GOOGLE TRANSLATE AND ITS ROLE IN ACADEMIC WRITING FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract. This study aims to determine Google Translate as a translation machine, used in academic writing for university students in the English Education Department. The objectives of this study are to (1) find out the use of Google Translate for the students in academic writing, (2) find out the advantages and disadvantages of using Google Translate in academic writing, and (3) find out the students' perspectives of Google Translate to their study towards the subject. This study occupied a descriptive qualitative method, and the instrument was a questionnaire. This study's participants were the students in the fifth-semester of Universitas PGRI Semarang who studied in 2020. The findings showed that students used Google Translate for translating words, new vocabulary, sentences, paragraphs, texts, and compose their sentences. There are both advantages and disadvantages of using Google Translate in academic writing. Google Translate benefited them in correcting the words' spelling, translating words, knowing the general meaning of texts, and finding the vocabulary they never knew before. The disadvantages were that sometimes: it served incorrect grammar, the translation was inaccurate, the meaning did not fit the context, the structure of the sentences was unarranged correctly, and some words were hard to understand. From the students' perspective, most students agreed that using Google Translate in academic writing was not considered cheating. They admitted that using Google Translate was useful and helpful for their study in academic writing. The students thought that the inaccurate result of Google Translate result was unable to improve the students' academic writing competence.

Keywords: academic writing, technology in writing, Google Translate, machine translation

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the languages used by people to communicate in the world. English is also an international language since people around the globe use it in many countries. As a global language, some people begin to learn English. In learning English, especially in the education field, we know that English has four primary skills. There are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The fourth primary skills are essential and required. Else, English also has other grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, and writing skills.

Writing is one of the skills that considered a difficult subject for some students. This problem is that writing has many components to master, such as vocabulary, understanding grammar, and spelling, more common obstacles found in writing (Mantasiah et al., 2018; 2019; 2020; Yusri et al., 2018). It must be a challenge for students who learn English as a foreign language. It is because writing in English is different from writing in their native language. Besides, when they write something or a text, there are some steps needed to consider. To begin writing, people should decide on ideas or topics that will be conveyed, pre-writing. After that, you have to follow the next step to organize the thoughts into an outline. Then, write a rough draft after you finish writing an outline, and the last is to make editing also a revision to your writing.

According to Oshima and Hogue (2007), academic writing is a kind of writing. The writing used in high school and college classes. Academic writing is dissimilar from creative writing and personal essay. Creative writing and personal writing are informal forms, but academic writing is formal. Sometimes we find slang, abbreviation, and incomplete sentences in creative writing or individual writing, which are acceptable.

Meanwhile, academic writing has differences from other writing types, such as journalistic or creative writing (Fitzmaurice and O'Farrell, 2013). An objective and different
approach are needed in most academic writing forms. An academic argument appeals to logic and provides evidence in support of an academic position. It is essential to show the discussions in a logical direction and draw conclusions. Besides that, academic writing has many forms.

In the modern era, the role of new technology gives many contributions to the learning process. For instance, the search engine makes it easier to find any source for everything. We can search for anything by inputting a keyword, and it will show the result. Besides the search engine, social media also has an impact indirectly on the learning process. When we use social media like Instagram, YouTube, and Google Translate, we can get something useful. The use of technology impacts the learning process for students' writing, precisely like Google Translate is a machine translation. Nowadays, machine translation becomes one of the devices that assist the translation process. Not only in translation, but also in speaking, writing, and reading.

When it comes to writing, non-native English speakers sometimes use Google Translate to translate their native language to the target language. As its role, Groves and Mundt (2015) said that the students in a second language would depend on machine translation to do their assignments. They investigated the grammatical accuracy of translation in a text translated into English through Google Translate from Malay (Bahasa Melayu) and written in Chinese. Moreover, they have made three assumptions about the implication of Google Translate. Firstly, is the growth of the Google Translate database will improve its grammatical quality. Secondly, Google Translate will remain free access for the user. Lastly, the students will use Google Translate if available to and helpful for them, whatever their EAP instructors/counselors' advice.

García and Pena (2010) found out machine translation can assist beginner and early intermediate learners to better communication. They explored the different results of using machine translation and direct writing. By using machine translation is getting better help with it in writing.

The improvement of using online translation in writing is also found by O'Neill (2016). The online translator students got higher subscores for features such as comprehensibility, spelling, content, and grammar on one or both writing tasks.

There are many tools for helping translate from one language to other languages, such as Google Translate. Karami (2016), in a journal article written by Ghasemi and Hashemian (2016), Google Translate is a provided service to translates different written texts from one language to another. Google Translate provides translating 90 languages, and it can translate a word, a phrase, a section of a text, or a Web page. Medvedev (2016) added Google Translate has many advantages such as free, fast, translating in many languages, voice recognition translating, translation of entire web pages, and can upload files for instant translation.

The differences between the first language and the second language are also having an impact on learning English. For instance, when Indonesian learners try to write a text in English, they face a different language style between English-language and Indonesian-language. In this situation, they need a dictionary (printed or online). Some students will write a text directly in English, but the rest sometimes use Google Translate. Bahri and Mahadhi (2016) reported that the students who use Google Translate to do their classroom activities and tasks get encouraged to study independently and solve their language learning problems by their strategy. He reported that using Google Translate effectively can help some students to benefit from their self-learning.

The researchers believe that some students have experience using Google Translate to help with academic writing assignments. Kol et al. (2018) stated that the students wrote significantly more words by using Google Translate. They were aware and corrected the errors that showed by using Google Translate. It was supported by the increase in readability levels after using Google Translate in writing.

Krisnawati (2017) reported that using Google Translate, and a learner could develop their vocabulary, speaking skills, and grammar. Although the scholars found the disadvantages of using Google Translate, the benefits can improve students' English skills. Based on the background explanation above, this study will focus on using Google Translate in academic writing and address three statements of the problems, and they are a). What do students use Google Translate? b). What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Google Translate in academic writing? c). What are the students'
perspectives of Google Translate as a learning tool when studying academic writing?

The researchers hope that this study will help the reader gain new information about using Google Translate in academic writing and expected that using Google Translate can benefit academic writing.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a descriptive qualitative method. According to Raco (2010), qualitative methods aim to discover an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, fact, or reality. Based on Creswell (2014), for grounded theory. There were 20 students in the fifth-semester as the research participants who participated in academic writing in the previous semester. This study collected data by distributing a questionnaire consisting of 18 point closed-ended questions via Google Form.

The researchers analyzed the data with three steps by Miles and Huberman (1994) in Isnani (2019), there are (1) data reduction, data display, (3) drawing conclusion and verification. In the first step, the researchers selected the data by focusing on the 18 closed-ended questionnaires. To obtain the information, the researchers analyzed the answers to the questionnaire. Based on Miles and Huberman (1994), a display is an organized, compressed assembly of knowledge to draw a conclusion and take action. Data can help us to understand the situation and decide to do something. Either analyze more or take action according to the understanding. The researchers presented the result of analyzing data collection, the answer to the questionnaire. It was displayed in narrative text from the questionnaire. According to Sugiyono (2019), finding out the discovery that had never existed before is the aim of a qualitative research conclusion. The researchers would like to give the decision of the result by summarizing the data based on the data display. After that, it was explained in a narrative to interpret the data.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The researchers had shared the questionnaire through Google Form, and the responses were collected. The questionnaire is used as a tool in this study to answer the problems. The first finding is the students’ aim using Google Translate. All students stated that they have already known about Google Translate. Two students said that Google Translate is a medium for translating one language to other languages worldwide and translating words, paragraphs, sentences, etc., to any language. There is one student stated that Google Translate could help all people to translate languages. So they think that Google Translate can translate many languages, and they believe that using Google Translate is very helpful in this era. There is also one student who said Google Translate is a platform used to assist in translation activities. One student even stated that Google Translate is an online application used to translate a language into another language; for example, Indonesia to English. Another student answered that Google Translate is to translate text and websites from one language into another.

Furthermore, most students have ever used Google Translate in their academic writing, 100% of the students answered a yes that they have ever used Google Translate in their academic writing, with different frequency in using it. The above information provides the basic fact that all students know and have ever used Google Translate in Academic writing. The following explanation provides answers to those three problems.

The first finding elaborates the role of Google translate for the students when studying academic writing. The data shows that most of the students, 80% of them (16 of 20) of students, said they used Google Translate to translate, such as solving a word, a vocabulary, a sentence, a text, and paragraph even a language. Besides, 10% (2 of 20) of students used Google Translate to search for the unknown meaning of the English word and find the meaning of words that he/she does not know. Meanwhile, 5% (1 of 20) of students used it to make up his/her sentences. The 5% (1 of 20) of students were not explaining.

Dealing with writing aspects, the students expressed writing parts and collaborated with Google translate, shown in figure 1.
The question stated that the most aspects of academic writing that students used Google Translate, 40% of students chose for words used, 35% of students chose for sentence used, 15% is a paragraph used. Meanwhile, for the text used, paragraph and phrase only had 5% for each, as shown in figure 2 below.

![Figure 2. The use of Google Translate for other needs.](image)

The chart shows that the students use Google Translate for other needs, the most vote was vocabulary with 45%, then spelling with 35%, and the last synonym also grammar for the same percentage 10% for each. The second finding revealed the advantages and disadvantages when using Google Translate in academic writing. It found out that 15% (3 of 20) of students said the benefits to using Google translate are to know the meaning of the text and the meaning of the unknown word. Else 25% (5 of 20) of students said the advantages of using Google Translate are to translate, for words, translation, vocab, sentence, and text, and translate a meaning of some words and a text they do not know. 5% (1 of 20) of students said that Google Translate helps them find correct words. 5% (1 of 20) of students said the advantages to using Google Translate are to know the right grammar and to learn about vocabulary, the other 5% (1 of 20) of students stated the advantages to using Google Translate are to know synonym so he/she can choose which one is the most suitable.

Further, 5% (1 of 20) of students said that the advantages of using Google Translate are that it makes it easier for him/her in the writing process that he/she did not know. 5% of the students said that using Google Translate can finish their task faster. Also, 5% (1 of 20) of students stated that Google Translate’s benefits are getting more information from the words. 5% (1 of 20) of students said the advantages using Google Translate are fast in translating.

5% (1 of 20) of students said the benefits of using Google Translate help them know the new vocabulary. 5% (1 of 20) of students said that using Google Translate are simple. 5% (1 of 20) of students stated that using Google Translate can save time. 5% (1 of 20) of students said they could check their writing if grammatically correct.

On the other side, 5% (1 of 20) of students were unsatisfied that Google Translate only provides the function to figure out words meaning and not more than that. When it comes to the disadvantages, it found out that 15% (3 of 20) of students stated that the drawbacks in using Google Translate grammatical error and grammar sometimes wrong. 15% (3 of 20) of students said that the disadvantages in using Google Translate are the meaning does not fit the context. The definition does not have the actual meaning and also sometimes cannot relate to the intention. 20% (4 of 20) of students stated that the disadvantages of using Google Translate are the translation is not accurate and does not match the meaning. Sometimes, the translation is terrible and different from cultural significance. There is 10% (2 of 20) of students said that the disadvantages in using Google Translate are the words do not make sense, and sometimes the words are difficult to understand. The 15% (3 of 20) of students stated that the disadvantages of using Google Translate do not relate and are inaccurate in sentences that are not arranged correctly.

Additionally, 5% (1 of 20) of students said that the disadvantage in using Google Translate is they trust too much for not editing the words after being translated. 5% (1 of 20) of students stated that they read the translation from Google Translate, making the students do not improve their translation skill. 5% (1 of 20) of students said that using Google Translate can make them dependent on it. 5% (1 of 20) of students said that using Google Translate is effortless, knowing its meaning, making them not think hard. The last 5% (1 of 20) of students said that Google Translate does not always provide a related sense.

The third finding uncovered the students’ perspectives of Google Translate when studying academic writing as the data shown in figure 3 as the following.
Figure 3 shows the percentage of the students' agreement and disagreement.

The figure shows that most of the students agree with the use of Google Translate in academic writing. There are 80% of students agree with the help of Google Translate in academic writing. For the rest, only 20% of the students disagree with Google Translate in academic writing. Further, the students expressed their opinion if the use of google translate belongs to cheating or not; thus, it is shown in figure 4 as the following.

Figure 4. The response to question 11.

The response from the students; they think the use of Google Translate can be considered as cheating. 75% of the students answered that they did not consider the use of Google Translate as cheating. Otherwise, 25% of students believed Google Translate as cheating. After that, the students expressed their opinion about their accuracy towards the result of Google Translate, shown in figure 5.

Figure 5. This figure shows the students’ opinions related to the accuracy of Google Translate.

The figure shows that all students think Google Translate is inaccurate. The next thing is that about the students' opinion if using Google Translate can improve students' academic writing. Half of the students stated that Google Translate could improve and develop their academic writing competence. Meanwhile, 50% (10 of 20) of students said that Google Translate could not improve and develop their academic writing.

The following elaboration delivered information, whether or not the students depend on Google Translate. They informed them that they could write and submit assignments without using them. 80% (16 of 20) said they could write or type without using Google Translate and submitting it. The 15% (3 of 20) of students said they could not do that, and only 5% (1 of 20) of students could not decide it for now.

The following elaboration, informs the students' confidence if they use or do not use Google Translate when writing.

Figure 6. Students' confidence when writing with or without using google translate.

The result shows that, 65% of students stated that they did not feel confident if they write without Google Translate. 35% of students said that they feel optimistic if they write without Google Translate. Further, the students will rely on Google Translate in their learning
activities, especially in academic writing, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. The response to question 16

The figure informs that 60% of the students will still rely on Google Translate, and 40% will not depend on it. The students' confession if they found Google Translate was useful or not, as shown in figure 8.

Figure 8. This figure informs whether or not Google Translate is useful.

The students admitted that Google Translate could be useful and helpful for their study in academic writing. 80% of the students admitted that Google Translate could help their research in academic writing. Otherwise, around 20% of the students stated that Google Translate could help their academic writing study.

As shown from the whole figures, 100% of students already known about Google Translate, and 75% of students ever used it in their academic writing. It is relevant to Jin and Deifell, (2013) that Google, including Google Search and Google Translate, was reported that the second most popular online tool. Students have used Google Translate for translating, such as decoding words, sentences, paragraphs, texts. Besides, the students also used Google Translate to search the unknown meaning of the English words and find the meaning of the story they do not know; even the student was using it to make up their sentences.

Following Chandra and Yuyun (2018), they found out that the students use Google Translate in three different aspects: vocabulary, spelling, and grammar. This study also found out most academic writing aspects that students used Google Translate is for word. Then the sentence is for the second, next is text, the last are phrase and paragraph. Moreover, the students used Google Translate for their other needs, such as vocabulary, which most students choose. After that, the second most is spelling, and the last is grammar and synonym. 60% of the students also do the editing after Google Translate does their text.

The students confessed the advantages of using Google Translate in academic writing. They said that Google Translate helps them find the correct words and know the text's general meaning. As a machine translator, Google Translate also allows students to translate words, sentences, paragraphs, and texts. The students' other benefits were that Google Translate was simple and could save their study time for a quick translation. Using Google Translate made them know the correct grammar, synonym, and more information from new words. It could also help them to correct their writing.

Although there are many advantages that the students get when using Google Translate, they also encounter some disadvantages. The students also have different perceptions about the disadvantages of using Google Translate in academic writing. After using Google Translate, the students think that the translation is not accurate, and the sentences are not arranged correctly. Other disadvantages are that the vocabulary is not connected. The words do not make sense, and sometimes the words are difficult to understand; the meaning of the translation does not fit the context. Another disadvantage is the translation also grammatically incorrect, and if they do not edit the words after translating with Google Translate, the terms will look weird for a native speaker. Sometimes Google Translate keeps them dependent on the text of it and rarely develops the ability to translate.

The students' perspectives toward Google Translate in academic writing are various. 80% of students agree with Google Translate in academic writing, and 75% of students did not consider it as cheating. Although they agreed with Google Translate, the whole students think that Google Translate is not accurate. Else, 50% of students said that Google Translate could not
improve and develop their academic writing. 80% of students can write or type without using Google Translate and submit it. On the other side, there are different results that the 65% of students stated that they did not feel confident if they write without Google Translate. 60% of students will still rely on Google Translate in learning activities, especially in academic writing. Moreover, 50% of students think that Google Translate fulfill their writing needs, and 50% of students also said that Google Translate did not meet their writing needs. Lastly, 80% of students admit that Google Translate can help their study in academic writing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the researchers attempt to draw a summary of this study. Students used Google Translate for translating, such as decoding words, sentences, paragraphs, texts. Besides, the students also used Google Translate for searching the unknown meaning of the English words, and the student uses it to compose their sentences. The most aspect of academic writing that students use is Google Translate is for translating words. The second is sentences, the third is texts, and the last is phrases and paragraphs. The students also use Google Translate for their other needs to find vocabulary in different languages, check the spelling, grammar and synonym.

The advantages and disadvantages, students have various thoughts of Google Translate in academic writing. For benefits, students stated that Google Translate helps them in their academic writing. They use it to find the correct words, translate words, search for vocabulary in another language, sentences, paragraphs, texts, and know the correct grammar. Besides, Google Translate helps students understand the general meaning and find the vocabulary they never learned. Because it is simple and shorten the time, so they can complete their task quickly. Students also know another synonym and getting more information from other words. While for disadvantages, students find out some problems when using Google Translate, which is grammatically incorrect, the inaccuracy of the translation, the meaning inaccuracy that unfits the context, sentences that are incorrectly arranged, and some words are difficult to understand.

This study shows that almost all students agree with Google Translate in academic writing and do not consider it as cheating. Although most of them state that they do not feel confident if they write without Google Translate, they still rely on Google Translate in learning activities, especially academic writing. Half of the students reported that Google Translate fulfilled their writing needs. Also, the majority of them admit that Google Translate can help their study in academic writing. Besides the positive perspective, the result indicates a pessimistic outlook too. All of the students think that Google Translate is not accurate, and some believe Google Translate cannot improve and develop their academic writing. Likewise, most students can write or type without using Google Translate and submit it.

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