

## Embracing Google Translate: EFL Students' Attitudes on Enhancing Literacy Practice

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates students' attitudes toward the use of Google Translate (GT) in their online literacy practices. The study looks at the results of an online questionnaire survey completed by 70 students studying English Language Education at Universitas Sintuwu Maroso in Poso, Central Sulawesi. The purpose of this research is to examine how students' attitudes regarding GT manifest themselves in their reading practices, taking into account behavioral, cognitive, and affective components. The results showed that: First, from a behavioral standpoint, students consistently show a proclivity to actively use GT for various translation tasks, ranging from solitary words to complete paragraphs, essays, or articles; Second, students have differing cognitive attitudes about the ethical implications of GT use, with some viewing it as a sort of cheating depending on the context; Finally, on an affective level, students tend to accept the usage of GT as normal, enjoy using it, and may even become dependent on its features. This study gives insight on the complexities of students' attitudes toward GT and how these beliefs influence their literacy practices. Educators can better appreciate the obstacles and opportunities that come with the incorporation of GT in online language learning environments by understanding the behavioral, cognitive, and affective elements. This knowledge can be used to design successful educational practices that take advantage of GT's benefits while addressing its possible limitations in order to improve students' overall language ability.

**Keywords:** EFL students' attitude, Google Translate, Literacy Practice, online learning

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Digital tools in today's digital era have great significance in learning since they have changed the way EFL students learn English. One of the free tools is Google Translate, which is very popular among students, widely used due to its ease of use, and free to use. Google Translate, or GT, has many features, such as being available in many languages and accepting images, text, or audio. For EFL students, GT can be used in foreign language learning to write, read, translate, pronounce words or phrases, or listen to spelling. Google Translate (GT) is a machine translation that has been proven to be very helpful with its simplicity. In the literacy activities, more specifically in doing reading and writing assignments, students use the GT as a translator tool. Ideally, GT assists students to save their time, increase their vocabulary, and many more things (Bahri & Mahadi, 2016; Chandra & Yuyun, 2018; Karnal & Vera, 2013). Unfortunately, in reality, students use GT in all of their activities. For example, they use the translation result from GT without paraphrasing it, causing errors or plagiarism in their assignment.

Reading and writing are literacy practices (Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Tungka, 2018), where students use language to communicate with each other in various contexts and for a variety of purposes. Attitude is one aspect that can describe how students behave when using GT in their literacy practice.

Attitudes can be viewed from behavioral, cognitive, and affective aspects (Jain, 2014). A behavioral aspect is an individual's response to his or her own actions or behavior towards a particular object, which can be seen from their daily habits towards that object. A cognitive aspect is someone's belief or thoughts on a particular object, which is seen from his responses when being asked about that object. An affective aspect is someone's feelings or emotions towards an object that can be seen from his or her reactions towards that particular object.

Several studies have investigated students' attitudes towards the use of GT. In the context of Indonesian universities, there was a high trend of frequent use of GT in their literacy practice in general, and GT was used to translate at a word-level and discourse-level (Chandra & Yuyun, 2018; Herlina et al., 2019; Mulyani & Afina, 2021; Tirtosimono, 2017; Winiharti et al., 2021). Some students used it to save time, and others used it to translate difficult and unfamiliar paragraphs, essays, or articles. Furthermore, they believed that GT assisted them in increasing their vocabulary knowledge, yet they also thought that using GT without proper and appropriate editing could cause errors and plagiarism. The findings also showed mixed feelings, one study revealed that some students' feelings towards the use of GT were neutral since it was merely a translation tool for them (Tirtosimono, 2017), while other findings shows that students showed positive feelings toward GT thought that the use of GT in their learning activities was ethically acceptable regardless of how it was used since GT assisted them in learning English (Chandra & Yuyun, 2018; Herlina et al., 2019; Mulyani & Afina, 2021).

Another study shows interesting findings regarding the use of GT by university students in their writing practices. The findings revealed that Thailand university students consistently used GT to construct sentences and paragraphs, often post-editing the outputs (Chompurach, 2021). Some students even trusted GT more than themselves and used its raw output as their writing assignment. While the majority viewed GT as a helpful and reliable tool for enhancing their writing, they also acknowledged challenges with understanding certain generated content, and potential for adopting bad habits. Despite that, most students did not object to GT's use in English writing. The study suggests that language teachers should guide Thai EFL students on effective GT usage and post-editing strategies for successful writing outcomes. Similarly, research conducted in Arab setting showed that GT was highly used by Arabic university students as a resource for language learning and the improve their language competency (Abdel-Reheem Amin, 2020; Bin Dahmash, 2020).

In summary, these studies provide insight on students' attitudes towards GT, emphasizing its significant role in influencing way students learn to read and write in English. Nevertheless, a gap exists among the existing studies, pertaining to their specific focus and the aspects of GT usage they explored. While previous research has examined views on GT, its usage frequency, and its impact on various literacy practices, the potential challenges associated with GT such as errors and plagiarism. The findings of those studies also showed mixed feelings. One study revealed that some students' feelings towards the use of GT were neutral since it was merely a translation tool for them (Abdel-Reheem Amin, 2020; Tirtosimono, 2017), while other findings shows that students showed positive feelings toward GT since GT assisted them in learning English (Bin Dahmash, 2020; Chandra & Yuyun, 2018; Chompurach, 2021; Herlina et al., 2019; Mulyani & Afina, 2021). In an attempt to address this gap, this study aims to investigate students' behavioral, cognitive, and affective attitudes towards GT usage in their literacy activities during online learning. Moreover, it seeks to facilitate a discussion on students' perceptions of potential errors and plagiarism issues that may arise when utilizing GT. By doing so, this research aims to shed light on the implications of GT on the literacy learning journey of EFL students in the context of online learning environment.

## 2. METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach and gathers data through questionnaire distribution. The target population comprises EFL students majoring in the English Language Education Study Program, with Google Translate as a learning tool in the context of their online literacy activities. The sample size consists of 70 students (11 male students and 59 female students), selected using a convenience sampling technique for their easy accessibility and reach (Etikan et al., 2016). The questionnaire used was adopted from Tirtosimono (Tirtosimono, 2017) and included two sections: a 34-item Likert Scale and a 19-item checklist. The questionnaire was presented in a Google Form and distributed online via WhatsApp. The data gained were analyzed by employing a descriptive statistical procedure to summarize the respondents' behavioral, cognitive, and affective attitudes about the use of GT in their literacy practices.

This study has at least two limitations. Firstly, the respondents of this research were prospective EFL teachers from only one private university who were selected through a convenience sampling method. This limited scope may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Secondly, the investigation focused solely on the EFL context of the use of GT in online learning environments for literacy practice. Therefore, future studies can enhance the research by investigating students' attitudes toward the use of GT in reading and writing activities within various learning contexts, including blended learning environment. Furthermore, employing a mixed-method approach can yield a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of students' attitudes and perceptions towards GT.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data gained from the questionnaires and discusses the data.

### 3.1 Students' Behavioral aspects towards the Use of GT

Tables 1 and 2 present distinct insights into students' utilization of GT in completing their reading and writing assignments. Specifically, Table 1 shows the data of students' behavioral aspects towards GT engaged in reading assignments.

Table 1. Students' Behavioral Aspects of Using GT in Reading Assignments

Item no.	Options	Frequency				
		Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
1	I use GT to check the meaning of unknown words.	0	4.3	10	37.1	48.6
2	I use GT to check collocations. (For example, to find out which is used for a person's height. "She is short" or "She is low". )	8.6	18.6	21.4	40	11.4
3	I use GT to check synonyms.	7.1	15.7	28.6	30	18.6
4	I use GT to translate a phrase. (For example, "a good boy", "will go to school")	8.6	14.3	24.3	38.6	14.3
5	I use GT to translate a sentence.	2.9	8.6	21.4	37.1	30
6	I use GT to translate a clause.	2.9	8.6	21.4	37.1	14.3
7	I use GT to translate a paragraph.	1.4	0	24.3	42.9	31.4
8	I use GT to translate parts of an essay/article consisting of two paragraphs or more.	1.4	2.9	22.9	51.4	21.4
9	I use GT to translate a whole essay/article.	5.7	4.3	14.3	50	25.7

As seen in Table 1, a majority of students often or always employed GT in their reading assignments for various purposes: checking the meaning of unknown words (85.7%); translating a whole essay or article (75.7%) and a paragraph (74.3%); translating only certain parts of an essay or article (72.8%); translating a sentence (67.1%); phrase (52.9%); clause (51.4%); and checking collocation meaning (51.4%).

Table 2. Students' Behavioral Aspects of Using GT in Writing Assignments

Item no.	Options	Frequency				
		Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
1	I use GT to check the meaning of unknown words.	1.4	2.9	12.9	41.4	41.4
2	I use GT to check collocations. (For example, to find out which is used for a person's height. "She is short" or "She is low". )	7.1	15.7	20	37.1	20
3	I use GT to check synonyms.	4.3	18.6	28.6	28.6	20
4	I use GT to translate a phrase. (For example, "a good boy", "will go to school")	5.7	15.7	22.9	32.9	22.9
5	I use GT to translate a sentence.	1.4	8.6	28.6	35.7	31.4
6	I use GT to translate a clause.	2.9	12.9	18.6	42.9	28.6
7	I use GT to translate a paragraph.	0	7.1	18.6	42.9	31.4
8	I use GT to translate parts of an essay/article consisting of two paragraphs or more.	0	7.1	22.9	41.4	28.6
9	I use GT to translate a whole essay/article.	4.3	4.3	17.1	42.9	31.4

Table 2 shows that the students often or always used GT in writing in English to: check the meaning of unknown words (82.8%); translate a whole paragraph (74.3%) essay or article (74.3%); translate a certain part of an essay or article (70%); translate a sentence (67.1%); check collocation meaning (57.1%); and translate phrases (55.8%) and clauses (55.7%).

Based on Tables 1 and 2, the students had a tendency to use GT actively in their literacy practices to check the meaning of unknown words, translate a paragraph, and even translate the whole text. These results showed a different result from previous findings (Tirtosimono, 2017) which revealed that GT was rarely used to translate a whole essay or article. The findings, however, agreed with the findings from Mulyani and Alfina (Mulyani & Afina, 2021) who discovered that GT was very often used to translate a whole text. This inconsistency with previous research emphasizes the dynamic nature of students' attitudes and practices regarding GT usage. Since it highlights the need for ongoing investigation and a nuanced understanding of how students adapt and evolve their approach to incorporating GT into their literacy practices, further research in this area is needed to provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to variations in GT usage patterns among students and help inform the development of effective pedagogical strategies.

### 3.2 Students' Cognitive aspects towards the Use of GT

The data presented in this section are the data of students' responses to the use of FT related to its ethical issues, advantages, and disadvantages. The researchers initiated the investigation by asking students to agree or disagree with a series of statements displayed in Table 3, which resulted in the data presented below.

**Table 3. Students' Responses to the Ethicality of GT**

Item no.	Options	% of Agreement
10	The use of GT is ethically acceptable regardless of how it is used	45.7%
11	The use of GT is considered as cheating depending on how it is used.	50%
12	The use of GT is considered as cheating regardless of how it is used.	4.3%

The findings in Table 3 reflect students' perceptions on the ethical aspect of GT in learning activities. Notably, approximately half of the students (50%) expressed the belief that using GT could be considered as cheating, although they acknowledged that this perception depended on how it was used. In contrast, only a small number of students (4.3%) believed that using GT amounted to clear academic dishonesty.

**Table 4. Students' Responses towards the Advantages of GT**

Item no.	Options	% of Agreement
13	GT enriches vocabulary.	41.4
14	GT helps comprehend readings.	61.4
15	GT helps in writing process.	41.4
16	GT gives convenience.	57.1
17	GT helps pronounce words	44.3
18	Other(s)	2.8

As seen in Table 4, students expressed their agreement with the statement that GT aids them in various language learning aspects. They believed that GT helped them comprehending reading texts (61.4%), pronouncing words (44%), and improving their writing skills (41.4%). This highlights the perception among students that GT actually serves as a helpful tool in enhancing their comprehension of difficult materials. Furthermore, students also acknowledged that GT provides convenience, so it is viewed as a convenient resource that can make learning easier for them and hence speed up their language learning process. Interestingly, there is a small percentage of students (2.8%) cited other reasons not specified in the table, indicating that there may be additional perceived advantages of GT that were not captured in the given response options. Overall, these findings suggest that GT has several advantages for students: facilitating reading comprehension, providing convenience, aiding pronunciation, enriching vocabulary, and supporting the writing process.

**Table 5. Students' Responses towards the Disadvantages of GT**

Item no.	Options	% of Agreement
19	GT does not provide good models.	15.7
20	GT brings laziness.	45.7
21	GT brings dependence.	62.9
22	GT gives chances to cheat.	22.9
23	Others	5.6

On the other hand, Table 5 outlines the drawbacks associated with the use of Google Translate in literacy practices. The data reveals that a significant majority of students (62.9%) agreed that GT actually fostered a sense of dependency, implying that they relied heavily on its usage. Considering the insights provided by Tables 3, 4, and 5, the dominant response related to the cognitive aspect of students is their belief that the use of GT can be considered cheating, particularly in test or exam scenarios or when it is employed for translating entire texts (Case, 2015). The majority of students expressed the belief that GT assists them in comprehending readings, enhances convenience in learning English, and aids in pronouncing challenging words (Karnal & Vera, 2013; Wisdayansyah, 2019). However, it is worth noting that most students also recognized the disadvantages of GT, as it leads to dependence and can foster laziness (Case, 2015; Wisdayansyah, 2019).

Considering the insights provided by Tables 3, 4, and 5, a prevailing response concerning the cognitive aspect of students is their belief that the use of GT can be considered cheating, especially in test or exam scenarios or when employed for translating entire texts (Case, 2015). Additionally, the majority of students expressed that GT assists them in comprehending readings, enhances convenience in learning English, and aids in pronouncing challenging words (Karnal & Vera, 2013; Wisdayansyah, 2019). However, it is essential to acknowledge that most students also recognized the disadvantages of GT, as it leads to dependency and can foster laziness (Case, 2015; Wisdayansyah, 2019).

These findings underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives on GT usage, considering both its benefits and drawbacks. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of addressing ethical considerations and promoting responsible and informed use of GT as a valuable tool in language learning and academic pursuits.

### 3.3 Students' Affective aspects towards the Use of GT

Table 6 offers valuable insights into the emotional experiences of students during their utilization of GT in literacy practices.

*Table 6. Students' Feelings towards the Use of GT*

Item no.	Options	% of Agreement
24	So-so	44.3
25	Dependent	25.7
26	Shameful	10
27	Enjoy	34.3
28	Confident	11.4
29	Other feelings	0

The highest reported emotion among the students was a neutral or indifferent feeling (44.3%), indicating that GT usage did not evoke strong positive or negative emotions. On the other hand, the least reported emotion was shame (10%), indicating that students did not feel embarrassed or guilty when resorting to GT for assistance. These findings agree with previous research (Bahri & Mahadi, 2016; Tirtosimono, 2017) and suggest that, for most students, GT was primarily perceived as a translation tool that assisted them in their learning process, rather than a tool they relied on extensively.

However, it is worth noting that some students expressed enjoyment in using GT. They reported using it frequently and appreciated its convenience, ability to teach them new vocabulary, and

assistance in studying and comprehending reading texts. Interestingly, these students mentioned a sense of dependence on GT, as they were uncertain about their translation accuracy without its assistance. These findings agree with previous research (Chompurach, 2021), which indicate a diverse range of emotional responses among students regarding the use of GT in their literacy practices, with a predominant neutral or so-so sentiment. While some students found enjoyment and perceived benefits from GT usage, others acknowledged a level of dependency on the tool for various aspects of their language learning journey.

#### 3.4 Students' attitudes towards the use of GT in their literacy practice

The research findings on students' interactions with Google Translate (GT) during their online literacy practices shed light on various dimensions of their usage patterns and attitudes. In terms of behavioral aspects, students actively used GT as a valuable tool in completing their reading and writing assignments. They utilized GT extensively for checking the meaning of unknown words, translating paragraphs, and even translating entire texts. These findings challenged some previous research while aligning with others, emphasizing the changing nature of students' practices with GT.

Moving on to the cognitive components, students' judgments of GT's ethical difficulties, benefits, and drawbacks were investigated. While a significant number of students recognized the possibility of cheating when using GT, they also recognized its benefits in improving reading comprehension, convenience in language study, and pronunciation support. However, there were concerns regarding dependency and laziness connected with GT use, indicating the need for balanced and informed approaches.

Finally, exploring students' affective aspects revealed a wide range of emotional responses among pupils. The majority of respondents experienced a neutral or indifferent attitude on GT, emphasizing its role as a useful tool rather than a dominant resource. Some students enjoyed and perceived benefits from using GT, but they also admitted to a degree of reliance on its aid. These emotional nuances highlight the complex nature of students' experiences with GT and underscore the importance of considering the affective aspect alongside the cognitive and behavioral dimensions. As educators and researchers, understanding these emotional responses can inform the development of strategies to promote responsible and effective use of GT as a valuable language learning aid while addressing any concerns related to dependency and overreliance. Moreover, encouraging a positive and balanced attitude towards GT can contribute to a more productive and enriching learning experience for students.

In light of these findings, it is evident that GT plays a major impact on students' literacy practices especially in an online learning environment. GT influences their actions, cognitive perceptions, and emotional experiences. Understanding these complexities is crucial for educators and researchers to develop effective instructional strategies that promote ethical GT usage while addressing concerns about its overreliance. Educators may embrace GT's potential as a helpful aid in language learning and enable students to become more adept and confident communicators by fostering a positive and balanced attitude toward it. However, ongoing study in this area is vital in order to keep up with the shifting dynamics of technology's impact on language learning and to develop techniques that fit the demands of various learners in an ever-changing educational landscape.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study shed light on students' attitudes towards the use of Google Translate in literacy practice. Behaviorally, students exhibited a tendency to employ Google Translate at various levels, ranging from checking the meaning of unknown words to translating paragraphs and entire essays/articles. Cognitively, students acknowledged that the perception of Google Translate as cheating varied depending on factors such as its purpose, instructions, and the specific context of its usage. Students also recognized the potential advantages of Google Translate which are providing assistance in comprehending readings, providing convenience, and aiding pronunciation. However, it is important to note that Google Translate was also associated with certain disadvantages, such as fostering dependency, laziness, and creating opportunities for academic dishonesty. Affective responses towards Google Translate usage were primarily neutral or so-so, indicating a lack of strong emotional engagement.

There are some implications of these findings for literacy instruction. It is recommended that educators provide clear and proper guidance regarding the use of Google Translate in the classroom, including teaching the students to use Google Translate as a tool rather than becoming dependent on it. By emphasizing wise and responsible usage, students can maximize the benefits of Google Translate while minimizing the potential negative consequences. In summary, by establishing appropriate guidelines for GT usage, educators can help students effectively integrate GT into their literacy practices, enabling them to utilize it as a supportive resource in their language learning journey while maintaining a balanced and independent approach to their studies.

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