

The Factors Affecting the Use of Google Translate as Language Learning Tool by Prospective English Teachers

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to explore the factors affecting the use of Google Translate (GT) as a language learning tool by prospective English teachers. The study adopted a survey approach and involved 93 Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) prospective teachers. The participants were selected from Malaysian universities through purposive sampling. The collected data was analyzed by performing both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 26. The findings showed that the students and teachers had positive attitudes towards GT as a language learning tool. It was also indicated that the factors of usefulness, ease of use, accuracy and GT use are strongly correlated; however, only usefulness of GT significantly influences and predicts the use of GT. The finding of the study has implications for students, lecturers, curriculum designers and researchers.

Keywords: google translate, English teacher, language learning tool

1. Introduction

Technology has been proven to assist learners in language learning by offering various ever-growing applications (Habebba, & Muhammedb, 2020). One of the language-related technologies is machine translation which is increasingly gaining popularity. One of the machine translation applications which has widely been used recently is Google Translate (GT) and is available on and compatible with many devices (Allu é 2016; Mundt, & Groves, 2016). GT is a statistical system that helps users to translate from and into a wide array of languages. GT is a service provided by Google Incorporation to translate words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs or even a whole text or web page from one language to another (Noviarini, 2021; Stapleton, & Kin, 2019). Students are using it for different purposes such as language learning and academic writing (Alhaisoni, & Alhaysony, 2017). GT has seen a lot of improvements following the introduction of artificial neural network-based neural machine translate system into the GT system (Derić, 2020). GT has been facilitating the translation of texts for the users; however, the accuracy of its translation is still in question (Stapleton & Kin, 2019). Several factors impact the use of GT such as usefulness, ease of use, accuracy, and attitude, etc. Although GT has a leading role in translation of texts, the academic literature fails to acknowledge what factors contribute to the intention of users to use GT (Yang & Wang, 2019). Only a handful of studies have looked at the students teachers' perceptions of GT. In Asian language learning context, students and teachers use GT for different purposes (Bahri & Mahadi, 2016; Septiadi, 2019). However, there is very little knowledge available regarding the factors predicting the use of GT in the process of language learning. Hence, the objective of this study was to investigate factors affecting the use of GT as a language learning tool by English students teachers. The present study uses the terms 'student teachers', 'prospective teachers' and 'pre-service teachers' interchangeably.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Technology acceptance model (TAM) was initially introduced by Davis (1989). TAM predicts and explains technology acceptance and use. This theory is rooted in Theory of Reason Action proposed by Ajzen (1975). The main components of TAM include: perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), attitude towards use,

behavioral intention to use, and actual system use, as demonstrated in Figure 1. PU refers to the features and functionalities of technology and is defined as: “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance” (Davis, 1989, p.320). PEOU is connected with easiness in using technology and is defined as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort” (Davis, 1989, p.320). Djiwandono (2019) applied these core elements of TAM to the use of technology by teachers. Djiwandono (2019) defines PU as “the extent to which teachers believe that digital technology will help them accomplish their work efficiently and effectively” (p.611). He defines PEOU as “the extent to which teachers believe that they do not have to deal with a lot of troubles and efforts in using the high technology” (p.611). Accordingly, in the present study, PU refers to the degree to which pre-service teachers perceive Google Translate as a helpful tool in language learning. PEOU refers to the degree to which the pre-service teachers believe that Google Translate is easy to use in language learning process.

Literature on technology use across disciplines evidences that PU and PEOU are strongly correlated: social media (Dumpit & Fernandez, 2017), learning management system (Fearnley & Amora, 2020), machine translation (Yang, & Wang, 2019), and Google Translate (Al-Marouf, et al., 2020). Another element is attitude which refers to an individual’s assessments of and beliefs about object of behavior (Ajzen, 1975). Another element is behavioral intention that directly influences the system use (Davis et al., 1989). The last element is actual use of the system which is the endpoint where users use the technology like GT. Being a robust and easily applicable to predict and explain technology use across different fields, has resulted in massive literature on using TAM (Al-Marouf, et al., 2020; Dumpit & Fernandez, 2017; Fearnley & Amora, 2020; Surendran, 2012; Yang, & Wang, 2019). In language learning context, Alhaisoni, and Alhaysony (2017) investigated EFL students’ perceptions of GT by involving 92 participants. They found that students had positive attitudes towards GT and used it for writing assignment, learning new words, and reading textbooks.

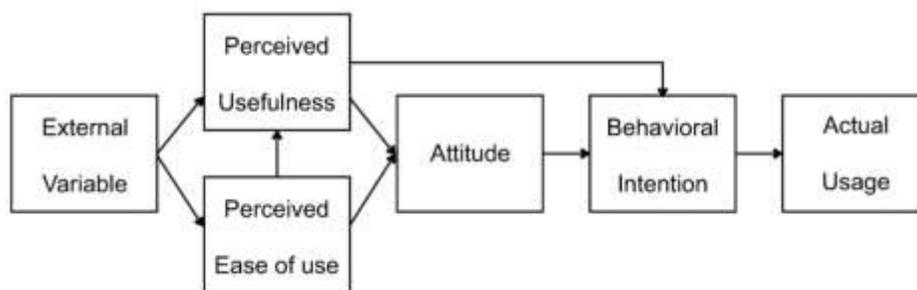


Figure 1. Technology acceptance model (Davise, 1989)

Al-Marouf et al. (2020) extended TAM to explore the acceptance of GT using a sample of 368 students. Their findings indicated that PU and PEOU strongly affect the behavioral intention to use GT. A study by Yang and Wang (2019) involving 109 students using TAM showed that PU significantly affects the intention to use machine translation. Other studies also indicated that students had positive attitudes towards PU and PEOU of GT (Dalimunthe, 2020; Habeeba & Muhammed, 2020). However, studies indicate that the users had issues with the accuracy of GT such as grammatical errors and lack of proofreading tool (Habeeba & Muhammed, 2020), inaccuracy and mismatch of the meaning (Brahmana, Sofyan, & Putri, 2020; Dalimunthe, 2020).

2.2 Accuracy

Accuracy of machine translation refers to the degree to which the output of translating tool reflects the original meaning of the translated text (Trujillo, 1999). Accuracy is associated with the translation quality, intelligibility and reliability (Arnold, et al., 1994; Derić, 2020). Some studies have highlighted GT output errors in terms of lexico-grammatical, syntax, pragmatism, and punctuation (Allu é 2016). GT translation from English to Indonesian language was found to have major errors (Handoyo (2019). In a survey study involving 111 students, Septiadi (2019) found that the participants had positive perception of GT and 43% of them often used GT; however, many students challenged the accuracy of GT. In comparing GT with other machine translation (SDL & Tradukka), GT had a more accurate, acceptable output (Cahyaningrum, & Widiyantari, 2018). Medvedev (2016) explored GT use for translating vocabulary items and reported its high accuracy. Tsai (2019) compared Chinese EFL students’ translation with that of GT and found that GT output had better quality in terms of word order, advanced words, grammar and spelling. The students also developed positive attitudes towards GT. A study also indicated that pre-service teachers had limited

sensitivity to GT errors (Prihastuti, 2018). A critically important aspect of GT is its use which will be discussed below.

2.3 Use

The end point in TAM model is the actual use of GT by users which is affected by PU, PEOU, and accuracy of its output. Literature review indicated that students use GT for different purposes in language learning (Bin Dahmash, 2020; Djiwandono, 2019; Resend & Way, 2021; Chandra & Yuyu, 2018). GT is used for writing improvement (Bin Dahmash (2020), communication, speaking, collaboration, learning source (Djiwandono, 2019; Resend & Way, 2021), spelling, vocabulary, phrase, and grammar (Chandra & Yuyun, 2018; Resend & Way, 2021), paragraph and whole-text translation (Chen, 2020), and reading, vocabulary learning and writing in Malay Language (Bahri & Mahadi, 2016). In a large scale study involving 1,042 teachers, Alimi (2018) found that 74.1% of teachers were aware of GT use; while, they were not competent in GT use.

Literature evidences that core elements of TAM strongly predict the use of technology. However, there is a paucity of study on the assessment of direct influence of PU and PEOU on GT use. Further, there is no clear picture how accuracy of GT output impacts its use by TESOL pre-service teachers in language learning course.

2.4 The Proposed Model

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that predict and explain the use of GT by student teachers. The present study developed a model by adding accuracy to the core elements TAM model. The study extended TAM by adding the construct 'accuracy' since the accuracy of machine translation particularly GT is critically important. The proposed model comprises usefulness, ease of use, accuracy and use of GT. Figure 2 demonstrates the elements of the proposed model for the present study.

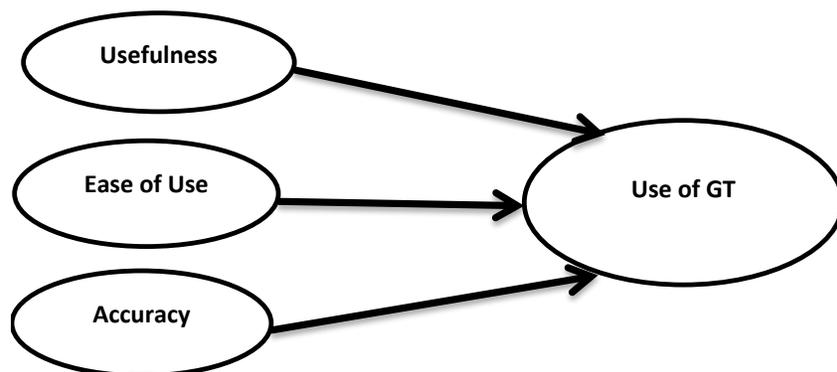


Figure 2. The proposed model

3. Methodology

This survey study investigated the factors affecting the use of Google Translate (GT) by assessing an extension of TAM elements (PU, PEOU, Use) and accuracy of GT translation in academic writing course.

3.1 Sampling Approach

The study selected its 93 participants from Malaysian university through purposive sampling from pre-service teachers. The rationale for adoption of nonprobability purposive sampling method is to have access to the participants who have required information to collect data from to address the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2016). It involved those student teachers who were using GT in the process of academic writing.

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument was a questionnaire comprised of demographics and behavioral intention. The section related to behavioral intention consisted of four constructs namely, Accuracy (4 items), PU (5 items), PEOU (2 items) and Use (13 items) based on Lickert Scale (Strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, neutral= 3, agree=4, strongly agree=5). The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies (Al-Marouf, Salloum, AlHamadand, & Shaalan, 2020; Yang & Wang, 2019).

3.3 Research Procedure

The study adopted a survey approach by involving 93 pre-service teachers. A survey questionnaire constructed in

Google Forms was sent to the students teachers through emails and WhatsApp. The participants took one week to answer the questions. The obtained data was saved in excel format and was transferred to SPSS version 26 for data analysis.

3.4 Techniques of Analyzing Data

The obtained data was analyzed using descriptive analysis (Mean, frequency, Std) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression) to examine the effect of constructs on GT use.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics of Us

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
| .93 | 13 |

As illustrated in Table1, the construct Use has 13 items with the reliability of 0.93, which is acceptable.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics of Accuracy

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
| .82 | 4 |

As indicated in Table 2, the construct accuracy with 4 items has the reliability index of .82, which is acceptable.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics of PU

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
| .88 | 5 |

As demonstrated in Table 3, the construct PU with 5 items has the reliability index of .88, which is acceptable.

Table 4. Reliability Statistics of PEOU

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
| .73 | 2 |

As illustrated in table 4, the construct PEOU with 2 items has the reliability index of .73, which is acceptable.

4. Result

This section presents the result of data analysis including demographics, descriptive and inferential statistics.

Table 5. Gender

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Male | 6 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 6.5 |
| | Female | 87 | 93.5 | 93.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 5 demonstrates the gender of participants. It is evident that that 87 females (93.5%) and 6 males (6.5%) participated in the study.

Table 6. Frequency of GT use

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Seldom | 1 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Sometimes | 54 | 58.1 | 58.1 | 59.1 |
| | Often | 16 | 17.2 | 17.2 | 76.3 |
| | Always | 22 | 23.7 | 23.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 6 illustrates the frequency of using GT by the participants. Around 58% (54) indicated that they sometimes use GT, while about 23.7% (22) accepted that they always use GT followed by 17.2% (16), and 1.1% (1) who

acknowledged that they use often or seldom use GT, respectively.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Use

| Statement | Mean | Std |
|---|------|------|
| 2. I use GT for assignments in English Language classroom. | 3.39 | .87 |
| 3. I use GT for projects and reports in English language classroom. | 3.26 | .82 |
| 4. I use GT to find the meaning of 'word' from my first language into English. | 3.68 | .99 |
| 5. I use GT to find the meaning of 'word' from English into my first language. | 3.52 | .94 |
| 6. I use GT to find the meaning of 'phrase' from, my first language into English. | 3.41 | .91 |
| 7. I use GT to find the meaning of 'phrase' from English into my first language. | 3.31 | .87 |
| 8. I use GT to find the meaning of 'clause' from my first language into English. | 3.38 | .908 |
| 9. I use GT to find the meaning of 'clause' from English into my first language. | 3.20 | .92 |
| 10. I use GT to find the meaning of 'sentence' from my first language into English. | 3.28 | .85 |
| 11. I use GT to find the meaning of a 'paragraph' from my first language into English. | 3.22 | 1.04 |
| 12. I use GT to find the meaning of a 'paragraph' from English into my first language. | 3.26 | 1.03 |
| 13. I use GT to find the meaning of a 'whole text' from my first language into English. | 3.14 | 1.10 |
| 14. I use GT to find the meaning of a 'whole text' from English into my first language. | 3.10 | 1.01 |
| Valid N (listwise) | | |

Table 7 illustrates student teachers use GT for assignments and reports, with the focus on the meaning of 'word', 'phrase', 'clause', 'sentence', a 'paragraph', and whole text' from English into first language and vice versa. The highest mean (3.68) belongs to the item “.using GTS to find the meaning of 'word' from first language into English”, while the lowest mean score (3.10) is related to the item “using GT to find the meaning of a 'whole text' from English into first language”.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Accuracy

| Statement | Mean | Std. |
|---|------|------|
| 16. The accuracy of GT is not the same as human translation. | 3.70 | .65 |
| 21. I rely mostly on GT to learning English. | 3.51 | .84 |
| 22. I rely mostly on GT to write assignments, projects and reports. | 3.44 | .77 |
| 23. The accuracy level of GT meets the requirement of English assignment. | 3.55 | .71 |
| Valid N (listwise) | | |

Table 8 demonstrates the student teachers' comparison of GT translation output with that of human, reliability of GT for language learning and for writing assignment, reports and projects, and accuracy level of GT translation were assessed. The highest mean value (3.70) belongs to the item “The accuracy of Google Translate is not the same as human translation”, while the lowest mean score (3.44) is related to the item “relying mostly on Google Translate to write assignments, projects, and reports.”

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of PU

| Statement | Mean | Std. |
|---|------|------|
| 15. GT has helped me to a large extent in gaining higher grades in assignments. | 3.66 | .77 |
| 17. GT has helped me greatly in the process of learning English language. | 3.63 | .83 |
| 19. GT helps me in writing an error free English assignment. | 3.49 | .77 |
| 24. Without GT I cannot complete the assignment in English. | 3.40 | .88 |
| 25. I cannot do well in English language learning if I don't use GT. | 3.35 | .91 |
| Valid N (listwise) | | |

Table 9 demonstrates the usefulness of GT in terms of gaining higher grades in assignments, process of learning English language, writing an error free English assignment, completing the assignment in English, and doing well in English language learning. The highest mean value (3.66) is related to the item “GT has helped to a large extent in

gaining higher grades in assignments”, while the lowest mean score (3.40) belongs to the item “Without GT they cannot complete the assignment in English”.

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics of PEOU

| Statement | Mean | Std |
|--|------|-----|
| 18. The speed of GT is better than human translation. | 3.54 | .83 |
| 20. GT is the easiest and fastest way to score good grades in English. | 3.51 | .82 |
| Valid N (listwise) | | |

Table 10 demonstrates that PEOU of GT in terms of its speed and easiness were measured. The highest mean value (3.54) belongs to the item “The speed of Google Translate is better than human translation”, while the lowest mean score (3.51) is related to the item “Google Translate is the easiest and fastest way to score good grades in English”.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | Std. | N |
|------|------|------|----|
| U | 3.31 | .71 | 93 |
| PU | 3.50 | .69 | 93 |
| PEOU | 3.52 | .73 | 93 |
| A | 3.54 | .60 | 93 |

Table 11 illustrates the overall mean and Std of the mean constructs U, PU, PEOU, and A. The highest mean value belongs to the Accuracy (3.54), while the lowest overall mean is related to Use (3.31).

| | | U | PEOU | A | PU |
|------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| U | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .437** | .419** | .506** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 |
| PEOU | Pearson Correlation | .437** | 1 | .812** | .855** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 |
| A | Pearson Correlation | .419** | .812** | 1 | .801** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 |
| PU | Pearson Correlation | .506** | .855** | .801** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Table 12: Correlations

Table 12 demonstrates the correlations between the main constructs (U, PU, PEOU, and A). It was found that all constructs are correlated.

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1 | .506 ^a | .256 | .231 | .62712 | .256 | 10.216 | 3 | 89 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), A, PU, PEOU Table 13: Model summary

Table 13 demonstrates model summary. It indicates that the R Square Change is .256 in developed model. it means that the model explains 25% of the changes in the variables.

Table 14. Coefficients

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|-------|------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| | | 1 | (Constant) | 1.439 | | | .389 | |
| | PU | .491 | .195 | .475 | 2.517 | .014 | .103 | .878 |
| | PEOU | .001 | .188 | .001 | .004 | .997 | -.372 | .374 |
| | A | .044 | .196 | .038 | .225 | .822 | -.346 | .434 |

a. Dependent Variable: U

Table 14 illustrates the sig. value of the constructs in the model. It was found that only PU (.014) significantly impacts the use of GT, while PEOU (.997) and Accuracy (.882) are not significant determinants of GT.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that there were strong relationships between the variables namely, PU, PEOU, Accuracy and Use. However, the findings of regression indicated that only PU strongly predicts the use of gamification by student teachers. The findings revealed that students use GT for different purposes regardless of the accuracy of the GT output which is consistent with the data on the literature (Prihastuti, 2018; Tsai, 2019). Descriptive analysis showed that students are aware of the fact that the accuracy of GT translation is less than that of human translation. The pre-service teachers indicated that usefulness of GT is the determinant factor of their GT use. This shows that this tool mainly helps them to gain higher grades in assignments, learn the English language, write an error free English assignment, and complete the assignment in English. Hence, the usefulness of GT helps them in doing assignments, reports, and projects with the focus on the meaning of 'word', 'phrase', 'clause', 'sentence', 'a paragraph', 'and whole text' from English into first language and vice versa. Descriptive analysis findings show that students frequently use GT to find the meaning of 'word' from first language into English, while they seldom use this tool to find the meaning of a 'whole text' from English into first language.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the factors that affect the use of GT by Malaysian and Indonesian TESOL pre-service teachers. The study found that the factors of PU, PEOU, Accuracy, and Use are strongly correlated. However, the PEOU and Accuracy are not predictors of GT use. PU is a strong predictor of the use of GT. The study indicated that the usefulness of GT is the driving force of using GT for student teachers in doing assignments, projects, and reports.

The current study only involved 93 student teachers in a survey study. A study with more participants using a mixed method might be of interest to explore participants' voices through interviews to add to the validity of survey data. A test of accuracy of GT output for Malaysian languages may be another future research area. A comparison of perceptions of GT determinant factors among Malaysian students may be suggested.

7. Recommendations

The use of GT or academic purpose by students is inevitable as GT is being used across disciplines globally. However, the use of GT might clash with the policy of higher education and particularly the issues of academic misconduct and plagiarism may arise (Mundt, & Groves, 2016). There is an argument that GT may narrow down students' sensitivity to accuracy as students need to be aware of the errors of GT results (Prihastuti, 2018). It is recommended that student teachers do self-correction and check the meanings of suspected words in online dictionaries (Longman, Oxford) and make the best choices in accordance with the context (Brahmana, Sofyan, & Putri, 2020).

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