

## GOOGLE TRANSLATE IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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### ABSTRACT

This study deals with the translation of English by using a modern technology machine Google Translate. Practical ideas of how Google Translate can be effectively used to introduce and practice vocabulary items with Indonesian learners of English are offered. It also discussed about the level of accuracy using Google Translate in learning English. Key words: English, translation, vocabulary, learning English.

**Keywords:** *translate, learning, google*

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, a technology may offer an instant translation from various languages to other various translations. People often tend to use dictionaries to translate words from one language to another. The more words it has the thickest book it will be. Technology may offer a new way of translating words to another by using Google Translate. Graddol: (1997:16) stated that technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education work and culture. Technology helps students to gain access to open educational resources.

In general, the aim of using technology resources to collect and analyze data, interpret results and communicate findings to improve instructional practice and maximizing student learning. Propose multiple methods of evaluation to establish students' appropriate use of technology resources for learning, communication and productivity. Kelly and Zetzsche (2012) stated that "translation is everywhere you look, but seldom seen" (p.xiii). One of the aims in this study is to look at the translation method in general, and to see its place in the current learning paradigm. The aim is also to share some professional experiences of implementing translation tools in the context of learning English and discuss further ways of approaching translation in a wider context.

### 2. The Use of Technology in Learning English

Educational technology aims to improve education. Educational technology, in the capacity of technology of education, serves valuable help in the total teaching-learning process for achieving the best possible results in an easiest way through the available human and non-human resources. As the use of English language has increased in popularity so has the need for qualified teachers to instruct students in the language. It is true that

there are some teachers who use technology, but the majority of teachers still teach in the traditional way of teaching method. None of these traditional way of teaching methods are bad or damaging the students. In fact, till date they are proving to be helpful also. However, there are many more opportunities for students to gain confidence practice and extend themselves, especially for students who learn the language for more than just fun.

### 3. Grammar and Translation

Translation and the grammar-translation method of learning and teaching English are the two basic theoretical concepts which place the foundation for the academic discussion in this chapter. Venuti (2013) stated that translation is a linguistic, as well as a cultural practice, that has given rise to long traditions of theory and commentary around the world. Let us recap on some of the theory of the grammar-translation method, this method dominated language teaching for about centuries, well into the 1930s.

Originally used to teach "dead languages" (e.g. Latin), this approach offers that the first language is maintained as a reference system in the acquisition of the second language (Stern, 1983, p.455). Its major point was on reading and writing skills. Vocabulary was taught through bilingual word lists. The sentence was used as the basic unit of teaching and language practice, and the teachers' emphasis and focus were mainly on accuracy.

Grammar was taught deductively with first language being a medium of instruction. As Larsen-Freeman (2002, p.10) summarizes the essence of the grammar-translation method as follows: Submitted February 20th 2016, accepted for publication March 20th, 2016 182 1. It was used to help students read and appreciate literature in a foreign language. 2. Grammar study of a

foreign language would help students understand the first language grammar. 3. Foreign language studies would help learners with their intellectual growth. Before the reader decides to question the need to continue reading this study, it will be noted that the goal is not to reincarnate the grammar-translation method and go back some hundred plus years in time. In this context, Venutti (2013, p.9) stated that who refers to an interview with Jonathan Galassi, a prominent translator of Italian poetry.

The ultimate was asked a question about particular types of translation and ways of thinking about translation. Then he replied in the following manner: *“I am afraid I am not very interested in the theoretical aspects of translation. I think that it’s really a hands-on artistic practice”*. With the emersion of ever improving instant translation tools, translation as a hands-on art of foreign language teachings have yet to be revisited. We will now look into the best practices and highlight major challenges in the English Learning Translation context. The communicative method, which has been the basic of the teaching paradigm for the past several decades, is certainly not to be replaced, but may involve some changes and the incorporation of the newest trends created by on-line and mobile translation tools and applications that are now available on the on-line market. To start with, let us consider current educational policies. The Curriculum Document in 2014 of the Language Centre at SQU strongly recommends using a communicative approach with maximum student participations. The document does not include any references into translation as a skill or a learning outcome. In fact, the word “translate” is not come across in the Foundation Program Document (FPEL).

However, the term “translation” is molded in cases of English language students with a translation major that are part of the Credit English Foundation Program (CELP), which is maintained by the Language Centre. On the other hand, it can be found some inference to translation skills when it comes at least to the following learning outcomes: 1. Use some knowledge of vocabulary in comprehending the text 2. Use a general and a level-specific vocabulary correctly 3. Use some spelling rules correctly 4. Use a dictionary as some of learning resources. The document stated above includes a sample of a lesson plan with the focus on vocabularies. The writing stage with the meaning-focus output allocates up to 15 minutes to provide students with definitions, synonyms or First Language translations of the targeted words.

This means that our system policy does not fully exclude translation as being part of the vocabulary-based lessons, especially for beginners and lower level students. In fact, the writing series used in the Foundation Program at SQU features bilingual lists of common terms. In summary, the curriculum system policy of the Language Centre with regard focuses on vocabularies on the impact of its competency in all skills. For these reasons, it recommends that the explicit vocabulary instructions would be a major element of any preparative language programs, and so this is the time when Google Translate can enter the scene. Google Translate in Learning English.

#### 4. Google Translate

According to Medvedev (2016) being an important member of the “Google family”, Google Translate is probably one of the easiest and most accessible tools to help users meet their translation needs. It offers quick and rather accurate dual translation services in a variety of languages, students have found the benefits of this application and tend to use it more often both inside and outside the classroom.

The reader might have used Google Translate and might wonder how it actually works. Then how did and does this translation software actually do it? In a playful mode, the official YouTube Google video shows an image of bilingual elves working for them, but what actually does the work is the statistical machine translation. The translation itself is based on various designs which are found in a large number of texts. The Google Translate creators are cognizant of all the challenges involved in proper translations, especially in the cases of exceptions, and the exceptions to those exceptions. Thus, Google has decided to interpret a vast number of documents already translated by humans. These documents consist of a variety of sources that include different books, UN materials, miscellaneous websites, etc.

One of the underlying principles is that Google computers are set to scan for statistically significant designs. Thus, once such chunks have been found, such methodology can be used to similar texts in the future. Google Translate developers plead that some languages have less available chunks and that is why their software did not discover many of them. Nevertheless, the translation will often depend on a particular language or a language pair. In fact, Google Translate has some undeniable advantages: it is free and instant; it offers a variety of languages for input and output; it allows voice recognition,

translation of entire web pages, and an upload of entire files for instant translations. The history of research and applications in the field of machine translation indicates a variety of machine translations which they have been the subject of much research of machine translation quality assessment, such as example-based, open-source, pragmatic-based, rule-based, and statistical machine translation (Elliot, 2006; Sin-wai, 1988).

Among the abovementioned before, machine translations, great effort has been devoted to the study of Google Translate, the most famous applicable machine translation in current years (Karami, 2014; Aziz, Sousa, & Specia, 2012; Komeili, Farughi, & Rahimi, 2011). Corder (1974) was the first who studied error analysis and defined language transfer as the main process in first language/second language learning in the 1960s. According to Keshavarz (1999), he defined error analysis as collecting samples, identifying errors, classifying, and evaluating them. He also classified errors and put wrong usage of prepositions, articles, plural morphemes, qualifier and intensifier, and the usage of typical Persian construction in English in one group as syntactical-morphological errors, and language switch into lexical-semantic errors and cross association. Karami (2014) stated that Google Translate depends on the number of human translated texts searched by Google Translate.

Google Translate was the first that based on a rule-based machine translation. And then, it followed an SMT utilizing statistical model to specify the translation of a word in 2006. SMT uses a 'bilingual text corpora' which is a database of the sentences in both source languages and target languages. A large group of sentences translated from for instance English to Persian will be provided for the machine to calculate the possibility of the words. If for example a word like X has possibility 75% to be translated into Y, then it will choose Y as the translation of X. As Karami (2014) discussed different models used in Google Translate. He has focused on two major engines used by Google Translate and has tried to assess advantages and disadvantages of each one separately. He also concluded that rule-based models are easier and efficient for machine translations translating languages which are simple in their linguistics and rules. He trusts for a machine translation like Google Translate which supports 90 languages and gets advantage of statistical models the quality of translated texts is due to data provided for the machine and the pair of languages used up in translation process.

In Medvedev's research (2016), he stated that "One of my former pre-intermediate students agreed to write his view on the advantages and disadvantages of Google Translate. The followings are what Rashid wrote based on Medvedev's research: Bad in Google Translate: 1. Long texts are translated incorrectly. 2. Voice translation is unclear. 3. Some languages have no audio translations.

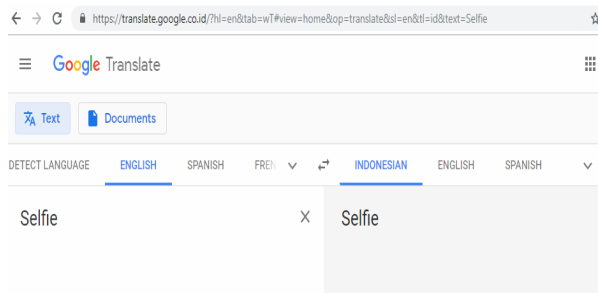
Good in Google Translate: 1. Translation may use without the Internet. 2. The instant of translation in all languages. 3. The translation of certain texts can be saved. 4. It can be used by using voice." It is also stated that some of the students agreed and may still follow Rashid's example and choose to use instant translation tools, moreover when it comes to their reading and writing needs and outcomes. Language students often refer to Google Translate as a convenient and easily accessible tool, but without proper guidance from language instructors they are likely to face certain difficulties.

## 5. Observation and Research

The most obvious advantage of instant translation is the speed. The result is achieved by a click of a mouse or a tap of a finger. Such immediacy also has a negative side to it, which can be demonstrated by a number of examples from the classroom observation and practice in Medan, Indonesia. It will be taken the four commonly used test rubrics to look at some cases of using the Google Translate application: task response, cohesion and coherent, lexical resource, grammar and accuracy.

5.1. Task response With Google Translate, the response to the task of translating a word, a sentence or a full website is available at the click of the mouse or a mere tap of a finger. The machine translation will not follow the pathway which Gouanvic (2005) described as more or less subjective selections made by translators who are free to translate or not to translate. The Shakespearean dilemma is provided by Google Translate as an affirmative response, regardless of the input items. Let us illustrate this with some English neologisms which may enter other languages, including Indonesian, with no translated equivalent. For instance, in 2014 Oxford dictionaries selected the word "selfie" as the word of the year and that same year Google Translate kept it unaltered with its mirror reflection. In Indonesian, the word "selfie" is translated into

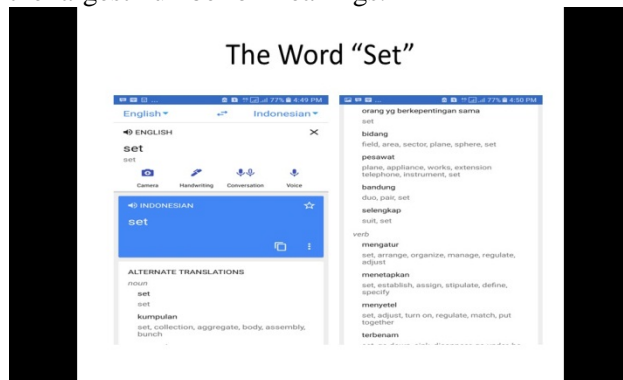
“selfie”, instead it should be translated with “swafoto”.



**Fig. 1 of Google Translation of the word selfie in 2018**

5.2. Coherence and cohesion of Google Translate, as we stated above, is based on various significant patterns which are later used to translate to and from a foreign language. In this case cohesion may be lost. Google translation of an English expression words are handled by Google Translate at an ever-increasing level, but when it comes to context, this tool may fail you and cause some misunderstanding in the choice of words. For instance the expression of “chasing a wild goose” is translated into Indonesian as “Mengejarangsa liar”. The meaning of word per word translation is correctly translated but when it comes into the context it is not correctly translated. For the equally expression in Indonesian, it is “Bagaimencarijarum di jerami”. The meaning of this expression is a hopeless pursuit of something unattainable.

5.3. Lexical resource Google Translate is likely to be most frequently referred to by the English language learners to seek for the translation of individual words. In cases of synonyms, the disparity between input and output presents one of the main challenges for Google Translate. Google translation of the word “set” into Indonesian with its numerous meanings. The word “set” has had the largest number of meanings.



**Fig. 2 of Google Translation of the word set in 2018**

Google Translate offers a set of several sets for this word with 3 parts of speech. In such cases we need more of our learners to occupy in critical thinking. Proper contextualization is an essential skill needed to choose the proper set of meanings. If our learners take on a role of critical translators, Grossman (2010) advised the learners to evolve a strong sense of style in two languages and should sharpen and expand their critical awareness of the emotional impact of words which are translated.

Google Translate also comes up with an opportunity to correct the translated equivalent with a more reliable and adequate option. 5.4. Grammar and accuracy, Chang (2011) compared the efficiency of Grammar Translation method over the Communicative method in teaching English grammar in the Taiwanese context and suggested combining both methods. That is because the former one is focused on accuracy and the latter one on fluency.

With the proper training, Google Translate may be accommodating on the individual word level, but the actual accuracy is often lost in cases of grammar and accuracy. Look at an example of a sentence taken from a student’s story written as homework:

“Bapakitusudahmelepaskanbayanganmasalalunya yang telahmenghancurkanhidupnya.” (The father has given up the shadow of his past which has destroyed his life). Google Translate had given the other options for the translations: (The father has given up the shadow of his past which has destroyed his life.) and (The man had removed the shadow of his past had ruined his life). If the students choose to translate the texts longer and entire passages with instant tools without proper on-site professional guidance, such inaccuracies could be frequent and would need to be addressed.

The students need to evaluate and select the correct translation before copying the translation. In this context it can be referred to a study in Stellenbosch University in South Africa, which had found that of the six text types translated by Google Translate, the Power Point slides yielded the best results. Van Rensburg, Snyman and Lotz (2012) claimed that the quality was still below average. The texts would require extensive post-editing for their function to be met properly.

## 6. Conclusion

Individual lexemes are translated from English into one of 80 languages at ever increasing quality levels in general. This application mostly deals with individual words or statistically significant



patterns that can be converted with a higher level of accuracy. The grammar-translation method has had its day in the history of English language learning and has now been substituted by other methods which are more communicative in their attitude and nature. But with the growing popularity of modern technologies like instant online translators and smartphone applications, some features of translation principles reappear in the current learning and teaching paradigm, regardless of some elements that are inevitably misguided in translation.

In this context, as educators, showing students the benefits and drawbacks of instant translation as a learning tool so that they are not lost but, instead, found in meaningful language practice is a part of goals in teaching English. Translation cannot be neglected and is an integral part of a bilingual classroom. As an English learner, using Google Translate can be used to seek the translation instantly but still cannot be depended as the only translation tools. Mastering the grammatical rules of the language is still a must because expecting miracles and expecting the results to be based on what Google Translate does will be full of lacks. Carter (2012) gave his prospective point of view on vocabulary learning. He stated that learners should focus on patterns of vocabulary that go beyond the single word into formulaic chunks and sequences of lexical creativity (p.15).

If the learners follow the general communicative pattern and still manage to incorporate Google Translate opportunities, then language teaching and learning experience will not be in a state of fear and discomfort as stated in one of the writings given above, but in a state of awareness and involvement in the process of critical linguistic thinking whenever the students translate the text. Learning English will be fun and enjoyable nowadays since many supporting tools given whether online or off line. Technology surely eases the students by offering many applications especially in learning languages yet mastering the rules of the language is still a must.

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