

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF DEEPL TRANSLATOR IN TRANSLATING ACADEMIC TEXT FROM INDONESIAN INTO ENGLISH

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine students' perceptions of using DeepL Translator to translate academic texts from Indonesian into English. DeepL Translator is an artificial intelligence (AI)-based translation tool that uses neural machine translation (NMT) technology to translate text between various languages. This research involved 2021 students from UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung who took the Education Translation course. This research employs a case study design and qualitative methods. Interviews and document analysis were the methods used to get data. This research investigates the phenomena surrounding using DeepL Translator in Education Translation classes through in-depth interviews. Purposive sampling was used in the research for sample selection. Three students were chosen as respondents to participate in interviews and document analyses. This research indicates that using DeepL Translator to translate academic texts from Indonesian into English has a positive impact. After using DeepL Translator, students feel helped and can improve the quality of student translations. Since the results of document analysis are given to students, students can pay attention to the quality of translated text from Indonesian into English by completing this research. Furthermore, lecturers are expected to be able to use translation machines such as DeepL Translator in translation classes as a learning medium, following technological developments and strengthening students' translation skills.

Keywords: Translation, DeepL Translator, Machine Translation, Academic Text

INTRODUCTION

Translation plays a crucial role in facilitating cross-cultural communication by transferring meaning from one language to another using linguistic structures adapted to the target language (TL). As a bridge between cultures, translation enables the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and values across linguistic boundaries, fostering mutual understanding in an increasingly interconnected world. According to Newmark (1981), translation is fundamentally "the ability to substitute a written statement or message in one language with an equivalent expression in another language." This definition highlights the transformative nature of translation, which goes beyond mere word-for-word substitution to capture the essence and intent of the original text. Effective translation prioritizes the accurate conveyance of meaning over strict literal equivalence, requiring translators to make nuanced decisions about cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and context-specific meanings. To achieve this, translators must employ

appropriate methods, procedures, and techniques while drawing upon their deep understanding of both the source language (SL) and target language (TL). This includes considering factors such as register, tone, and pragmatics to ensure the translated text resonates with the target audience as intended. Furthermore, the translation process often involves a careful balancing act between fidelity to the source text and readability in the target language, making it both an art and a science that demands linguistic expertise and cultural sensitivity. As globalization continues to expand the need for cross-linguistic communication, the role of professional translation becomes ever more vital in fields ranging from literature and academia to business and international diplomacy.

In the Indonesian context, the development of English translation, particularly in the educational sector, has shown significant progress. As highlighted by Retnomurti et al. (2024), the rise of English as a medium in academic programs and international curricula has necessitated the translation of learning materials and reference texts. Translation, therefore, acts as a bridge between global knowledge sources and local learners. Within this context, the primary challenge lies in achieving equivalence, as emphasized by Hariyanto (2003), who asserted that the key issue in translation is finding the most appropriate equivalent in the TL to preserve the intended meaning of the SL.

At the tertiary level, translation has become an integral component of English education curricula. This integration reflects the growing recognition of translation as both a practical skill and a cognitive tool for language mastery. Students in translation courses are trained in analyzing sentence structures, identifying translation errors, and applying suitable translation techniques. Such training often involves comparative linguistics exercises, where learners examine parallel texts to understand how meaning is reconstructed across languages.

One of the cores focuses of this training is maintaining accuracy—the degree to which the translated message reflects the original meaning. Accuracy serves as the foundation for effective communication, ensuring that ideas are preserved without distortion. Surgawi et al. (2018) identify three core dimensions of translation quality: accuracy, clarity, and naturalness. These dimensions provide a framework for evaluating translations holistically.

Accuracy relates to the faithful transfer of meaning, requiring careful attention to lexical choices and contextual nuances. Clarity refers to grammatical coherence and readability, emphasizing logical flow and syntactical correctness in the target language. Naturalness involves the stylistic adaptation of the translated text into the target culture and language, ensuring that the output sounds idiomatic rather than mechanically translated.

Despite this formal training, students often face challenges in translating academic texts from Indonesian into English. Based on preliminary interviews with English Education students who had taken translation courses, common issues included lack of confidence, fear of producing inaccurate translations, and difficulty selecting contextually appropriate vocabulary. These challenges are compounded by the lexical and stylistic differences between everyday English and academic discourse.

With the rapid advancement of technology, machine translation (MT) tools have become increasingly prevalent in aiding language learners and translators. These tools have evolved from simple rule-based systems to sophisticated AI-powered platforms capable of handling complex linguistic structures. One such tool is DeepL Translator, a neural machine translation platform supporting over 30 languages, including English and Indonesian. Its neural network architecture allows it to analyze entire sentences rather than just individual words, resulting in more natural-sounding outputs. DeepL Translator employs statistical algorithms and large language models to generate translations and has been acknowledged for its relative accuracy and fluency compared to other MT systems (Nair & Peter, 2012). Particularly for European language pairs, studies have shown it achieves higher quality results in terms of grammatical correctness and semantic preservation. While MT cannot fully replace human translation, its

presence has significantly impacted how language users approach translation tasks. Many now use it as a first draft solution or for gisting purposes, though professional translators still play a crucial role in post-editing and quality assurance, especially for sensitive or nuanced content.

Prior research has explored the use of machine translation tools such as DeepL and Google Translate in various domains. Takakusagi et al. (2021) investigated the effectiveness of DeepL in translating Japanese medical texts into English, while Yulianto and Supriatnaningsih (2021) compared the translation accuracy of DeepL and Google Translate from French to English. Yanti and Meka (2019) also examined the use of Google Translate in classroom translation activities. However, these studies primarily focused on the comparative effectiveness of translation tools or their application in non-Indonesian contexts.

In contrast, the present study seeks to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of DeepL Translator in translating texts from Indonesian into English. This research focuses on sixth-semester students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, aiming to investigate their experiences, challenges, and the perceived benefits and limitations of using DeepL Translator as a tool for academic translation. By understanding students' perspectives, this study aims to evaluate the practicality and pedagogical implications of integrating AI-powered translation tools into translation training and academic learning more broadly.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative method is used because it is able to describe descriptively and in depth the object of research based on natural and interpretive contexts, as explained by Nassaji (2020), that the qualitative method is a naturalistic investigation that focuses on non-numerical data to understand phenomena contextually. Case studies were chosen because they provide an in-depth focus on a particular unit of analysis in a real situation. Karlsson (2016) and Mohajan (2018) stated that case studies allow researchers to obtain comprehensive information through intensive exploration of an individual, group, event, or activity within certain time and space limits. Therefore, this method is considered appropriate to study students' perceptions of the use of DeepL Translator in translating texts from Indonesian to English.

The data sources in this study were sixth semester students of the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung who had taken the Educational Translation course and used DeepL Translator in their translation activities. The types of data used were primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from interviews and student translation results, while secondary data were obtained from documents in the form of abstract texts from educational journals translated by students and relevant supporting theories.

Data collection techniques were carried out through two methods, namely semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interviews were used to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of DeepL Translator. This technique allows informants to provide open but focused answers according to the focus of the research. Interviews were conducted with three students who met the criteria. Document analysis was carried out on texts translated by students using DeepL Translator. The texts used were paragraphs from educational journals. The translation results were then analyzed using the translation quality assessment guidelines from Nababan et al. (2012), which cover three main aspects: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. In this analysis process, the researcher was assisted by a certified translation expert to ensure the accuracy of the assessment.

Meanwhile, the data analysis technique in this study follows the interactive data analysis model from Miles and Huberman (2012), which includes four stages. First, data collection, namely, collecting information through interviews and document analysis. Second, data reduction, namely the process of sorting and summarizing data to focus on the most relevant and important information. Third, data presentation, which is done through tables and brief

descriptions, is used to make it easier for readers to understand the findings. Finally, drawing conclusions, namely the stage where researchers compile an understanding and interpretation of the data that has been analyzed to answer the formulation of the problem in the study. Through these stages, the study is expected to be able to reveal students' perceptions in a complete and in-depth manner regarding the use of DeepL Translator as a tool in academic translation from Indonesian to English.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

This study examines students' perceptions of the use of DeepL Translator to translate academic texts from Indonesian to English. Data were collected through interviews and document analysis of three 6th-semester students majoring in English Education at UIN Bandung. This section is divided into two parts: students' perceptions of the use of DeepL Translator in translating academic texts, and students' ability to translate academic texts using DeepL Translator:

1. Student perceptions of the use of DeepL Translator in translating Academic Texts

The first finding to be discussed concerns how students perceive academic texts translated from Indonesian into English using DeepL Translator. The instrument used to collect data is an interview. The ten interview questions were classified into three aspects of perception: cognitive, affective, and conative and the questions were ordered based on the translation stages, namely pre-translation, while-translation, and post-translation.

In the cognitive aspect, students prove their comprehension of the research on applying DeepL Translator to text translation in the Educational Translation course. According to Walgito (2003), a person's cognitive functioning is determined by how they take in and interpret information from their environment using their five senses. Students concurred during their discussion of the results that DeepL Translator can assist students in translating texts for the Education Translation course. This is because DeepL Translator assists students in finding formal understanding, building sentences, and translating texts while also saving them time. This follows the claims made by Ningrum and Dewi (2024) that students can gain from using translation tools in some ways, such as by expanding their vocabulary, enhancing their grammar, saving time, boosting their self-esteem, and offering ideas or recommendations to help readers grasp the text's meaning. Students also pointed out that even though DeepL Translator generates more accurate output, it must be double-checked to guarantee the best outcomes. When the translation results are heated and used, this demonstrates the existence of deep cognitive processing. Lastly, after learning about digital technology and translation in semesters three and five, students began using DeepL Translator.

From the affective aspect, students describe how they felt about their emotional responses when they used DeepL Translator to translate texts. Walgito (2003) defined the affective aspect as feelings and emotions that arise in response to the stimulus received. The discussion of this affective aspect states that students' feelings and beliefs when using DeepL Translator affect students' feelings and beliefs in translating texts. Some students initially hesitated to use DeepL Translator because they were concerned that the translation results might not be accurate or comparable to other translation tools. Still, after trying and seeing results, their feelings became more positive. Students felt more confident after using DeepL Translator, according to those who felt more confident in their ability to translate texts after seeing clear and accurate translation results. Bhattacharyya (2015) provided support for this claim, stating that machine translation serves as a tool to facilitate the accurate translation of written texts from the source language to the target language. Additionally, happiness with the calibre of the translation generated bolsters the positive feelings brought on by using DeepL Translator. Many students expressed satisfaction with the DeepL translations' outcomes, which made them feel more supported in finishing their Education Translation course assignments. However, some people were still hesitant and felt they needed to double-check, which shows that even with

confidence, there is a level of caution when using this tool in terms of the conative aspect, which refers to a tendency to act by perception. Walgito (2003) states that the conative aspect is the inclination or impulse to take action in response to what is perceived. Students displayed a proactive behavioural pattern when using DeepL Translator during the discussion of the findings. Typically, they start the translation process with this tool and then use it iteratively and cross-check to make sure the final translation is accurate and appropriate in its context. This demonstrates a strong desire to ensure that the translation outcomes meet the expected academic standards while preventing potential errors. Additionally, students show behaviour that is focused on achieving better outcomes. For example, they combine DeepL Translator with other tools, like Grammarly, to enhance the quality of their translations. They demonstrate a critical and cautious attitude by making additional revisions instead of immediately accepting the translation results. This is because DeepL Translator still has benefits when the translations are not flawless. According to Pym (2010), one of DeepL Translator's shortcomings is its insensitivity to texts that contain cultural terms in translation. These students unintentionally demonstrate a drive to use the best and most efficient resources to assist with their academic assignments while still trying to produce work that lives up to expectations.

The next step is discussing the Pre-Translation Stage. The initial stage of DeepL Translator use by students begins with the introduction and assessment of its reliability as a tool for translating academic assignments. Students first get to know DeepL through courses or lecture materials on digital technology and translation, especially in the fifth semester. Some have even known about this tool since the third semester through an introduction from the lecturer. The main motivation for using DeepL comes from positive reviews and quality comparisons with other translation machines, although initially, students still doubt the accuracy of the language. Therefore, they often compare DeepL's translation results with other tools and double-check to ensure the appropriate language structure. At this stage, students also understand the source text and adjust it to the target language context before translating, and conduct terminology research to ensure accuracy.

The process of while-translation using DeepL and making repeated revisions to ensure the quality of the translation results. They review the translation results to ensure contextual suitability, replace fewer academic words or phrases with more appropriate synonyms, and improve punctuation and sentence structure. To ensure correct grammar, they often use additional tools such as Grammarly. This process helps improve accuracy and build students' confidence in translating. This stage also requires students to maintain coherence and consistency of the text, taking into account the target audience and target language norms.

The Post-Translation stage in students' use of DeepL Translator includes evaluating the translation results and final adjustments to ensure the text meets academic and communication needs. They check for culturally nuanced or difficult-to-understand terms and refine parts that are still lacking. Although DeepL's results are generally quite accurate and use academic terms, students still do manual editing or use additional software, especially to overcome the limitations of the free version and differences in cultural meanings. This process shows the importance of collaboration and thoroughness in ensuring quality translations.

In conclusion, students' use of DeepL Translator in an academic context supports understanding, confidence, and the development of translation skills. Cognitively, students understand the benefits of DeepL in saving time and improving sentence structure. Affectively, their confidence increases, although they remain alert to potential errors. Consequently, they show initiative by integrating other tools and performing manual editing to produce quality translations. From the pre-translation to post-translation stages, DeepL has proven to be an effective tool, although it still requires additional verification to ensure that the results are in accordance with academic standards.

2. The quality of students' translations in translating academic texts using DeepL Translator

Based on the collected data, namely the analysis document, the three informants provided fairly good translation results based on the assessment scores. The following is a discussion based on the aspects analyzed:

The first is based on accuracy; accuracy in translation refers to the correspondence of the message between the source text and the target text. Based on the analysis of the translation results of three students, it was found that although the main idea was understandable, the overall quality decreased due to literal translation and the use of confusing technical terms. For example, terms such as "Thematic Real Work Lectures" and "Merdeka Learning Campus Merdeka" were translated literally, potentially confusing foreign readers. The three students were rated as "less accurate" due to the lack of contextual adjustment and unnecessary repetition of terms.

The second is the acceptability aspect. Acceptability is related to the language conventions in the target text. The results show that although some parts are natural, such as the sentences in Student 2's translation that flow well, there are still incorrect tense usage and overly literal phrases, such as "Real Work Lecture". Student 3 showed a better understanding of technical terms, but there were still terms that needed further clarification. In general, acceptability can be improved by adjusting sentence structure and choosing terms that are more common in English-language academic contexts.

The third is readability. Readability refers to the extent to which a text is easy for readers to understand. All three students scored 2 (adequate), as their text was generally understandable but still needed improvement. Student 1 had a logical flow, but some long sentences could be simplified. Student 2 had a structure that could be followed, but the use of phrases such as "Learning Merdeka Curriculum in Merdeka Campus" felt awkward. Student 3 had long and complicated sentences, which could disrupt the reading flow. Simplifying sentences and adjusting terms are highly recommended to improve readability.

Based on the findings from the three aspects, it is clear that the use of DeepL Translator enhances students' understanding of academic translation. Students become more aware of the benefits and limitations of automated translation tools, as well as the importance of manual editing. This study also provides insights for lecturers to evaluate the use of translation technology in supporting the learning process. Although tools such as DeepL help in enriching vocabulary and understanding meaning, critical thinking skills and awareness of cultural context remain important.

In conclusion, analysis of the three students' translations shows that although the main idea can be conveyed, there are still major challenges related to accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Literal translation of important terms causes confusion and reduces the coherence of the message. Improvement in translation quality can be achieved through simplifying sentences, clarifying terms, and understanding cultural context, so that the translation is truly effective in an academic environment.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to find out how students feel about using DeepL Translator to translate academic texts from Indonesian into English. Furthermore, the research aims to assess the quality of translation with which students translate academic texts using DeepL Translator.

Based on the data and discussion, it can be concluded that students generally have a positive perception of using DeepL Translator to translate academic texts. Students understand that DeepL Translator can help them complete translation tasks faster and more efficiently. They appreciate the accuracy of more formal and scientific word choices. Furthermore, DeepL is useful for sentence construction and saving time, especially in translating longer and more

complex texts. Students admit that DeepL Translator does not always produce perfect translations. They often need to double-check, especially in terms of grammar, punctuation, and contextual accuracy. Some students use DeepL with other tools, such as Grammarly, to ensure that translations are more accurate and meet academic requirements.

In terms of translation quality assessed through document analysis of the translation results of 3 students, the results produced by students with the help of DeepL Translator are considered quite good, although there are still some weaknesses. The aspects assessed in translation quality are accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The accuracy aspect shows that the three students communicated the original text's main idea well. However, some technical terms were translated literally and did not fit the context of academic English. This indicates that the translation needs to be modified to make it easier for audiences worldwide to understand. Some sentence structures are still less acceptable in terms of acceptability, especially in the use of word forms. Some terms are translated literally, making them less natural in an academic environment. In contrast, the translations of the three students are considered easy to read; however, long sentences can hinder reading fluency and should be shortened to improve comprehension and flow.

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