

TO USE OR NOT TO USE GOOGLE TRANSLATE

Fitrotul Maulidiyah

Politeknik Negeri Malang
fifitmaulidiyah@gmail.com

Abstract

The unavoidable development of the Internet in 1990s along with the introduction of *Google Translate* in 2007 have increasingly shifted perspectives previously occupied by translation teachers, translation students, translation process, and most importantly translation product. In the past, the instructions in translation used to rely on teacher resourcefulness and physical availability of texts. Nowadays, they involve in the introduction of freely accessible translation machine, namely *Google Translate*, which should be commensurate with its professional application and utilization. Thus, this study sought to describe the students' purposes and attitudes towards the use of *Google Translate* (GT) for English language learning. Students observed are students of English department program at Politeknik Negeri Malang. Eventually, results of the study illustrate that most students use *Google Translate* during English language learning even though they realize that there are some problems occurring during the use of *Google Translate*.

Keywords: translation, translation machine, students' attitudes, English language learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Internet has started to overtake people's life since 1990s. The rapid growth of information and communication technology has put translation into a further step towards giving more informed and reliable products for the users. Translator education used to depend on teacher resourcefulness and availability of similar or identical text. However, reality shows that it is now almost impossible to obtain the aforementioned criteria without relying on information and communication technology, especially when online web tools are freely available (Korošec, 2011).

Advances in technologies have resulted in the development of many computer applications which provide opportunities in work, life, communication, and learning in the 21st century (Sukkwan, 2014). In addition to being a rich source of translation-relevant information and resources, these computer

applications, including the Internet and its search engines, have become the rich and extensive sources of translation-relevant information and resources. These readily accessible resources allow translators to objectively assess occurrences of linguistic phenomena. One example of these readily accessible resources is machine translation. Machine translation is computer software which is used to translate texts from one language to another (Yamamoto, cited in Sukkwan, 2014). This software could bridge content among languages so that non-native speakers could understand the target language more easily. It not only facilitates professional translators for the sake of publication but also helps readers to understand ideas in foreign languages (Hutchins, 2009).

Nowadays several online machine translation services are accessible for internet users and language learners such as Google

Translate (GT), Bing Translator, and Yahoo Babelfish. Google Translate is well accepted and ranks the first among the most prominent machine translation services. Google Translate is able to provide banks of two hundred billion words and it also provides its users with the most versatility of words and phrases. This makes GT well known among English for Foreign Language (EFL) learners. (Komeili, Hendavalan, & Rahimi, 2011).

Recent technologies as well as online tools and services have continuously made their way into contemporary and hardly avoidable translation classrooms. In contrast, simply making use of new technologies does not make teaching and learning either innovative or more effective (Kelly, 2005). Therefore, new strategies of implementation and integration into classroom activities need to be elaborated. To avoid the excessive use of machine translations, which in this study is GT, EFL learners must be further supervised on how to wisely and accountably use this machine translation so that in the future, it would not ruin their products of translation.

To this end, a study is initiated by the researcher focusing on to use or not use Google Translate by EFL learners majoring in translation and guiding at Politeknik Negeri Malang. In the context of the study, two questionnaires were prepared: a five-point rating scale questionnaire and a checklist questionnaire.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As a "network of networks", the Internet may be described as the most comprehensive corpus in the world. The system became publicly and commercially available in the 1980s and began to spread rapidly. It was estimated that the Internet traffic doubled every year during the 1990s, and according to web sources, some 1.97 billion people were using the Internet by 2010; this figure appears destined to increase yet further, particularly with the rapid introduction and expansion of ICT across the developing world.

Search engines, such as *Google* or *Yahoo*, are the Internet applications designed to perform searches across the entire corpus of documents, images, and other resources available worldwide. According to net market

share, *Google* was ranked first among the popular search engines in 2010 (with 84.65% of total), followed by *Yahoo* (6.69%) and the Chinese search engine *Baidu* (3.39%). With reportedly the world's largest index of web pages and over a million servers in data centres spanning the globe, *Google* processes over one billion search requests every day, searching billions of web pages in less than half a second.

In 2007, *Google* introduced *Google Translate (GT)*, a statistical machine translation (MT) platform which currently provides automated translations, directly or via a pivot language, between over 50 languages. GT's success is to a large extent predicated on its statistical approach, which has proven to produce better results than the previously supported rule-based linguistic systems. It is most known as *Systran*, that for the most part retrieve data from bilingual dictionaries and grammars which are then supplemented by linguistic and other rules. Contemporary statistical MT systems rely on a large amount of human-engineered translations (UN, EU) which are utilised to automatically infer a statistical model of translation. The underlying premise is that for every source language element there are a number of possible translations, and the most adequate translation is assigned the highest probability by the system (Veritas, 2009).

Google Translation Toolkit (GTT) was introduced in 2009. GTT is a collaborative web-based translation memory (TM) platform into which translators upload texts and submit them for translation. GTT solutions are drawn from a combination of previously human-engineered translations deriving from the global or individual TM, machine translations and source texts. GTT is an advanced and innovative system offering both individual translators and agencies free and effortless access to machine translation. Its application has had encouraging results when used as the initial translation step as well as during the post-editing process, and has thus enabled a sustainable flow of work (Drugan & Babych, 2010; Ramos, 2010).

Internet-Assisted Translation

Translation, in the information age, relies heavily on the use of the Internet resources and

tools (Korošec, 2011). As Samson (2005) notes, teachers are no longer one of too little information, but rather too much, and students need guidance in order to manage this situation.

However, something needs to be addressed at the very outset: the younger generation tends to have no reservations as to the application of new tools and resources. The tendency for students to make use of resources and information available via the Internet is nevertheless clearly manifest.

Generally, it could be claimed that there are two major uses of the Internet in the translation process. First is as a provider of translation relevant tools and resources. Second is as a source of subject matter, facts, and/or linguistic information. Selcher (2005) points out that quality Internet searches “beyond merely ‘finding something’ in a hit-or-miss way, is definitely more difficult and requires much more patience and constant updating of techniques than does traditional library research.” He believes that information overload is very much a shortcoming of Internet use, and something which accordingly requires sharp management and judgment skills.

III. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive qualitative design was deemed to be an appropriate mode of inquiry for this study which sought to provide information about students’ attitude towards GT. This study follows the characteristics of the mentioned design in ways that it gives complete and detailed description about an interest in natural settings without manipulation, and is inductive nature (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). The study was carried out at Politeknik Negeri Malang particularly on the English department. It was conducted with a group of 25 students of English department of 2017 academic year. These students are categorized as ‘good’ students because the researcher chose them by relying on the teacher’s judgment. The students’ scores are ranked and they are chosen to be the participant of this study.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method involving the use of a five-point rating scale questionnaire and a free response questionnaire. The five-point rating scale questionnaire was adapted from a

questionnaire developed by Sukkwan (2014). The five-point rating scale questionnaire was designed to describe students’ purposes of GT use for English learning, attitudes, benefits, and drawbacks. The free response questionnaire contains general information of the participants and problems and solution in the use of GT. The five-point rating scale questionnaire involves students’ purposes of GT use and students’ attitudes towards the use of GT.

The need for the study has arisen from the researcher’s own classroom experience. Students were increasingly using *Google Translate* to support their assignments. The consequences were the students started to have an unnerving effect on classroom workflow, especially when they are asked to produce writing products. Their products of writing turned out to be having low grammatical accuracy and their diction use is inappropriate. When being asked, they confessed that they directly put the Indonesian version of their sentences in the box of GT to be directly translated into English. They copied the translated sentences without editing them and this generated the inaccuracy of grammar use and inappropriate use of dictions and some technical terms. These phenomena encouraged the researcher to investigate these students’ attitude towards the use of GT in their English learning.

The data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires to the students which were previously chosen to be the participants. Students were asked to complete both the five-point rating scale and the free response questionnaires. Students were given time for thirty minutes to fill in the questionnaires. The data obtained from students’ responses in the questionnaires were then analysed using percentages and Likert scale analysis. The data were presented into percentages to make them easier to understand.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results revealed that almost all participants (90%) used GT. Elaboratively, there are 50% of the students who stated that they ‘often’ use GT, 30% of the students stated they ‘sometimes’ use GT, 10% of students ‘always’ use GT, and

10% of students 'seldom' use GT. However, it seems that none of them has never had any experience in using GT. Each of them has used GT even though not quite frequently.

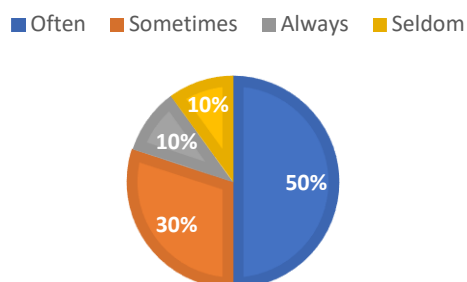


Figure 1. Frequency of GT Use

The purposes for which students most frequently used GT were translation, writing, vocabulary learning, writing, and reading, ranged in sequence. For translation (58%), students used GT most frequently to easily obtain the target language without looking up to the physical dictionaries. However, a talk bubble button was hardly used by them. For writing (25%), students used GT mostly to complete their English exercises and assignments. They also confessed they also used GT for online communication such as writing a caption in their social media. For vocabulary learning (9%), students used GT to get general word meaning especially when they found several difficult words both during their English learning and outside the class. For reading (8%), students used GT particularly to help them understand English sentences and texts in an English textbook including those displayed on a particular website.

In terms of students' attitudes towards using GT for English learning purposes, it was generated that students were in favour of GT at a high level because it was free of charge and easily accessible. It could also perform translations tasks very fast. In addition, it was revealed that GT provided more advantages than disadvantages. In the students' opinion, they thought that the quality of translated texts from GT was far better than theirs. Thus, students stated that GT could help both students with poor and good English competency.

In contrast, some students admitted that GT had negative effects on their learning

habits in several ways. Being assisted by GT, students lacked attempt to read an English text themselves. They hardly remembered or guessed the meaning of new vocabulary words which led to their being lazy to look up to physical dictionaries. Finally, their frequent use of GT led them to not write in English with their own effort.

These findings are in line with Josefsson (2011) who stated that students mostly used GT for the purposes of text translation because it is quick. Some of them used GT to get better understanding in their first language of the text. These findings are also in line with Korošec (2011) which revealed that a vast majority of students were using GT during their preparations for translation classes. He stated that technology is not an option in today's world of professional translation; it is a necessity. Practically all translating is aided by computers and is increasingly being taken away from the personal computer and out of the home, and into the virtual environment. Freely accessible online translation memory tools together with statistical machine translation systems have been developed to a standard where they can provide solid first drafts, thus importantly speeding up the translation process and avoiding unnecessary repetition of labour. However, current ICT is nowhere near replacing the human translator; it facilitates their work and improves efficiency, but translators, including students, need to remain aware as to its limitations.

According to the study, the findings showed that students clearly realized that GT had both benefits and drawbacks. They had positive attitudes towards the use of GT as it was convenient and helpful. The findings support some researchers stating that learners' positive attitudes are encouraged when computers are used for language learning. However, the students admitted that their attempt in reading and writing were reduced and problems of vocabulary retention appeared when they used GT.

V. CONCLUSION

Results of the present study showed that students frequently used GT for translation, writing, reading, and vocabulary learning

respectively. For translation, students used GT most frequently to easily obtain the target language without looking up to the physical dictionaries. For writing, students used GT mostly to complete their English exercises and assignments. For vocabulary learning, students used GT to get general word meaning especially when they found several difficult words both during their English learning and outside the class. For reading, students used GT particularly to help them understand English sentences. The students had highly positive attitudes towards GT: it is free to use; it translates text fast; and GT translation results are better than students' translation.

Some drawbacks were also reported, however. Students highlighted that GT cannot translate all words correctly and it sometimes gave inappropriate word meanings so they needed to recheck and edit word meanings from dictionaries. Besides, students found that GT reduced their attempt to read a text in the target language because it had been translated into their native language by GT.

In conclusion, students realized that GT could help their English learning. They viewed GT as a good learning tool even though it was sometimes quite problematic because they were aware that GT could drive them lazy especially to open dictionaries. In addition, GT could also be problematic in some other ways namely its inaccuracy and inappropriateness of word meanings. Finally, although GT has some weaknesses, students still believe that it is more advantageous than disadvantageous for their English learning. Students realized that they needed to be wise in using this well-known and unavoidable machine translation.

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