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THE USE OF GOOGLE TRANSLATE IN EFL ESSAY WRITING

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Abstract
Writing skill is considered a difficult skill for some of the students because of limited vocabulary as well as grammatical weaknesses. Therefore, this study aims to investigate further the practice of GT in EFL essay writing as wells as its role in language learning. The study was conducted in Universitas Kristen Krida Wacana, involving eight respondents from Ukrida Department of English. Two methods were used, such as mediated-observation and interview. A writing task was given to each respondent and her/his writing process was recorded using screen-recording application. The data collected from the writing tasks were analyzed by classifying it into appropriate writing aspects while the interview data were transcribed. The result showed that students used GT in three different aspects: vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. Vocabulary became the highest used, with word-level became the first one, followed by phrase as a second highest, and sentence as the third. Spelling became the fourth highest used, while grammar was the least used among students. It is also found that GT is perceived as a dictionary as students used GT mostly in understanding vocabulary items.

Keywords: Google Translate, essay writing, vocabulary

Introduction
Google Translate (GT) as one of the products provided by Google has become a popular translation tool for language students. As English is still considered as a foreign language in Indonesia, many Indonesian students, even college students appear to use GT to help them in learning English. This tool tends to help the students to get the translation quickly and easily.

From the four main skills in English, writing is considered as a difficult skill for students to acquire (Al-Badi, 2015; Al Darwish & Sadeqi, 2016; Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017; Huwari, I & Al-Khasawneh, 2013; Younes & Albalawi, 2015). The reason behind this issue is because writing skill has many components that students need to master in order to have a better writing performance, for example, subject-verb agreement, word order, and diction. Moreover, first language transfer (Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017), grammatical weakness (Huwari, I & Al-Khasawneh, 2013), the limited number of vocabulary and idioms as well as less experience with second language (Salem, 2007) are other reasons why students find writing difficult. Since writing, especially essay writing has become a problem for EFL learners (Ahmed, 2010), the existence of GT appears to play an essential role to help them while writing an essay.

GT has become a debatable issue whether this tool can be applied in language learning. Many researchers have discussed this translation tool regarding its output, for example, Ghasemi and Hashemian (2016) investigated an error analysis from English-to-Persian and Persian-to-English, and Santoso (2010) examined an error analysis from Bahasa Indonesia to German. However, a discussion related to the Online Translation (OT) and writing are still scarce (Fredholm, 2014, 2015). This study, therefore, discusses further the students' use of GT in EFL essay writing. It aims to find out which writing purpose that the students consult through GT.

A word-processing program is one of the examples of the technology in language learning (Alsulami, 2016; Oxford, 2004; Walker & White, 2013). Kasapoglu-Akyol (as cited in Alsulami, 2016) said that using this program is a great method to assist students' writing development. Microsoft Word as a word-processing program has many features that are beneficial for students in facilitating their writing process (Walker & White, 2013). The spelling and grammar checker are few of the features from Microsoft Word (Nomass, 2013) that are usually used by the students. Those features are mostly used by the language learners in writing because sometimes they make many mistakes in terms of spelling and grammar as they have a grammatical weakness (Huwari, I & Al-Khasawneh, 2013) and less experience with the target language (Ibnian, 2011).

Medvedev (2016) shared his idea regarding the advantages of GT. It has a free access. The users only need to open its website in a browser or download the app in their gadget to use it. It is also instant, in a quick click, the users could get the translation result. It also provides a variety of languages. Photo recognition becomes one feature in GT application in students' smartphone that they use in order to save their time, especially when they try to understand some English texts. The student only need to take a picture of words or text, then let the tool finishes the job.

Although it has some great benefits, GT still has some drawbacks. The most discussed drawback from this tool is the incorrect translation for a longer sentence or text (Medvedev, 2016; Santoso, 2010). Medvedev (2016) stated that GT is unable to handle a longer sentence. If it translates a longer sentence, usually this tool gives a word-per-word translation. Santoso (2010) even mentioned that this tool cannot handle idiom or figurative language. Furthermore, he added that the length of the text determines the quality of the product translated; the shorter the text, the better the result. van Rensburg et al. (2012) found out that from six different text types (newspaper article, minutes, class notes, official letter, examination, and PowerPoint slides), only PowerPoint slides that have a good result when translating it from Afrikaans to English using GT. The reason behind this is because the slides do not contain full sentences; only phrases are used.

Jin and Deifell (2013) added that GT is used as a complementary tool because this tool does not have a grammatical function. It is said that GT is unable to handle the subject verb agreement (Bozorgian & Azadmanesh, 2015). Bozorgian and Azadmanesh said that this tool does not have a capability to identify the subject-verb agreement because the tool does not know the rule of the agreement. This is different from a human translator who is aware of the principles. Another drawback from GT is a translation in context (Medvedev, 2016). He suggested the students

be aware of using GT in their language learning when translating words in context. This is because GT can "cause some misunderstanding in the choice of words" (p. 185).

The goal of every student when they have a writing assignment is to produce a good writing, so they can also have a good score. There are several aspects that are required for the students to create an effective writing: organization, clarity, word choices, and mechanics (Starkey, 2004). Organization refers to how the students arrange the idea in their writing. It means that the idea of the writing should be clear and organized logically. If the writing has a good organization, the reader can easily follow the writer's idea. Clarity is one of the essential elements of writing that students need to possess to make a readable and understandable writing for the reader (Hamadouche, 2010; Souhila, 2015).

Word choice refers to how the students choose the words to express their own ideas in their writing. Choosing the right words while pouring the ideas in writing is one of the best ways to deliver the message to the reader (Starkey, 2004). Word choice is strongly related to vocabulary. Vocabulary is defined as words that are needed to convey students' ideas and meaning (Alqahtani, 2015). Moreover, vocabulary plays an important role in language skills as it determines the success of the language use.

Mechanics in writing can consist of many things, some of them are grammar and spelling. Grammar refers to the knowledge that the students have about the rule of language. Spelling is considered as one of the important aspects of mechanics because in EFL context, teachers tend to focus on this trait when grading the students' writing (Hamadouche, 2010). In addition, having a good spelling in the writing gives a credibility to the students (Alred, Brusaw, & Oliu, 2009; Hamadouche, 2010). Moreover, Starkey (2004) emphasized the importance of spelling in writing, saying if students make spelling mistakes, the readers' impression towards the writer seems to be negative.

Many researchers have been discussing the use of Machine Translation (MT) in language learning. Clifford et al. (2013), for example, investigated the use of MT using survey at Duke University in the USA. He administered the surveys to the undergraduates studying French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. The study shows that the students use MT mostly for vocabulary (91%), followed by the idiomatic expression (36%), transition words or connectors (31%), verb tenses (29%), and word order (20%). Moreover, they use MT to translate individual words (89%), short phrases (62%), full sentences (16%), and short paragraph (7%). It is stated that if the students translate from their target languages (Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese) into English, one of the activities that they usually do with MT is rechecking what they have written.

O'neill (2012) investigated the effect of Online Translation (OT) on French as a foreign language in writing skill. One of the main focuses of his study is the effect of OT in second language features in writing skill, such as "comprehensibility, vocabulary, syntax, grammar, spelling, and content" (p. 67). The result of his study indicates that the use of Online Translation (OT) has an effect on some categories, such as comprehensibility as well as spelling and accent, while the rest of the features do not have a significant difference among groups. Moreover, the use of

OT in writing could decrease the error related to orthography. Regarding the use of OT, most students use this translation tool to look up for words and phrases.

Fredholm (2014) examined OT use in Swedish learners studying Spanish at the upper secondary school. It focuses on the effect on morph syntactic and lexical-pragmatic accuracy in essay writing. The study found out that the use of OT does not really affect the students' writing performance. It is neither improving the writing performance nor provide worse results.

Method

The method of the research was a qualitative method. This research was a case study of eight students, exploring the practice of GT in students' essay writing. This research involved eight undergraduate students from the first to the fourth year in an English Department located in Jakarta. The respondents were purposively chosen because they were the ones who used GT in their writing assignment. Mediated-observation was used to investigate the exploration of GT used among the respondents. Mediated-observation refers to the use of a computer as an observation instrument to record the respondents' action on the computer screen using an available software.

The respondents were asked to write a narrative essay and their writing activity was recorded using a screen recording from *QuickTime Player* application as well as supervised by the researcher. After the writing task was done, the screen recording and the writing file were saved into a folder of each respondent. Each respondent had a code. The code was from 01 to 08. The writing session was conducted once only because of the limited time the respondents had. Then, there was an interview to know their use of GT in depth.

To analyze the data, the first thing to do was watching the screen recording of each respondent. Then, listing and classifying each data from the screen recording into a table in *Microsoft Excel*. In analyzing the item that the respondents had input to GT, five different writing aspects were detected:

Word: If the respondents inserted a single item in the GT box, it was classified as a word.

Phrase: If the respondents input a group of words, it was considered a phrase. The phrase can be any type of phrase, such as noun phrase, prepositional phrase, verb phrase, and so on.

Sentence: The item classified as a sentence if the respondents inserted at least subject and predicate, sentence fragment, or a clause.

Grammar: This related to the grammatical thing, such as a plural form.

Spelling: If the respondents used GT to check word spelling, it was included in the spelling aspect.

Then, the next step focused on the interview data. The data from the interview was transcribed, then it was classified into a table based on the question that was being asked.

Findings and Discussion

It is found out that the students use GT for three different aspects of the essay writing: vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. Vocabulary is divided into three

different level: word level, phrase level, and sentence level. This aims to take a look closer into which level has the highest use among the student. The total findings from mediated-observation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The total use of Google Translate

Writing Aspect		R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	Total	%
Vocabulary	Word	14	8	2	6	17	5	13	16	81	68.07%
	Phrase	5	0	0	1	4	2	8	4	24	20.17%
	Sentence	3	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	7	5.88%
Grammar		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.84%
Spelling		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	6	5.04%
Total		24	9	2	7	22	7	24	24	119	100%

The total of the data collected through the mediated-observation from the respondents' screen recording is 119. Table 1 shows that there are 81 attempts for word, followed by the phrase, which has 24 attempts. The sentence has 7 attempts, while spelling has 6 attempts. Grammar becomes the least used, with only one time. All respondents use GT for vocabulary in word level, while only six respondents use GT to consult phrase. Then, only three respondents use GT for sentence and spelling. Meanwhile, only one respondent that used GT for checking grammar. Respondent 1, 7, and 8 have used GT the most, with the total use is 24 times. It is followed by Respondent 5 who used GT 22 times. Respondent 2 used GT 9 times, while Respondent 4 and 7 are 7 times respectively. Respondent 3 used GT the least, with only 2 times.

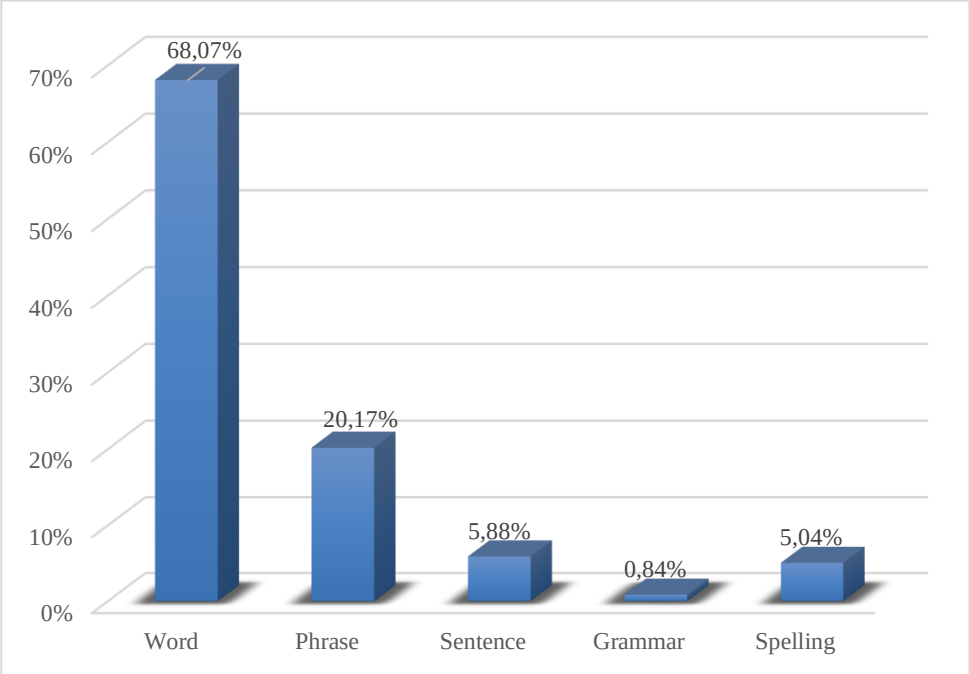


Figure 1. The use of Google Translate

Figure 1 presents the percentage of Google Translate (GT) use in this study. The highest percentage is the word with 68.07%. The second highest is the phrase, with 20.17%. The sentence becomes the third one, with a percentage of 5.88%, followed by spelling with 5.04%. While grammar becomes the least one, with only 0.84%.

Table 2. Interview result

The purpose of using GT	Translating the word or idiom that they do not know, finding new vocabulary, if there is an assignment, checking their diction and spelling
The reason for choosing GT in writing	GT is the easiest/simplest way because they only need to type the words that they do not know and the result will show up directly. Using GT is faster if using a dictionary, it takes much time Not confident with the writing, sometimes the meaning of the word that has been written is different with the context
GT is helpful in writing context?	Yes, but only in finding or translating a word that they do not know Helpful for beginner
Benefit	Simple, easy to be accessed, feature (voice, upload photo)
Drawback	Wrong translation, especially with phrase & a longer sentence; sentence structure & grammar are incorrect; unreliable, especially with context

From mediated observation, it is found out that all respondents use GT mostly in vocabulary aspect. The highest one is in word level with 81 data (68.07%), followed by phrase with 24 data (20.17%), and sentence with only 7 data (5.88%) out of 119 in total. These findings confirm the study from O'neill (2012) and Clifford et al. (2013). O'neill's study found out that most of the students use Online Translation (OT) to look for words and phrases. This is based on the self-report of his respondent on the translation use. Moreover, Clifford et al.'s (2013) study, which uses a survey, found out students used the Machine Translation (MT) mostly for vocabulary (91%). Furthermore, Clifford et al.'s study also revealed that students used MT to translate individual words (89%), short phrases (62%), full sentences (16%), and the short paragraph (7%).

All respondents use GT in the word level. There was at least one attempt for each respondent. While in phrase level, there are two respondents (R2 and R3) who did not use GT in this aspect and in sentence level, there are only three respondents (R1, R5, and R7) who used GT in the sentence level. R2 and R3 have a similar belief. During the interview session, both claimed that they rarely use GT due to the lecturer's prohibition in using GT at the university level. It is better to use GT only at the world level. R3 even suggested not to use GT in the writing because

there are some better tools that can support the writing process, such as Oxford and Cambridge dictionary.

As mentioned earlier, all respondents use GT in word level. This is due to the drawback of GT, that especially cannot handle a longer sentence. Medvedev (2016) mentioned the bad thing about Machine Translation (MT). Some of them are providing a literal translation, especially with a longer sentence, inaccurate grammatical output, and inequivalent translation of cultural references. Moreover, Santoso (2010) states another drawback, commenting that GT is unable to handle idiom or figurative language. During the interview, all respondents agree that GT gives an inaccurate result in terms of translating sentences. They also claim that they use GT mostly for vocabulary in a word level because GT result is inaccurate if it is dealing with a longer sentence. Because of these downsides, all respondents tend to minimize their GT use to be only in consulting word level, while six of them in both word and phrase level.

Although all respondents stated that GT cannot handle a longer sentence, and therefore they use it limited to find words, a contradictory finding is discovered in the mediated observation data as there are three respondents (R1, R5, and R7) that use GT in sentence. R1 used GT twice in sentence aspect, while R5 was only once and R7 was three times.

The three respondents use GT in sentence due to finding the proper words in their sentence. It seems that they wanted to check what they had written in their writing task. In writing, the word choice is one of the crucial aspects because it aims to deliver the message to the reader (Starkey, 2004). If they cannot choose the right words in their writing, the readers are unable to understand what they try to convey. Not to mention that vocabulary has a vital role in language skill because it determines the success of the language use (Alqatani, 2015). As a result, this matter seems to burden some of the students when they get a writing assignment. Because of this problem, some students tend to find a shortcut to solve the difficulty. Therefore, the existence of GT helps the students to get the proper words for their writing.

One of the examples is taken from R7's attempt as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Example of GT use in a sentence

R	Input	Output	Before	After	Time
7	kita berangkat dari sekolah	we leave school	we went	we left	26:10

At first, R7 had written *we went*. Then, she moved to GT to check whether the words that she wanted to write have the same meaning with what she intended to write. After checking with GT, the result was different. At the end, she followed the result from GT, which was *we leave*, with a change in the tense becoming *we left*. *Went*, which is a past form of *go* is inaccurate to describe the word *berangkat*

in a sentence of *kita berangkat dari sekolah*. *Berangkat* in that sentence might refer to *depart from the school*. Therefore, *we left school* is more proper than *we went school*.

Spelling

It is also discovered that spelling becomes the second least used in GT. The use of GT in this aspect is only 6 out of 119. This shows that students rarely consult spelling in GT. The reason behind this finding is because the students use *Microsoft Word*, which is a word-processing program, to write their writing assignment. This program has many features that can help students in their writing assignment and one of them is the spelling checker (Nomass, 2013). This feature is reducing the students' error in spelling by telling them which word that is incorrect. It also gives a recommendation for the students when they make a mistake. If there is a red line below the word, it means that the students have made a mistake. The easiest way to correct the mistake is by right-clicking the word to see the recommendation given by the program. If the recommendation does not provide the word that the students want to write, the students have to find another tool that can solve their problem.

O'neill (2012) found out that Online Translation (OT) gives a good effect in terms of spelling as OT could minimize the error that is related to orthography. Although O'neill's study focuses on French writing, this effect can be also affected the English for Foreign Language (EFL) writing. During the interview, R8 admitted that she used GT because she was unsure about the spelling of some words, especially with the ones which have a similar sound or spelling. In the writing task, she was unsure between the word *thought* and *through*. That was why she checked those words in GT to make sure which word that is correct. This is in line with Clifford's (2013) study that said if the students use translation tool from the target language, in this case is English, they usually recheck on the word that they have written.

It is said that spelling is one of the crucial aspects of mechanics because spelling gives a credibility to the students' writing (Alred et al., 2009; Hamadouche, 2010). It is believed that making an error in spelling gives a negative impression from the readers (Starkey, 2004). Because of that, students are more careful in their writing so the readers do not judge negatively towards their writing. Not to mention that when grading the students' writing, teachers are likely focusing on the spelling (Hamadouche, 2010). With these in mind, the presence of GT helps the students tackle the problem in spelling that cannot be handled by *Microsoft Word*.

Grammar

Most of the respondents hesitated to use GT in grammar aspect because they believe GT could not handle grammar properly. Bozorgian and Azadmanesh (2015) stated that GT cannot handle the subject-verb agreement because the tool does not know the rule of the agreement. However, it is found out that there is only one respondent that used GT in this aspect.

Table 4. Example of GT use in Grammar

R	Input	Output	Before	After	Time
1	tiga salib	three crosses	three cross	three crosses	18:05

Table 4 indicates there is at least one student that still use GT in consulting grammar. Similar to the use in vocabulary aspect in sentence level, R1 used GT in grammar aspect to check on what she had written in her writing task. In this case, R1 wanted to check the plural form in the phrase of *tiga salib*. Since she was unsure about what she had written, she used GT to help her solve her uncertainty. Moreover, although it is said that GT does not have a grammatical function (Jin & Deifell, 2013), this tool seems to have a grammar capacity to help the students in a particular state, such as in checking the plural form.

Role of Google Translate

It is found out that the respondents use GT as a supporting tool in their language learning. This shows that they do not rely much on GT. Jin and Deifell (2013) stated that GT functions as a complementary tool due to its pitfall, which does not have a grammatical function. All respondents use GT mostly for finding or translating vocabulary. They use this tool frequently from Bahasa Indonesia to English. This means that GT is used as a dictionary since the respondents try to find a certain vocabulary that they do not know in English. This role is similar to the role of MT that Clifford et al. (2013) provided. They stated that MT is perceived as a dictionary because it is a helpful tool to find a vocabulary.

Although GT has some drawbacks, it does not mean that GT gives a negative impact for students. Fredholm (2014) found out that OT does not really affect the students' writing performance. It is neither improving the writing performance nor provide worse results. Even though GT does not affect the writing performance, GT still can assist the students in their language learning, especially in language skill. Clifford et al. (2013) stated that MT is perceived as a helpful tool for finding vocabulary. Moreover, Jaganathan et al. (2014) and Jaganathan and Ling (2015) claimed that GT has an essential role in language learning. Most of the respondents agree that GT is helpful in essay writing. However, there is a limitation from GT in aiding their language learning. The majority of the respondents admitted that GT is helpful if it is dealing with only words. On the contrary, if it is dealing with longer sentences, it is not helpful anymore.

Conclusion

Google Translate (GT) becomes a debatable topic since its emergence in 2006 whether this tool can be applied in the language learning or not. As writing skill is considered difficult skill to be acquired, students tend to use this tool in writing sill. This study provides the information about GT used by the students in EFL essay. It is found out that the students use GT in three different aspects, such as vocabulary, spelling, and grammar. Vocabulary becomes the most used aspect in GT, with word-level becomes the highest one, followed by phrase as the second most used. Sentence becomes the third most used while spelling becomes the fourth. Grammar is the fifth, becoming the least used among the others.

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