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ENGLISH LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS USING GOOGLE TRANSLATE FOR DOING ASSIGNMENTS: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

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Abstract

The use of Google translate (GT) for English assignments is now inevitable. Teachers neither can prevent their students to use GT nor can supervise it since all of the learning process has been running online from home to home. Therefore both teachers and students should bring out the advantages of GT to improve English competence and to reduce the disadvantages of using GT. This study is aimed to find out the learners' perspectives of using GT for doing their English assignments and to describe the advantages and disadvantages of GT. The study is presented in descriptive qualitative design. The data collection instruments of this study are questionnaires and interview. The participants are 198 students of Information system department, University of Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang. The findings of this study showed that for about 80% of English learners depend their English assignments on GT. Based on the learners' perspective, the advantages of using GT are time saver and instant results and the disadvantages of using GT are inaccuracy in the results relate to cultural context, idiom, sentences with metaphor and pragmatic aspects and laziness for learning the structure of English language. The study also came with the solution to eliminate the disadvantages of using GT.

Key words: English learners, Google Translate, Advantages and Disadvantages

Introduction

During this pandemic, learning online is an absolute way to continue teaching and learning activity in all educational levels. By the coming of the pandemic era of Covid 19, learning online by using one of internet learning platform is inevitable. The moments when teachers can strictly prohibit their students to use mobile phone and stick to the knowledge given to practice do not happen anymore. Now, the students are rely heavily on mobile phones, laptops and others technological devices more than before, especially as a to do the assignments. Far before the pandemic, many scientists have surveyed the part of the module devices on language learning (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009; Motiwalla, 2007; Thorton & Houser, 2005). Today, the use of these kinds of tools even more varied and more critical. Both teachers and students need to adapt the technology and use it as a new media of courses and classes. In university, many platforms used by teachers such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Edmodo, Moddle and many others. In English language subject, any media can be used but one thing that will always be **used** now is Google Translate (GT).

Bahri and Mahadi (2016) explain that Google Translate is a free machine translation made by Google team in order to translate text from one language to another language within a second. Now GT can be accessed through PC and smartphones which help the users to access it easily (Alhaisoni and Alhaysony 2017). “Indonesia is the top countries that actively uses Google Translate and recorded translation activities through mobile devices which increases 354%. Indonesia is the largest and fastest growing

country in the use of Google Translate because based on data recorded by Android, the use reached 50% and PC users grew to 94%.” (Hughes, 2017)

The assistance given by tools like Google Translate (GT) is huge especially for the English learners. However, most English teachers argues that the use of GT in the process of language learning is eliminating the quality of the learning process itself (Groves & Mundt, 2015, p. 119) . The students inevitably use GT to search for answers in order to accomplish their assignment. Students are prone to translate almost all of the sentences in their assignments and become lazier to learn to translate by the skills taught to them and become more ignorant when it comes to learn about language compositions or grammar. On the other hands, teachers are no longer be able to check their students acts of studying directly, but using online learning platforms. The flaws that this new system has in relation to checking the students sincerity is still limited. This two opposite arguments and ways of thinking might become obstacles to achieve the target learning because both teachers and students should sit together to get better outcomes.

This study has been conducted to find out English language learners’ perceptions in using Google Translate Application and what advantages and disadvantages that the learners might get after using the Google Translate for doing their English assignments. The study has been done for students who have learned English for two semester in System Information department, University of Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang. It is done after the English

teachers find out that there were massive tendency of students using Google Translate for doing their assignments during online learning and that the assignments handed in by the students are mostly correct. Meanwhile, the students ability in direct and oral practices were not as good as their assignments.

Methodology

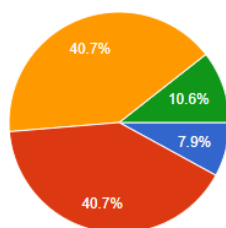
This study is conducted in System Information department, University of Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang. The study is carried for students who have taken English course for two semesters. There were about 6 classes students are asked to fill in the questionnaires and answer the interview questions but there were only 198 students responded.

This study is a descriptive qualitative study where all the data gained described and evaluated descriptively. “Qualitative research explores problems and develop a detailed understanding of a phenomenon.” (Creswell, 2012). He added that “qualitative research is characterized by goals associated with understanding some aspects of social life and its methods which can generally produce words, as date for analysis” (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Moreover Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) state that “qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting and exploring data, in short, understanding data in terms of participants” definition of situations, recording patterns, themes, categories and regularities. Hence, the researcher can obtain deep and detail information based on the circumstances that occur with the students.

Data collection instruments used in the study are questionnaires and short interview by using google form application. A questionnaire is a media of collecting primary data which are consistent and coherent for analysis (Roopa & Rani, 2017) while “Interview allow participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they perceive their situations of viewpoint (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Both instruments are chosen due to the situation during pandemic of covid 19 which prohibit direct contacts between teachers and students. The results are displayed and analyzed descriptively.

Result

In order to find out the English learners’ perspective in using Google Translate for doing their English assignments, ten short



questions have been designed collectively. The questions are designed and revised based on the previous research questionnaires by Munthe (2020). There were ten questions given in the

questionnaires. The first question (1) How do you think about your English competency? This question is aimed to set the map of the students competency in English or their confidence in English language. The result came as follow:

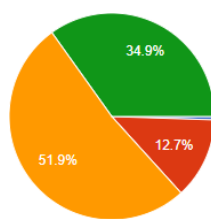
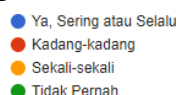


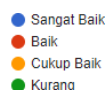
Figure 1. Learners’ answers for question 1

The pie chart in figure 1 shows that 51.9% of learners had good enough English competency and 34.9% of students were less competence. Despite of the answers belong to the students opinion, the chart informs us that most of learners who join in this research have lack of English competency. It also means that most of the learners have low self-confidence of their English capability and this might become the reasons they use Google Translate application.

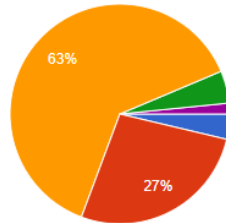


Question (2) Did you have any difficulties in doing English assignments? In this questions, the researcher aimed to see the learners’ reason of using Google Translate. The learners’ answers are shown in the pie chart below.

Figure 2. Learners’ answers for question 2



In the figure 2, we can see that 40.7% of



learners said that they sometimes had difficulties in doing English assignments. There is another 40.7 % of learners said that they barely had difficulties. There is only 7.9% of learners who often had problems with English assignments. By this percentage, we can conclude that English assignments given by the teachers are not so difficult for most of the learners.

Question (3) Do you have GT application in your mobile phone? The questions are given to find out the tools of Google Translate that the learners use. The responses are shown below:

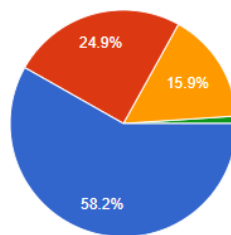
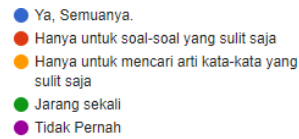


Figure 3. Learners' answers for question 3

Based on the answers in figure 3, it is

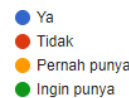
shown that 58.2% of learners said they



have installed GT application in their smart phone, 15.9% of learners have ever had this apps and 24.9% students do not have it yet. This percentage shows us that almost every learners has ever used the GT application.

Questions no (4) Did you use GT to do the English assignment? The question finds out how many learners among the 198 used GT and how did they use to do it when they did their assignments. The answers are in the pie chart below.

Figure 4. Learners' answers for question 4



The figure 4 shows that 63% of learners used GT to translate difficult words and 27% of learners used it to answer difficult questions. In total, we can say there is 80% learners usually used GT to do the assignment. There is less than 10 % of learners who didn't use GT for doing their assignments. This percentage implies that most learners admitted to use GT and they did that to translate word to word from Indonesian language to English language

and vice versa.

Question (5) Did you find that GT is helpful for doing English assignments? This question is given in order to find out the learners' perception of how helpful GT for completing their English assignments. The following pie chart shows the answers.

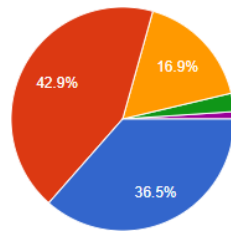


Figure 5. Learners' answers for question 5

The pie chart in figure 5 shows that there is 36% of learners confidently said that GT is helpful for doing English assessment, 42.9% said it is quite helpful and 16.9% of learners said it is sometimes helpful. So, obviously most students feel the benefit of using GT even though they used GT generally to translate word to word.

Question (6) Are you certain that the translation results you got from GT were correct for your English assignments? This question is set to confirm the students' answers for the previous question about how helpful GT for them. The question also figures out how care the students with the result they got from GT for the score that they may get in their English assignments.

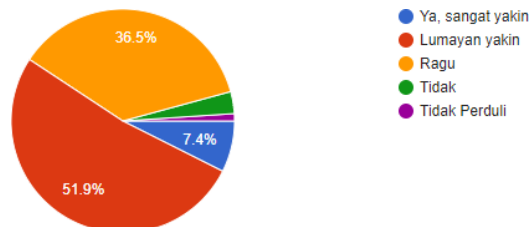
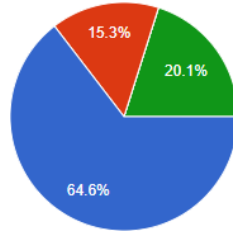


Figure 6. Learners' answers for question 6

In figure 6, we can see that 51.9 % of learners said that they were quite certain with the translation results they got from GT. However we can also see that 36.5% of learners felt unsure and less than 7 % of learners said they are not sure at all. This pie chart also shows that there is also a small amount of percentage shows that students do not care whether the translation result is correct or not as long as they can finish their assignments.

Question (7) Did you know that GT might give you wrong translation result? In this question, the researcher wanted to know how many students are aware with the flaws that GT has when translating languages. The answers are shown in the chart below.

Figure 7. Learners' answers for question 7



In figure 7, we can see that 64.6% of learners said that they are aware that GT might give them wrong translation results and 20.1% of learners agreed with the possibility of flaws. Yet, 15.3% of learners said that they didn't know at all.

Questions (8) Do you think that you will still use GT for further English courses? This question is used to find out the learners' attitude of using GT for the next English courses. The answers of the question are displayed below.

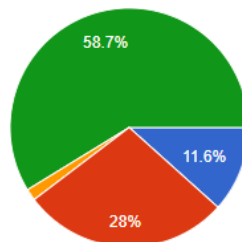
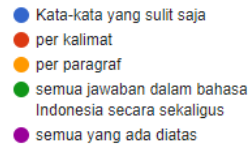


Figure 8. Learners' answers for question 8

In figure 8, it is shown that most learners said that they will possibly use GT for more English courses since they have found the advantages after they used GT. 11.6% of learners were sure and 28% of learners thought that they will not use GT anymore. There is less than 10% of learners

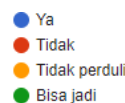


said that they didn't care about GT for further English courses.

Question (9) How did you use GT all this time? This question investigates the ways the learners used GT while doing their assignments. It is proposed to see whether the learners know the correct steps to GT or not. The answers are shown below.

Figure 9. Learners' answers for question 9

The pie chart in figure 9 shows that there is





71.4% learners used GT to translate words by words. 15% learners said that they translated per sentences and the rest of them did

the translation by trying the whole paragraph or even the whole text from Indonesian language to English language.

Besides answering the questionnaires above, the learners also answered for 2



interview questions. There are varied answers

Question (10) Do you think that using GT has improved your English competence? This questions is used to find out learners' perspectives after using GT related to the benefit they have got with their English competence. The results are shown below.

Interview question (1) After using GT for doing English assessment, what advantages have you got?

Most students answered that they can translate words or that they can find out the meaning of difficult words easily. The sample answers can be seen the figure below.

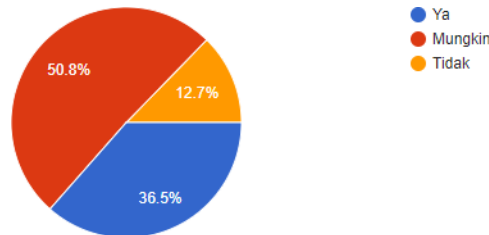


Figure 10. Learners' answers for question 10

In figure 10, it is shown that there is 50.8% of learners said they may get some improvements like having more vocabulary and new words. 36.5% of learners said that they feel sure with the benefits and there is 12.7% of learners did not get the improvement at all.

Figure

Figure 11. Learners' answers for interview question 1

Figure 11 shows us some of the learners' answers relate to interview questions 1. In brief, it can be concluded that most learners believed they get new vocabulary and improve their English skills with GT. Other than that, some learners said that GT help



them to read more text in English and help them to finish doing English assignments quicker and save time consumption.

Interview question (2) After using GT for doing English assessment, what disadvantages have you got? This questions investigates the learners' awareness of flaws or errors in GT translation results and also for their willingness for learning English seriously.



Figure 12. Learners' answers for interview question 2

Figure 12 contains some responses attained by the learners' answers for the second interview question. As we can see in the figure, some learners knew that GT might have disadvantages for their English learning process such as laziness, addictive and ignorant. Some also knew that the results of the translation sometime irrelevant with the context of the language input. However, a few learners believed that GT only bring advantages and they didn't see the problems in using GT.

Discussion

The use of GT during learning English is now inevitable since the learners use the gadget to learn almost all of the time. Although some learners realized that they

could make mistake while translating using GT, the instant process of getting the results bring satisfaction and great assistance especially for doing difficult English assignments.

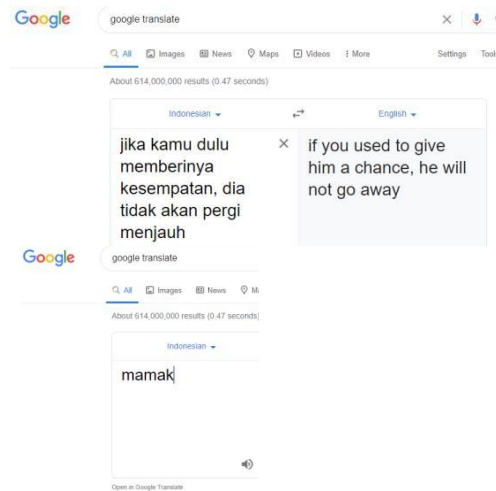
In regarding to this phenomena, the teachers neither can complain when their learners used the GT for doing the tasks

that they give nor to prevent the learners to use it. Despite having such a confusing situation, the teachers should be the ones to offer better solutions in order to eliminate the disadvantages of doing assignments with GT.

Based on the research, it is found that most students tend to use GT to translate words that they do not understand. As a result, the meaning transfer is often incomplete and bias. Mathiew (2015) explains six problems the user faces when using google translators. First, GT can only see words as general apart of the sentence as a whole unit. Secondly, in most tenses, GT cannot assess grammar from Indonesian language in English correctly. The students who have lack of English grammar understanding might miss this error. The third is syntactical problems of natural language. The fourth, rhetorical problems like direct and indirect sentences. Fifth is pragmatic problems. When someone say something pragmatically, we cannot only just catch the meaning literally but also contextually. The last one is cultural problems which sometimes may intervene someone when speaking Indonesian language.

example, grammatical sentences can be translated better but the students still need to be aware of some errors.

Figure 14.



Google translation for grammatix content

Figure 13. Google translation for cultural content

The word *mamak*, for instance in Indonesia, means mother in one traditional language and means mother's older brother in another traditional language. However, GT can only predict the most common word and the most input it has in its system.

Another research of the flaws of GT proposed by Azadmanesh, M. & Mojtaba, B. (2015). In his research, he found that GT was not be able to translate the use of both subject and verb in relation to the context. Moreover, the result done by human translator is still much better and more accurate. Nowadays, most of the problems have been overcome by Google team. For

First, problems are from students Indonesian language. Living in Indonesia archipelago causes multi culture and native languages. Indonesia is a national language yet the students might use their native language more often and longer. Therefore, the students' competence of using Indonesian language cause using GT even more difficult since GT approach and detect a language to process based on the formal language input. The error or misconception in the input of Indonesian language will absolutely give inaccurate results of translation. Secondly, GT still cannot translate idiom, metaphor or pragmatics. As we can see in the figure below:



Figure 15. Google translation for idiom in English

Okpor (2014) also said that GT cannot translate idioms accordingly. Therefore, students have to learn idiom based on context conventionally. After having big numbers of students who used to ask GT for doing their assignment and might also use it more often in the future, instead of banning them using GT, the researcher proposes an idea of giving information and guidance to use GT properly and to avoid mistake. This seems to be a wise response since technology will take over most of human responsibility whether the human is ready or not, later or sooner. The students are supposed to know some important issues about GT and some strategy to use it correctly in order to take most advantages of GT.

First, The students should not translate word by word nor a whole paragraph at once. They had better to translate sentence by sentence or even clause by clause. Secondly, The students should know that GT cannot be a solely reference for their translation. They have to read over the result and correct some ungrammatical errors or inaccurate terms based on the appropriate context of the sentence. Thirdly, students should learn about collocation and idiom, metaphors, pragmatics and other use of language based on context.

Conclusion

Based on all the answers collected from questionnaires and interview, it can be seen that there is 80% students depend their English assignments on GT and that they use GT mostly to translate words by words. In the learners' perspective, according to the answers, GT is an important tool which is very helpful and useful. Even though some of them were aware of disadvantages of GT, they still want to use GT for more in the future. Therefore, it is the teachers' responsibility to show them how to use GT properly and avoid errors in translating language. The guidance given by teachers

to learners in using GT might improve the advantages of using GT and decrease the flaws the learners get from their translation results.

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