Maritime Students’ Perception of Google Translate in Improving Writing Skill

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Abstract
This study aims to determine the perception of using Google Translate in the third semester of Engineering Students of Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap to improve their writing skill. Ten students were selected as the research participants for this study. The data for this study is obtained by experimental study and questionnaire. The questions consist of the students’ perception of using Google Translate to help them improve their writing skill in EFL and their perception of Google Translate for improving their writing. By using descriptive-qualitative analysis, it is known from the results of writing before and after using Google Translate, that respondents produce better writing by utilizing Google Translate. This can be seen from the aspect of the number of words, the structure of the written content, sentence structure, spelling errors, and grammatical errors which experienced an average increase of 0.66%. The study also shows that although there are some disadvantages of using Google Translate, most respondents agree that there are more advantages to it in helping them improve their writing skills. In conclusion, this study a positive perception in using Google Translate to improve writing skills and it is useful to improve the students’ writing skill.

Keywords: Google Translate, Writing Skill, Perception, English as a Foreign Language.
**Background**

English, as one of the most spoken languages in the world can be challenging to some people, especially students who are learning it as a foreign language. In order to master the English language, there are at least four major skills that students need to comprehend: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. When learning foreign language, translation is often needed to transfer the meaning from one language to another. Translation process is an act of transferring a text from source language (SL) to the target language (TL)[1]. It can be defined as the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language[2]. According to Ghaouar et al., translation is an important cognitive strategy to learn vocabulary[3]. Most university students have difficulties in transferring meaning from one language to other because of the change of style and grammar in between their languages[4].

In this fast-paced culture that we face nowadays, technological advancement plays in every aspect of people's life, including education. English language learning is no exception. There are technological tools that we can utilize in order to master foreign language. Machine translation also can be helpful in EFL classes, that can support learners at the productional level[5]. One of the most popular machine translation software is Google Translate. Google Translate is an automated machine translation service provided by Google Inc. Google Translate is the second most popular online tools to promote students' reading and writing abilities in other languages and lowering the students' learning anxieties because of its simplicity[6]. Students utilize Google Translate in acquiring vocabulary rather than dictionary[7]. In addition, Sukkhwan claim that Google Translate is commonly used for learning reading, vocabulary, writing, and also translation[8]. Learners can also use Google Translate to acquire word meanings and pronunciation[9].

As students of maritime vocational academy, English has become one main skill in order to get a higher chance to be working in an international shipping line for the students. Not only in English subject, almost all subjects and materials are taught in English. Students mentally convert their thought of a language that they don’t entirely grasp to their native language. So, as to understand the material, the students usually need to translate their materials into Indonesian. With the development of the technology, sometimes the students are dependent in using machine translation software. According to Lee, computer-assisted translation contributes to learners’ faster and more fluent written productions with minor errors[10].

According to Nunan, writing is a physical and mental exercise that require the writer to gather and organize thought into intelligible productions[11]. Accordingly, EFL teachers are not satisfied with the level in writing of their students because they struggle to produce well-structured writings such as content organization and grammar[12]. Therefore, this study aims to describe the students’ perception of google translate in improving their writing skill.

**Theory and Method**

Perception can be defined as the way people perceive or understand something from their point of view[13]. According to Gibson, perception is a process that involves receiving, organizing, and also interpreting a stimulus[14]. Perception can be divided into positive and negative perception. The positive one is related to self-confidence, power to endure crisis, and to focus outside oneself. Meanwhile, negative perception can be related to focusing on their own desire and trying to prove their self-worth[15].

This is descriptive-qualitative research since the result of this study is described and focused in words rather than numbers. This study focuses on the students’ perception of Google Translate in improving their writing skill.

In this study, random sampling has been applied in selecting the sample. The populations in this research are ten students from third semester students in engineering program of Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap that are selected as research participants.

There are two instruments to be used in this study, the first one is a study to examine the utility of Google Translate in aiding the students improve their writing skill, and the second one is a questionnaire by using Likert scale as a reference.

The experimental study aims to make an event occur to reveal a cause-and-effect
relationship between two variables. There are two steps on this experimental study. the first one is the pre-test session in which the students are asked to create a short essay, not more than 500 words, with the development of maritime industry in Indonesia as the topic. Then the essays are analyzed based on the word choices, content organization, sentence pattern, and also spelling and grammar. In the post-test step, the students are asked to produce an essay with the same topic in their mother language, and then translate it with Google Translate. Both sessions are each given 60 minutes time of completion. The next step is to compare the pre and post-test essay of each participant to identify any significant change in their writing or there isn’t any change.

The second instrument used in this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire gathers data of the students’ perception toward the use of Google Translate in improving their writing skill. The questionnaire applies Likert scale as a reference, with nominal scale of one to five which range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure the entry of each question. The questionnaires were collected online through Google Form.

**Result and Findings**

After analyzing data from the questionnaire and the study from ten participants, the result of the pre-test and the post test of the essay writing with the topic given, it was shown that there was significant difference between the pre and the post test. The students were asked to write an essay not more than 500 words about the development of maritime industry in Indonesia, with no help from Google Translate on the pre-test and for the post test, they were asked to write the essay in their mother language and translate it with Google Translate.

There were some criteria to be measured, in terms of number of words, the differences shown in the pre and post-test with mean differences of 0.68. For the content organization the differences were 0.16, the sentence pattern revealed the difference of 0.36, the students tended to produce different choice of sentence pattern in their pre and post-test. Meanwhile the difference of the grammar mistakes was significant, which was 1.46. Moreover, the difference of the spelling mistakes decreased as it could be seen in 0.62 mean differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>Mean Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Organization</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Patterns</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Mistakes</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Mistakes</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the test result, it could also be found that the students’ choice of words was more varied, this meant that the students gathered new vocabularies from Google Translate. It could also be seen that the grammar and spelling mistakes declined in the post-test. The content organization was also more systematized since they were told to write the essay in their mother language before translate it to Target Language (TL). From the result, it could be seen that the quality of writing increased. It was parallel with Chon & Shin (2020) study which stated that the use of Google Translate help the foreign language students’ writing quality to be better.

The second instrument was utilized to measure the students’ perception in using Google Translate in improving their writing skill using Likert type questions (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree). The data presented in the table were also collected from the ten participants from third semester students in Engineering Program of Akademi Maritim Nusantara. There were 10 items used to find out the students’ perception in using Google Translate for their writing task. The questions were:

- **Q1** I often use Google Translate to translate text from Indonesian to English and vice versa.
- **Q2** I use Google Translate to look for unfamiliar words that I don’t understand.
- **Q3** Using Google Translate saves my time in doing my task.
- **Q4** I use Google Translate because I don’t feel confident in my writing.
- **Q5** Google Translate makes me lazy to open my regular dictionary.
- **Q6** Google Translate is not a good instrument to help me improve my writing skill.
- **Q7** Google Translate is easier to use.
the result showed that there were some improvements in their contents organization, number of words, the sentence patterns, and also declining spelling and grammar mistakes. From the result of the questionnaire, it could be concluded that the students had positive perception in using Google Translate to improve their writing skill. It was shown that 70% of the participants strongly agree that Google Translate helped them improve their writing skill. However, even though the participants acknowledged the usefulness of Google Translate in helping them with their writing skill, there were still things to investigate, such as the fact that the EFL learners had to be careful in order to avoid the dependency of using Google Translate in their language learning. Moreover, even though we can see that Google Translate is quite effective to help students in writing tasks, there are many language applications that can be utilized such as Microsoft Translator, Babylon, TripLingo Translator, Grammarly, etc.

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### Bibliography


