

Challenges of Using Google Translate as a Tool to Enhance Essay Writing Skill

Arista Wulan Agustin¹, Fairuz Raissa Salsabila², Rita Agustin³, Bella Persita Dewi⁴

^{1,2,3,4} English Education Department, Faculty of Educational and Teacher Training

Universitas Tidar, Magelang, Indonesia

Jl. Kapten Suparman No.39, Potrobangsari, Kec. Magelang Utara, Kota Magelang, Jawa Tengah 56116

Submission Track:

Received: March 01, 2025

Final Revision: July 20, 2025

Available Online: July 31, 2025

Keywords:

Challenges, Essay Writing, Google Translate

*Corresponding Author:

arista.wulan.agustin@students.untidar.ac.id

Copyright©2025 (Arista et al)

Abstract: The use of Google Translate has become increasingly common in student environments as a tool to advance essay writing skills. This research aims to explore the role of Google Translate in advancing students' experience and skills in essay writing and to identify the barriers and limitations associated with its use. The research used a descriptive qualitative method with a focus on a questionnaire that collected open-ended responses from participants. The research concerned 25 students enrolled in the English department at Tidar University who had used Google Translate in their writing. The results were collected through a questionnaire designed to elicit detailed feedback on students' perceptions, frequency of use, motivations, challenges, and suggestions for alternative tools. The findings show that most students often rely on Google Translate to help with writing. They argued that while this tool helps in providing quick translations and vocabulary, it also has limitations, such as grammatical inaccuracies and overly addictive styles, which can be a hindrance to the development of fundamental writing skills. In addition, the students pointed out the importance of manual writing skills for deeper language understanding and creativity.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

INTRODUCTION

In the globalized world, the use of technology has become essential in every aspect including education. The use of technology in education can be seen in how it helps the students in doing their work (Fadilah et al., 2021). As a result, tools such as Google Translate receive prominence among students since they provide the convenience and accessibility of translating into various languages, including English (Shefta et al., 2022). As writing is considered to be the most difficult skill to master in English (Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017), the use of Google Translate is beneficial for students in helping them to enhance their writing skills.

While it offers various benefits, the use of Google Translate also presents certain challenges that teachers and students must overcome. Chandra & Yuyun (2018), highlighted that students regularly rely on Google Translate as a quick way to decipher their thoughts. This reliance becomes more prominent when they face difficulties in expressing their thoughts in English. Nonetheless, such considerations focus on the fact that the quality of translation may not be able to continuously adjust to the scholastic writing tradition, leading to errors in language use, structure, and coherence (Setyaji et al., 2021). Over-reliance on such tools may also hinder the development of fundamental

writing skills, as students may become overly reliant on machine-generated output (Fitriani et al., 2021).

Likewise, Yunita Putri et al. (2024), investigated that there are differences in students' perceptions with the use of Google Translate in completing English writing tasks. Their findings revealed a dual perspective: although the students gained practicality and found certain features to be convenient, they also realized that there were some barriers, especially in creating socially appropriate and relevant interpretations. This points to the need for students to use the tool more critically and balance it with learning other techniques to ensure that their writing meets academic standards.

Based on this, the purpose of this article is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using Google Translate as a tool to improve writing skills. This article will also provide strategic recommendations for students and teachers on how to maximize the effectiveness of Google Translate in an educational context, resulting in better writing skills.

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

Writing skill is the ability to effectively communicate through text by combining subject expertise, creative expression, and intellectual honesty (Gautam, 2019). However, such skills are essential for attaining an EFL learner's academic success; it is necessary to develop writing skills; attention has to be paid to various positive and negative factors that influence the process (Chicho, 2022). In competitive examinations, job applications, and social service, mastery of written English is regarded as a vital component and requirement that is essential in educational and professional practice (Gautam, 2019).

EFL learners often face serious impediments to the perfection of their writing skills. Limited vocabulary, grammar deficiencies, and a lack of understanding of English writing conventions contribute to these impediments. Research grouped evidence has shown that writing skill mastery is often rated as the most difficult skill to attain and control because of its intricacies. Aspects such as interference of the mother tongue as well as lack of practice make the equation more complex (Al-Badi, 2015).

The combination of technology in language learning has provided new avenues for EFL learners to develop their writing proficiency. Available facilities such as Google Translate (GT) have become attractive to students who seek immediate help with vocabulary and grammar. Research shows that GT usage is mainly for vocabulary help, followed by grammar and spelling investigation (Chandra & Yuyun, 2018). This addiction to technology can be developed in teaching by providing quick access to translations and definitions, thus boosting students' confidence when writing.

The importance of writing skills in an expert context is that writing skills are not only for academic achievement but also play an important role in an expert environment. Employers increasingly value effective communication skills, and the ability to write clearly and convincingly can be relevantly engaging for job prospects. Therefore, EFL learners should focus on updating their writing skills not only for academic success but also for future career opportunities.

METHOD

The research method employed in this study was a qualitative descriptive method. The participants of this study were 25 students of the English department study program at Tidar University who had used Google Translate to assist them in essay writing. The data were collected through questionnaires with several open-ended questions that were designed to elicit detailed responses from the participants about the challenges that they

face with the use of Google Translate in enhancing their essay writing skills. The questionnaire used in this study was modified from Yunita Putri et al. (2024). The questionnaire was about students' perception toward the use of Google Translate; for this reason, some adjustments were created so that the questionnaire matched the topic of the study. After the data is collected through a questionnaire, the researcher then analyzes the participant's responses to the open-ended questionnaire by reviewing, concluding, and presenting the information (Miles, 1986). This data analysis is used to identify the similar challenges that students face when using Google Translate to enhance their writing skills in creating essays. The questions are presented below:

No	Category	Questions
1	Frequency of use	<i>"How often do you use Google Translate when writing essays?"</i>
2	Student' motivation	<i>"What is your main reason for using Google Translate when writing essays?"</i>
3	Student' perception	<i>"In your opinion, does Google Translate help or hinder the process of learning to write essays in a foreign language?"</i>
4	Student's challenges and limitations	<i>"What is the biggest challenge you face when using Google Translate for essay writing?"</i> <i>"How often do you feel the need to re-edit Google Translate's output to match your essay's context?"</i> <i>"Do you feel there are limitations in Google Translate that impact your essay writing skills?"</i>
5	Alternative tools/technologies	<i>"Do you use tools other than Google Translate to help with essay writing?"</i> <i>"How important do you think manual writing skills without translation tools are in developing writing skills?"</i>
6	Suggestions	<i>"What changes should be made to Google Translate to make it more effective in helping improve essay writing skills?"</i> <i>"Do you have any suggestions for other users about using Google Translate to improve essay writing skills?"</i>

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher provided 10 statements in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of several open-ended questions that revealed the respondents' experiences when using Google Translate in improving their essay writing skills. The results will be categorized into six main points, namely the frequency of use, student's perception, student's motivation, student's challenges and limitations, alternative tools/technologies, and suggestions. This study aims to explore the role of Google Translate in helping students' essay writing skills.

The first is about the frequency of use of Google Translate as a translation tool. From 25 participants of this research, 5 students answered that they rarely use Google Translate, 4 students answered that they sometimes use Google Translate, and 16 students answered that they often use Google Translate to help them write their essays. This result is in line with the research by Winiharti et al. (2021) and Bin Dahmash (2020), which concluded that Google Translate is frequently used by students and academics, and its impact on translation ability appears limited.

The second is about students' motivation to use Google Translate in their essay writing. The main motivation of students to use Google Translate is to avoid mistakes that are often made by English learners, especially when writing essays. As many as 48% of respondents stated that they had difficulty translating difficult or unfamiliar words or phrases. This reflects that students prefer Google Translate as a quick solution to understand and find the right phrases or words to translate in essay writing. According to Chandra and Yuyun (2018), students who have difficulty understanding an idea or language consistently find Google Translate and similar technologies to be a quick solution to the challenge. In addition, another 38% of respondents stated that they were motivated to use Google Translate to save time. This shows that students tend to look for efficient tools when they have difficulty writing their essays. However, this becomes a problem if they rely too much on tools like Google Translate without doing additional checks. Although GT is often considered an efficient translation tool, they need to consider that frequent use of this tool can potentially result in the development of a more academic vocabulary and a lack of understanding of the various variants of vocabulary used when writing. Another 4% of respondents revealed that they use Google Translate to ensure correct grammar when forming sentences in their writing. This shows that Google Translate is used as a supporting tool to check the accuracy of their writing. The remaining 12% of respondents revealed that they are less motivated to use Google Translate because they have other translation tools that they think are more accurate.

The third is about student's perception of Google Translate. Here are some participants' statements about their perception of Google Translate:

Student 2 : *"I think it is very helpful, especially if I am not very fluent in the language."*

Student 4 : *"Yeah, it helps the process of writing an essay in a foreign language. I also use it to look up words that I do not understand."*

Student 8 : *"It can both help and hinder. It helps by providing quick translations and vocabulary suggestions, but it hinders when the output is too literal or grammatically incorrect, which requires an effort to correct the problem."*

The result of this question led to the similarities of the research from Tumbal et al., (2021) which resulted in students commonly finding Google Translate helpful and easy to use for translations. In addition, Kurniawan et al. (2022) also states that students generally perceive Google Translate (GT) as a useful tool for enhancing their English writing skills, though its impact varies across proficiency levels. It is sure that more than 80% of respondents through the questionnaire believe that Google Translate is a useful tool that can help and enhance their writing skills, especially when they are in the process of writing an essay. For university students, GT-assisted texts demonstrated improved content and

vocabulary, and fewer errors compared to self-written texts, with non-English majors showing more significant improvements and positive attitudes towards GT (Tsai, 2022).

The fourth point is the student's challenges and limitations when using Google Translate. Students appreciate GT's speed, convenience, and ability to provide quick translations (Tuyet Phan & Chen, 2021). However, several challenges persist when using GT. These include inaccurate grammar and semantics, difficulties with technical terms, complex words, and idioms (Pham et al., 2022). Here are some participants' responses to the question about the challenges they face when using Google Translate and how often they need to re-edit Google Translate's output:

Student 1 : *"Incorrect grammar, and this causes me very often to re-edit the result."*

Student 11 : *"Google Translate does not always understand the overall context of a sentence or paragraph, so the translation can be inappropriate. I always need to re-edit the Google Translate translation to ensure accuracy and precision with the desired writing style."*

Student 13 : *"Sometimes, when I use Google Translate, the translation is not the way I want it to be. It sometimes happens, which makes me need to re-edit and paraphrase it. Google translate also can't help if I want to transfer language to an academic language style, so I still have to use other translation tools."*

Furthermore, students also stated the limitations of using Google Translate, which are similar to the challenges, such as the accuracy of the grammar, diction, and the maximum number of words that can be translated at one time.

The fifth is the alternative tools or technology that students use other than Google Translate. However, GT is not without limitations, including frequent grammatical and semantic errors that can lead to misunderstandings (Pham et al., 2022). To address these issues, students often double-check results using dictionaries or other translation programs. Here are some participants' response to the question about alternative tools or technology that students use other than Google Translate:

Student 5 : *"Yes, I use DeepL"*

Student 21 : *"Yes, I use Chat GPT, Gemini, and DeepL."*

Student 25 : *"Yes, I do. Namely Gingerwriter."*

Most of the participants answered that they use other translation tools besides Google Translate such as DeepL, Chat GPT, Gemini, Gingerwriter, which are tools generated by AI. Students prefer to choose tools that are generated with AI since it provides better features and better translation results than Google Translate.

Then, the students also answer the question about how important the manual writing skills are without any translating tools for the students. Most of the students answer that the skill of writing essays without any help from translation tools is very important.

Student 8 : “Manual writing skills are very important because they help develop a deeper understanding of the language, enhance creativity, and improve grammar and vocabulary usage without over-relying on tools.”

Student 10 : “It is highly important to write based on our own thoughts, so the flow will be more natural and our idea of writing skills will be also developed.”

Though Google Translate provides effective and efficient translation which will bring benefits to the students, the students still think that the skills of writing without any assist from Google Translate is very fundamental. By writing without any help from technology, the participants stated that they were able to enhance their writing skills in many aspects such as creativity, grammar, and vocabulary.

Lastly, students’ suggestions for Google Translate so that it will become more effective in helping to improve essay writing skill. Most of the students suggest that Google Translate should improve their translating tools since there are many grammatical errors made by Google Translate. Then, they suggest Google Translate to create a feature where users can choose the alternative or similar words that are appropriate with the context of their writing. In addition, the participants also suggest Google Translate to add a feature where the users are able to correct their grammatical mistakes with context so that they know their inaccuracy. Therefore, with the inaccuracy that can occur when using Google Translate, the participants suggest other Google Translate users to proofread the translation because there might be errors which can cause different meanings and they suggest the users to not merely rely on Google Translate because translation machines are not always accurate which can be detrimental.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that Google Translate has benefits and challenges in improving essay writing skills. The majority of students found the tool very helpful and practical to use, especially for improving grammar and translating English vocabulary. This research also shows that over-reliance on Google Translate will face several obstacles, such as the lack of translation insurance in academic contexts, which sometimes results in grammatical errors or less precise translation quality. In addition, reliance on this tool may hinder the development of manual writing skills. Therefore, students should use Google Translate more carefully and review their translations twice in order to continue honing their writing skills without the help of technology. Even so, Google Translate can be made more useful for learning by adding contextual elements in learning academic grammar.

REFERENCES

- Al-Badi, I. A. H. (2015). Academic writing difficulties of ESL learners. *WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings*, 63–76. <http://www.westeastinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Ibtisam-Ali-Hassan-Al-Badi-full-Paper.pdf>
- Bin Dahmash, N. (2020). I Can’t Live Without Google Translate: A Close Look at the Use of Google Translate App by Second Language Learners in Saudi Arabia. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(3), 226–240. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.14>

- Chandra, S. O., & Yuyun, I. (2018). the Use of Google Translate in Efl Essay Writing. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 21(2), 228–238. <https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v21i2.1539>
- Chicho, K. Z. H. (2022). An Analysis of Factors Influencing EFL Learners' Writing Skills. *Canadian Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(2), 28–38. <https://doi.org/10.53103/cjlls.v2i2.38>
- Fadilah, N., Setyosari, P., & Susilaningsih, S. (2021). Motivasi Belajar Mahasiswa Teknologi Pendidikan dalam Pembelajaran Online. *JKTP: Jurnal Kajian Teknologi Pendidikan*, 4(1), 90–97. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um038v4i12021p090>
- Fitriani, N., Muhayyang, M., & Amri, U. (2021). An Analysis of the Impact of Google Translate on Students' Writing Skills. *Pinisi Journal of Education*, 1(1), 166–169. <https://ojs.unm.ac.id/PJE/article/view/25834/13030>
- Gautam, P. (2019). Writing Skill: An Instructional Overview. *Journal of NELTA Gandaki*, 2, 74–90. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jong.v2i0.26605>
- Kurniawan, R. Y., Yunita, W., & Sofyan, D. (2022). The Correlation Between Students' Perception of Google Translate and Their English Writing Skill. *Wacana: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra Dan Pengajaran*, 19(1), 33–39. <https://doi.org/10.33369/jwacana.v19i1.23047>
- Miles, M. (1986). Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods: by Mathew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984. 263 pages. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 9(2), 184–187.
- Pham, A. T., Nguyen, Y. N. N., Tran, L. T., Huynh, K. D., Le, N. T. K., & Huynh, P. T. (2022). University Students' Perceptions on the Use of Google Translate: Problems and Solutions. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 17(4), 79–94. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v17i04.28179>
- Setyaji, A., Sukmaningrum, R., & Hawa, F. (2021). Kualitas Teks Terjemahan Mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas PGRI Semarang. *Seminar Nasional Hasil Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 2, 49–71.
- Shefta, K., Ulum, M., Priscilla, M., Ismail, S. O., Studi, P., Guru, P., Dasar, S., & Jeruk, K. (2022). *Exploring Efl Students' Perception in Using Google Translate*. Snipmd V.
- Tsai, S. C. (2022). Chinese students' perceptions of using Google Translate as a translingual CALL tool in EFL writing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 35(5–6), 1250–1272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2020.1799412>
- Tuyet Phan, N. T., & Chen, C.-H. (2021). Vietnamese Engineering Students' Perceptions of the Use of Google Translation Tool. *Journal of Science and Technology - IUH*, 48(6). <https://doi.org/10.46242/jst-iuh.v48i6.1610>
- Winiharti, M., Syihabuddin, S., & Sudana, D. (2021). On Google Translate: Students' and Lecturers' Perception of the English Translation of Indonesian Scholarly Articles. *Lingua Cultura*, 15(2), 207–214. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v15i2.7335>
- Yunita Putri, M., Riana Eka, B., & Testiana Deni, W. (2024). The Students' Perceptions Toward the Use of Google Translate in English Writing Assignment. *English Language & Literature International Conference*, 6, 32–45. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2021.1880441>