

## The Efficacy of Using Google Translate in Translating from Arabic into English and Vice Versa: Saudi EFL University Students' Perspectives

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## **Abstract**

Translation according to Newmark (1988:5) as mentioned by Thiar Sitorus in her research,2020. "It is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text", that is to say it is the translation of the meaning of a text into another language in accordance with the intended author. This requires not only translating from one language into another, but understanding the target language and the intended meaning needed to be conveyed by the writer. (Google Translate) GT works as a supportive tool for EFL learners when translating articles from English into Arabic. The question raised by this research study is whether GT enables them to give the appropriate intended meaning or they will need to edit it again to give the most appropriate translation. Many students copy and paste the same translation provided by GT. Working with the help of GT without having the basic skills of translation will affect the learner's outcome and make them dependent on the GT without thinking to use their own skills to translate. In this research the researchers will investigate the use of GT by EFL learners and to what extent will it develop or impede the learners' translation

outcome. The data was collected through a questionnaire which was distributed to 60 EFL students of the College of Science and Arts of Ahad Rufadia Campus and also by conducting an interview with Ahad Rufadia's college staff members. The data analyses were done by the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) program. In the findings of the research most students agree that GT helps them in the translation of different text and it also develops their vocabulary acquisition as well as their language skills. GT save time for the students more than manual ones even though its accuracy is not sufficient and it needs more editing.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

Google Translate, Translation, EFL Students, Perspectives, Efficiency

## **Introduction**

### **Background**

Due to the huge and vast development in the field of technology many tools are used by students in different fields of knowledge in general to support their education and also by EFL students in particular. The use of GT application seems to be widely used by students when translating articles, paragraphs, sentences, utterances, phrases and individual words from English into Arabic and vice versa.

Nowadays several online machine translation services are accessible for the Internet users and language learners such as Google Translate (GT), Bing Translator, and Yahoo Babelfish. Google Translate is the most widely spread online machine and ranks the first among the most prominent machine translation services.

Google translate has the ability to provide banks of two hundred billion words as well as it provides its users with the most versatility of words and phrases. This makes GT well known among English as a foreign language learner (EFL). (Komeili, Hendavalan, & Rahimi, 2011).

Google Translate is an application which provides great supports and benefit to students' learning. Google translate is in great demand by EFL students when translating from English into Arabic or vice versa. It stands as a machine which provides solutions to students when doing different tasks. English language students are aware of the benefit of this application and the extent it provides support in doing different tasks.

This descriptive qualitative research study is conducted so as to find out EFL students' use of Google translate application in translating from English into Arabic and vice versa. It aims at investigating the impact of utilizing this application on the learners' translation outcome. Will this application develop the learners' ability in interpreting different English language forms and having the ability to translate appropriately or will it ruin the learners' translation outcome and lower the learners' ability when translating from one language into another language?

## **1.1 Conceptional Framework**

### **Google Translate**

Google Translate (GT) was first planted in the year 2004. It is a statistical machine translation (MT) platform which currently provides automated translations, directly or via a pivot language (Veritas, 2009).

GT online tool reached its highest pick today as it nears its 10th anniversary. It added 13 new languages including Hawaiian and Kurdish. GT now includes more than 100 languages. GT now uses a combination of machine learning and human volunteers to make sure of the translation accuracy. Three million volunteers also correct translations and suggest new words. Language newly added to GT Amharic (spoken in Ethiopia; Corsican; Frisian (Netherlands & Germany); Kyrgyz; Hawaiian; Kurdish; Luxembourgish; Samoan; Scots Gaetic; Shona (Zimbabwe); Sindhi (Pakistan and India); Pashto (Afghanistan and Pakistan); Xhosa (South Africa).

### ***Translation***

It is defined in the online Oxford dictionary as follows;

- 1- The process of translating words or text from one language into another language.  
(<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>)

### ***EFL***

EFL as defined in Cobuild Advanced English Dictionary as the teaching of English to people whose first language is not English. EFL is an abbreviation for English as a foreign language. It is the practice and theory of learning and teaching English for use in countries where it is not an official medium as in British English.

In American English it refers to English as a foreign language. The study of English by nonnative speakers living in a non-English speaking environment. (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>)

### ***Perspectives***

Desautels, Lori, in (2014). Discussed the term “Perspective” in the field of education as a bundle of beliefs, that is a mindset which we each embrace determining how we see one another, our experiences, and possibilities or lack thereof. It was also defined in the paper of Lori as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary it refers to; ‘an attitude towards or a way of regarding something; a point of view’. When we drive our perspectives to our classrooms as teachers, this involves all what is done in the classroom so as to fulfill the lesson objectives. Our perspectives impact our students’ emotions and the way they learn.

### ***Efficiency***

Efficiency of something as defined by; The Britannica Dictionary, in (2022) refers to the degree of being efficient. It was also defined in Collins Dictionary, 2022 as the quality or degree of being efficient, competence as well as effective. It also refers to the efficiency of a process and how near it is to be perfect.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The rapid development of various online machine translation services has opened a wide door for English translation learners in general and the majority of EFL students in Ahad Rufadia College. These translation services and especially Google translation support students in accomplishing various assigned tasks. It was also a great support for students of translation specially when working on the translation of Wikipedia articles which they worked on during the program of translating Wikipedia articles as well as different assigned tasks given in different courses.

GT is a useful tool for translators. However, depending too much on GT for EFL learners before building the bases needed to develop their translation skills and developing

their competence in translation might have a negative impact on students' progress toward the desired learning outcomes (Boase – Beier,2011).

The quality of the translated texts reveals the complete dependence of the students on GT without going through and editing the text after accomplishing it by GT which creates a negative impact on the learners' translated articles such as getting unrelated vocabulary words not equivalent to the intended Arabic words translated e.g. Abu Huraira . يترجم ابي القطة . GT produces inappropriate sentences. No editing is done from the students' side either because they depend completely on GT and think it will give them the accurate translation or they do not work on to develop their translation skills and work on translating or they do not know how to translate and depend completely on GT. This shows that learners do this as mentioned previously either they cannot identify the mistakes made by GT or their complete dependence on GT before forming the basic skills needed for translation.

### **1.3 Questions of the Research**

*To meet the stated objectives, the following research questions were raised*

- 1 - What is the effect of using GT by EFL students on their translation product?
- 2 - How can GT help the learners develop their translation skills?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Research**

*This study attempts to achieve the following objectives*

- 1 - To find out the utilization of how GT application can be used in supporting EFL learners when translating different texts.
- 2 - To determine the impact of GT on EFL learners' translation outcome.

### **1.5 Hypotheses**

- 1 . It is hypothesized that the utilization of GT by EFL learners when translating different types of articles have an impact on the learners' outcome.
- 2 . GT application can be used to develop students' translation skills.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this research study will be of benefits to several groups: students of translation, teachers of translation, translation syllabus designers, and professional translators. This study will also be a contribution to the field of applied linguistics and the sub-field of translation in particular.

### **1.7 Limits of the study**

The study will be conducted in Ahad Rufadia campus, College of Science and Arts, King Khalid University, KSA, in the academic year 2022. The study is limited to the use of GT application by students in translating from English into Arabic and vice versa.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Previous studies

The study which was conducted by Alhaisoni in (2017), revealed that Google translate which was used by the students for the purpose of searching for a meaning of unfamiliar words, writing requested assignments and reading an English textbook. They use it for vocabulary, writing and reading instead of using it for translating different texts.

Another study has been conducted by Dahmash in (2020). A close look at the use of Google Translate Application by second language learners in Saudi Arabia. The study showed that the students who use GTA depend on it in their whole daily life as a means of a language learning resource. Using the GTA was so beneficial to them. They used it as a dictionary from where they can check the accurate spelling and pronunciation as well as for translation.

A study has been conducted by Raza and Nor in (2018). The study reveals that EFL learners found that GTA is an efficient advanced tool which facilitate and ease learners' process education. It is available in different choices in desktop computers, laptop computer, or smart mobile devices. It is readily available and handy tool which support learners' education.

All these were the interview respondent's responses. This shows that GTA is an efficient advanced tool which developed and encourages EFL learners when translating different texts. It really took such a great value and place in learners' life. This was supported by what had been mentioned by Aiken, Ghosh, Wee & Vanjani (2009) when they found that Google Translate is the best among four online translation services, namely, Google Translate, Yahoo SYSTRAN, Applied Language and x10.

### 2.2 Google Translate

Ducar and Schocket (2018) in their studies discussing the issue of Google Translate they mentioned in details the strengths and drawbacks of using this app and presented the pedagogical implications of incorporating Google Translate where English language is used. They mentioned that Google Translate has no spelling errors. It supports the learners by correcting their spelling and translating idioms effectively, as well as detecting their use of proper nouns. However, it might also produce grammatically inaccurate sentences in English.

Google Translate use to provide learners with a second audience. This could be seen when learners face difficulty in expressing their thoughts and ideas in English. Their support is Google Translate which assists them in translating their thoughts and ideas in English. The GT text can offer students initial advice on word usage and sentence structures for further reference and revision in their English writing (Tsai,2019)

What was mentioned by Ducar and Schocket as well as Tsai concerning the effectiveness of the use of GT was supported by the responses received from EFL English teachers concerning the effectiveness of the use of this app and how it develops the learner's translation skill.

### 2.3 Google Translate in translating text

The mechanism of translating is on continuous development. Learners have various tools which replaced the use of dictionary books used in translation. Various online resources are available to support L2 learners such as translation Online, Foreign Word, Web Trance, Prompt and Google Translate (GT) (Hampshire & Salvia,2010).

Google Translate is the most common online resources for translation. It is a free multilingual machine translation service developed by Google to translate text, speech, images, sites from one language to another one. It is a corpus based and founded based statistical retrieval of text receiving the language data from huge web data (Kirchhoff, Turner, Axelrod & Saavedra, 2011). It also has shortcoming in translating various types of texts. (Jolley & Maimone, 2015). It serves around 200,000,000 users daily. (Wikipedia.org).

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study is an attempt to investigate the use of GT as a translation tool media used by EFL students when translating texts. The overall research method adopted is the descriptive analytical method. For data collection, the researchers used an interview for teachers as well as a questionnaire which was distributed to 60 EFL learners in the College of Science and Arts in Ahad Rufadia.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

To accomplish the aforementioned objectives of the current study and as well as to answer the questions raised by the current study, the researchers conducted an interview to 10 English teachers. Moreover, a questionnaire was distributed to 60 EFL students about the use of Google Translate Application. The analyses of the students' samples and the teachers' interview will help in finding out the effect of GT on students' performance and to what extend does it help them to develop their translation skills.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

To attain the objectives of the research and answer the questions raised by the current study, the analytical-quantitative research method is utilized by the researchers. Moreover, this method is suitable and it fits the study because the effect of Google Translate will be noticed clearly when response is received from the tools used.

### **4.0 Results and Discussion**

In this part of the study, some collected samples of EFL Ahad Rufadia's students were given a questionnaire concerning the use of Google Translate Application in translating into Arabic and vice versa. An interview was also conducted to EFL English language teachers (Assistant/ Lectures/ Professors) in different Universities. Their findings supported the researchers' main point.

- \* Google translate is a recent technological application which is commonly used by EFL learners nowadays to convert texts into a new language being learned such as English language.
- \* Google translate helps the students to form a comprehensive translated text with a correct lexical choice within a short period of time.
- \* It helps students to form long sentences using correct grammatical forms considering the different parts of speech.

- \* If the lexical meanings are chosen appropriately, the translated texts could be more meaningful, grammatically correct and serve the purpose of translation itself which means the texts might convey the intended message for the readers.
- \* Google Translate is not creative and attractive as a result of the absence of students critical thinking and imagination. Therefore, there is no use of figures of speech because students only transfer the meanings without adding their own skills and abilities.
- \* Google Translate helps students to enrich their vocabulary which is very important in the process of translation. It also helps the learners to understand long texts before translating them into another language. Google Translate encourages the learners to read more texts and increase their knowledge and information because students prefer using new ways of technology in acquiring new knowledge.
- \* As a result of using this application for a long time, students will be able to translate long sentences, paragraphs and even long texts. When learners translate a text, this enables them to form correct grammatical sentences with correct structures.
- \* Some responded that Google Translate is a very useful program since it is available for learners everywhere. It promotes students' quality of translated texts, but at the same time it makes students lazy because they do not make a lot of efforts to get a translated piece of writing done since they depend on this program.
- \* Google Translate supports the learners and develop their translation skills because it enriches their vocabulary, encourages them to practice more by translating different texts, allows them to use different types of translations as well as allowing them enough time to rearrange their thoughts as well as practice unlimited number of texts.

**This table shows the students' perceptions toward using Google Translate App**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	St. Deviation
1-Google Translate from English to Arabic is accurate and without errors.	7.1%	17.9%	16.1%	53.6%	5.4%	2.67	1.06
2- Google Translate from Arabic into English is accurate and without errors.	7.1%	26.8%	14.3%	46.4%	5.4%	2.83	1.10
3-Google Translate is used without rechecking.	5.4%	32.1%	17.9%	37.5%	7.1%	2.91	1.10
4-Google Translate in academic texts saves time.	21.4%	57.1%	12.5%	7.1%	1.8%	3.89	.88
5-Google Translate enriches learners' vocabulary.	10.7%	51.8%	12.5%	21.4%	3.6%	3.44	1.06

<u>6-Google Translate develops the learner's translation skills.</u>	14.3%	48.2%	10.7%	23.2%	3.6%	3.46	1.11
<u>7- Google Translate helps in developing learner's language.</u>	16.1%	57.1%	8.9%	14.3%	3.6%	3.67	1.02
<u>8-The translations of specific texts, such as academic texts are more accurate than regular texts.</u>	5.4%	30.4%	23.2%	37.5%	3.6%	2.96	1.02
<u>9- Google Translate could be generally recommended to EFL learners in a beginner level.</u>	8.9%	39.3%	12.5%	35.7%	3.6%	3.14	1.11
<u>10-Google Translate App can be used as a support but not as a reference.</u>	26.8%	51.8%	5.4%	14.3%	1.8%	3.87	1.02
<u>11-Google Translate lowers the learners' ability to gain proficiency in translation.</u>	1.8%	53.6%	17.9%	26.8%	0%	3.30	.89
<u>12-Google Translate helps learners to translate simple and complex sentences.</u>	17.9%	46.4%	10.7%	21.4%	0%	3.53	.12
<u>13- Google Translate is more helpful than a dictionary.</u>	16.1%	37.5%	12.5%	30.4%	3.6%	3.32	1.17
<u>14- Google Translate helps in translating accurate idioms and phrases.</u>	5.4%	33.9%	21.4%	37.5%	1.8%	3.03	1.00

From the above table, it is clear that in the first statement more than half of the population with the percentage of (59%) don't trust the accuracy of the translated texts from English into Arabic by Google Translate as they disagree, while the rest of the population with the percentage of (24.9%) indicate that they depend mainly on it without any rechecking or modification as they agree. As for the accuracy of translated a text from Arabic into English in the second statement, (51.8%) doubt the accuracy of google translate as they thought it is not

accurate, while (33.9%) rely totally on it without changes. The third statement which completes the previous ones and stresses the idea of whether GT needs rechecking or not revealed that (44.6%) of the population think that it needs, while (37.5%) see that it does not and (17.9%) undecided.

One more statement related to the accuracy of GT in translating academic text is discussed in statement No. (1/2) o.8, it is about whether GT is more accurate in translating academic texts than regular ones. (41.1%) support this viewpoint while (35.8%) see that it is inaccurate. Statement No. (13) discussed whether GT is more helpful than a dictionary received agreement from students with the percentage of (53.6%), while (34.0%) reject this idea.

The mean score of the first three statements and the eighth one which focus on the accuracy of Google Translate and whether it needs rechecking or not in addition to statement no.13 which compares between GT and the dictionary are (2.67, 2.83, 2.91, 2.96, and 3.32). These scores indicate that students' responses are neutral or medium as not most of the students agree or disagree with the given statements which reveals that they don't exactly decide whether it is accurate or not. Therefore, students should be advised to make the best use of these advanced tools and not to rely totally on them and what is more important is that they should employ their translation skills and use dictionaries. This result agrees with Tumbal, Liando, and Olii (2021) who concluded that though Google Translate was one of the faster machines translations, yet cannot be denied that its result was not accurate to translate paragraph and it can make students lazy to open the dictionary. In addition, the students are suggested to use it wisely and always re-check its result.

Moving to the fourth and fifth statement which tackling the application effectiveness in saving time and enriching the learners' vocabulary, it is obvious that great number of students (78.5%) believe that it saves their time, while a smaller number of students (8.9%) see that it does not. (62.5%) agree that the application enriches their vocabulary, whilst (25.0%) do not think so. This result is supported by many other research results as (kumar, (2012), Khotimah, Wahyudin, and Rohbiah (2021), Tumbal, Liando, and Olii (2021) found that Google Translate enriches students' vocabularies and it is very useful to enhance new ones. Saber (2020) also proved that there is a positive relationship between translation speed and the use of computer-assisted translation tool of Google Translate for Arabic-English translation, so it saves much time.

As for the statements No. (6/7) statements which question the GT's ability in developing the learners' translation skills and their language, (62.5%) agree that it really develops their translation skills, whilst (26.8%) think that it doesn't. (73.2%) believe that GT helps in developing their language, on the other hand, (17.9%) don't think so. This finding is in consistent with (Alhaisoni and Alhaysoni, 2017, Kumar, 2012) who found that students use GT for vocabulary learning, writing, reading, translation, and grammar structure. They also use it to learn the language and it helps them to understand and improve their English language.

The statement No. (8/9) about recommending GT to beginner learners receives agreement from students with the percentage of (48.2%) while (39.3%)\_reject it. A large number of students believe that the application should be used for beginners as it is of great help for them.

The statements No. (10/11) discussed the use GT as a support but not as a reference and whether it lowers the learners' proficiency in translation, (78.6%)\_believe that it is a tool not a reference, while (16.1%) (believe that it is a main source and a reference. (55.4%) see that it

hinders proficiency in translation, on the other hand, (26.8%) think that it doesn't. GT is a supportive device for learners and translators, but at the same time it limits their abilities. Kumar (2012) findings support this one as he explained that though GT is helpful, it affects the ability to think, and it has grammatical errors with wrong meaning, and it is not accurate. So, he advised that students should not rely completely on it.

Moving to statement no. 12 which discussed GT's ability in translating simple and complex sentences, a large number of students (64.3 %) agree that it helps in translating both types of sentences, while less number (21.4%) don't agree. Despite students' approval of its ability in translating both types, they should consider the minor errors in its result as it is discussed earlier that GT is not always accurate, and it contains errors. Alkhawaja et al., (2020) findings revealed that Google Translate produces sentences with relatively few errors in English-to-Arabic translation, and the translated text is fluent to some extent and Mother Tongue output are mainly related to mistranslations, corruption of the overall meaning of a sentence, and orthographic errors. As for the last statement no. (14)\_about the ability of Google Translate in translating accurate idioms, (39.3%)\_reject the accuracy of GT, on the other hand, (39.3%) see that it is accurate. Here, students know that it gives them literal translation which is away from the intended meaning of the idiom and therefore the meaning is a mess and distorted.

## 5.0 Conclusion

This study aimed at examining Saudi EFL university students' perceptions toward the proficiency of using GT in translating from English into Arabic and vice versa and in practicing language. Most students agree that it is of great help for them, especially in vocabulary acquisition and in developing language skills. They also believe that it saves much time in translation if it is compared to their manual one. As for the accuracy of translation, it is found that there is a large number of students who don't trust its results, however, the overall analysis indicated that students did not decide firmly about its accuracy. Therefore, they should be advised to recheck and reexamine its result continuously and it should not be considered as a reference or a basic source for them, instead it should be a helping and supporting tool and they should not rely totally on it.

Moreover, it turns them to be lazy and unable to open or check the dictionary that offers various and different meanings from which they can choose the most appropriate and accurate one according to the required context. Therefore, GT may limit or hinder developing learners' skills and proficiency in translation if they only depend on it. Students should make the best use of these advanced tools by being aware of their errors and trying to correct them by employing their human intelligence as these tools are finally artificial machine translation.

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