implementation of qualitative data analysis is divided into three stages, including data reduction, data display, conclusion, or verification.

In the data reduction stages, the interview results obtained from interviewing students were systematically selected and simplified, leading to answering the research questions. While in the data display the researcher presented the data from the previously separated and simplified data in a more precise form. Display data was conducted to make it easier for the researcher to master the information about EFL students' perception towards the use of Google Translate in Translation class. And in the conclusion or verification stages Hence, the researcher summarized the results of the data about the EFL students' perception towards the use of Google Translate in Translation class in the data display briefly and concisely so that researchers and readers can easily understand it.

## **4. Findings**

### **4. 1. Students' perception towards the use of Google Translate in translation class**

This section explains the data from the first research question: the perceptions of EFL students towards the use of Google Translate in Translation class. Based on the interview results the students noted some perceptions towards the use of Google Translate.

#### **a. Saving time**

"Google Translate really helped me in saving time. When doing assignments and during the learning process, for example, there are words that I don't know, I search for them on Google Translate".

#### **b. Useful as rough or basic translation**

"I often used Google Translate to work on assignments, the literal translation I used as a basis. Sometimes there are sentences that I can't translate myself. I need a little guidance. I think Google Translate can give me ideas to match the context that I want to translate so that the translated results are what I want. I used Google Translate as a basis, just to help translate text based on my understanding".

#### **c. Capable to translate document instantly**

"The document feature of Google Translate is beneficial in terms of time savings, as it allows for quick translations of multiple pages. This allows for more time to enhance Google Translate translations, resulting in better translation results".

#### **d. Capable to translate picture instantly**

"The camera feature was helpful in completing assignments during the translation class, as it allowed the user to upload a picture of the part they wanted to translate and the text and translation would appear. This was efficient and helped save time".

#### **e. Capable to translate speech instantly**

"The advantage is that it is easier and more efficient, especially when we want to translate quickly in a short time. We only need to say the word we want to translate, and the translation will appear".

#### **f. Help students in following the lesson in the classroom**

"Yes, it was really helpful. For example, when the lecturer is explaining something and there are unfamiliar words, or when the lecturer asks students about the meaning of a sentence".

g. Help students complete their assignment

"Yes, it was extremely helpful. I use Google Translate for almost every task".

h. Help students improve their translation skill

"When I proofread Google Translate translation results, I think my translation skills can improve because looking at the translation results indirectly teaches me how to translate".

"I am motivated to learn structure and grammar because I am aware that Google Translate's translation results are not very good, so there is definitely an encouragement to always improve my knowledge".

i. Students were not confident when they did not use Google Translate

"When I am not using Google Translate, I am not confident that I will be able to complete the task in the time required".

j. The synonym feature helps adjust the context of the translation

"Yes, it helped. There are many suggested synonyms for words so there are many choices, and we can adjust them according to the context we want".

k. Students recommend using Google Translate in the Translation class

"For time efficiency in working on Translation assignments, I highly recommend". "I recommend using Google Translate because it can function as a dictionary, translating words I don't know and providing synonyms that provide word suggestions, both of which were extremely useful to me. As usual, don't necessarily use the translation results, but still do scanning and proofreading so that the results are maximized, don't necessarily use the literal translation results".

## **4. 2. The obstacles that students face when using Google Translate in Translation class**

This section reveals the data from the second research question. Based on the results of the interview, students perceived some obstacles they faced when using Google Translate in Translation class.

a. Require stable internet connection

The student revealed that using Google Translate requires a stable internet connection. "The network must be stable; if my network is unstable, I cannot use it".

b. The translation results did not match the context the students wanted

"The translation was literal, so it didn't match the context we typed because, in my opinion, the translation results were too stiff, so reading the translation results was sometimes difficult".

c. The grammar of the translation was inaccurate

"the grammar was usually inaccurate, for example when I typed a sentence in continuous tense from Indonesian to English, but the sentence was translated into the present tense.

Likewise, when I want to translate it into the past tense, the sentences are always translated into the present. So, I think the grammar needs to be changed again".

d. The number of words that can be translated is limited

"Yes, it bothered me a lot because my assignments were mostly texts that were more than 5000 words, and it was very inconvenient if I had to always pay attention to the number of words I wanted to translate".

e. The document translation feature produces disordered translation results

"Sometimes the translation results of document feature are scrambled, and a bit shady".

f. The camera translation feature was unable to detect images properly

"the camera feature usually couldn't capture the translation properly. For example, camera translation also translates unnecessary parts, such as page numbers and titles, which were sometimes included in the camera's translation results. In addition, sometimes there were words that were not detected so it produces words that did not match the text that I am translating".

g. The speech translation feature could not detect voice properly

“The voice translation feature was sometimes slow in capturing sound, and the sound captured by Google Translate was not always accurate, especially when capturing voices from non-native speakers”.

#### **4. 3. How students solve the obstacle they face when using Google Translate in Translation class**

Based on the results of the interview, students put forward several ways to overcome the obstacles they felt.

a. Students used a dictionary to overcome the unstable network problems

“If I had network problems, I would usually try to translate it myself using a dictionary to look up the meaning of words I didn't know”.

b. Students used offline Google Translate to overcome the unstable network problem

“When I had network problems, I chose Google Translate offline, because Google Translate has an offline feature that can translate words, so it's better for me to use that”.

c. Students used their own knowledge

“I also usually try to translate it myself if I really know the meaning of the word or the context of the sentence”.

d. Students used Google Translate synonyms to overcome unsuitable translation contexts

“Yes, I usually use this feature (synonyms). If a word does not seem to fit the context, I usually look for synonyms on Google Translate”.

e. Students did proofread to overcome unsuitable translation contexts

“I deal with inaccurate Google translate results by re-reading the translation results and then attempting to correct the sentences one by one by matching them with context”

f. Students used a dictionary to overcome unsuitable translation contexts

“I will translate myself based on the dictionary”.

g. Students used their own knowledge to overcome unsuitable translation contexts

“I tried to improve it with my own knowledge”

h. Students tried asking other people to overcome unsuitable translation contexts

“The last attempt I made was to ask seniors”.

i. Students used the Grammarly application to correct the inaccurate grammar

“I used the Grammarly app to correct inaccurate translations from Indonesian to English. Grammarly focuses on improving grammar”.

j. Students used their own knowledge to correct the inaccurate grammar

“Because the translation results had poor grammar, I did manual grammar checks”.

k. Students used the Microsoft Word application to correct the inaccurate grammar

“sometimes I use Microsoft Word because it has a proofreading feature that allows me to check the grammar”.

l. Students divided the text into several parts to solve word limitation problems

“I had to divide the text into several parts (before copying it to Google Translate”.

m. Students switched to using the document feature to solve word limitation problem

“I immediately translated using the document feature”.

n. Students switched to the typing feature to solve the disordered translation results produced by the document feature

“Yes, if the results of the document translation were disordered, I used Google Translate's typing feature”.

o. Students did proofread to overcome camera features that were unable to detect images properly

"I resolved it by checking the source text and then checking the translation results".

p. Students cropped images to overcome camera features that were unable to detect images properly

"I cropped it first (a photo of the document I want to translate) to avoid Google Translate translating unnecessary parts"

q. Students switched to using the typing feature to overcome camera features that were unable to detect images properly

"I switched to the typing feature".

r. Students improved their pronunciation to overcome the speech translation feature that could not detect voice properly

"There was no other option but to try to slow down my speech and repeat it over and over again so that Google Translate could recognize my voice"

s. Students switched to the typing feature to overcome the speech translation feature that could not detect voice properly

"I usually used the typing feature because the results were more accurate than speech translation"

## **5. Discussions**

### **5. 1. Student perceptions towards the use of Google Translate in Translation class**

a. Time saving

Yanti & Meka (2019) and Pham et al. (2022) stated that the role of Google Translate as a media in translation class was to save students' time.

b. Useful as rough or basic translation

Chandra & Yuyun (2018), who stated that Google Translate facilitates students to know various kinds of vocabulary, and most students used Google Translate to find vocabulary that helps them in writing activities.

c. Capable to translate document instantly

Medvedev (2016). Google Translate allows for instant translation of entire files.

d. Capable to translate picture instantly

Yanti & Meka (2019) students stated that the ability to translate text from images is extremely useful and the translation process was quick because we did not have to retype the text.

e. Capable to translate speech instantly

Medvedev (2016) stated that Google Translate has some undeniable benefits, one of which allows voice recognition.

f. Helping students in following the lesson in the classroom

Handayani et.al (2022) one of the benefits of using Google Translate in EFL learning is effective assistance in learning activities.

g. Helping students complete their assignments

Yanti & Meka (2019) stated that Google Translate enabled students to quickly and easily complete translation tasks.

h. Helping students improve their translation skills

When students translated using Google Translate, they automatically learned many new words. Wirantaka & Fijanah (2021) found that Google Translate assists students in learning new words as well as words with similar meanings.

i. Students were not confident if they don't use Google Translate

Yanti & Meka (2019) who revealed that Students felt more confident when using Google Translate to create a text in Translation class.

j. The synonym feature helps adjust the context of the translation

Sagita et al. (2021) Google Translate was an application that was useful as a medium for learning, and one of the benefits they felt is the synonym feature.

k. Students recommend using google translate in the translation class

Students recommend using Google Translate in the Translation class, but caution against relying too heavily on it. if we use it frequently, we will never really learn to translate ourselves without the help of Google Translate. This is supported by Tumbal et al (2021) & Axelina & Setiawan,

(2021) who stated that Google Translate was helpful in translating but Google Translate, can make dependent and make students lazy to translate themselves.

## 5. 2. The obstacles that students face and how students solve the obstacles they face when using Google Translate in Translation class

### a. Require a stable internet connection

Brahmana et al. (2020) one of the challenges that students faced was an incorrect connection while translating. in order to overcome this problem, they used a dictionary, the student also tried to use offline Google Translate or tried to translate themselves.

### b. Lack of accuracy

Maulidiyah (2018) stated that one of the drawbacks of Google Translate is its inaccuracy. Hence, to overcome the problem of unsuitable translation context, students tried several ways, such as using Google Translate synonyms to find the suitable word, proofreading, using a dictionary, using their knowledge, and even asking other people to fix the translation results.

### c. The number of words that can be translated is limited

Brahmana et al (2020) found that students faced obstacles such as error connections, lack of accuracy, and network problems due to a limited number of translations. To overcome this, students divided the text into several parts and translated them gradually one by one. They also switched to using the document translation feature.

### d. The document translation feature produces disordered translation results

Students faced obstacles when using the document translation feature due to disordered results. To overcome this, they switched to the typing feature and tried copy-pasting the text to produce better translation results.

### e. The camera translation feature was unable to detect images properly

The camera translation feature was unable to accurately translate the picture, leading to blurry, unnecessary parts, and not in accordance with the text. To overcome this, students proofread, cropped a photo, and switched to typing to fix the translation results.

### f. The speech translation feature could not detect voice properly

Medvedev (2016), students can use Google Translate on their devices to enter a target word, but the pronunciation must be clear and accurate. Students used their own knowledge and typing features to improve their pronunciation to improve the accuracy of the speech translation feature.

## 6. Conclusion

After gathering data from interviews, it was concluded that students gain numerous benefits from using Google Translate, including time savings and utility as a rough or basic translation. Additionally, the synonym feature provides many word choices that can assist students in adjusting the context of the translation they require, following the lesson in the classroom, completing assignments, improving translation skills, and increasing students' confidence in collecting assignments. However, there are some obstacles and solutions when using Google Translate in Translation class, such as inaccurate translation results, the limitation on the number of words that could be included in the Google Translate typing feature, the disordered translation results produced by the document translation feature, the disordered translation results produced by the camera translation feature, and the speech translation feature's inability to detect voice correctly. To overcome these obstacles, students used a dictionary, offline Google Translate, or attempted to translate themselves.

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