



EFL pre-service teachers' excessive use of Google Translate: Blessing or misfortune?

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Abstract

This study investigates EFL pre-service teachers' use of Google Translate (GT) on a daily basis under three underlying questions: 1) Why do EFL pre-service teachers often use GT? 2) How do they use it on a daily basis? and 3) What are the drawbacks of using GT? Despite its benefits, debates over its use in educational settings remain a prevailing issue. For this reason, a case study approach involving six EFL pre-service teachers in different semesters was employed. To garner the data, an open-ended questionnaire and an interview that was done in several sessions were deployed. Thematic analysis was then utilized to analyze the data. The findings reveal that the EFL pre-service teachers' excessive use of GT was caused by their lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Quick and easy use of GT and lack of confidence to express their own sentences also encouraged them to use GT excessively. They used GT on a daily basis for both academic and non-academic purposes. They also incorporated GT with other applications, especially for doing academic assignments, since they realized that GT was sometimes unreliable. Their background knowledge of English played an important role in examining the translation results of GT. The EFL pre-service teachers have been aware that using GT excessively could decrease their learning ability, and they should enhance their English proficiency to effectively use GT. It implies that GT can assist EFL pre-service teachers' learning by primarily deploying their own knowledge and skills and only utilizing GT for enhancement.

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INTRODUCTION

Google Translate (GT) has become a prominent digital assistant for language learners nowadays, and it has been widely used by English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. It enables language learners to translate words, paragraphs, and even sentence-pictures to other languages with a single click. It makes this application widely utilized by EFL learners around the world to help them handle any writing tasks or reading passages. GT was also reported to help students enhance their vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and pronunciation (bin Dahmash, 2020; Knowles, 2022); as a result, GT could foster students' communicative performance and confidence, but it reduced their anxiety (Chompurach, 2021; Tsai, 2019, 2022). In English-medium classes, GT appears as a survival tool for students to communicate with teachers and peers and comprehend teaching materials (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017; Kelly & Hou, 2022). EFL learners also massively use GT for many other purposes, such as assisting speaking performance and helping to understand English materials. Regardless of the pros and cons of using GT, this application is recently suggested to be employed in formal education context as a language learning resource (Rowe, 2022), which can be done by developing students' literacy on GT (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017; Bowker, 2020) and promoting responsible use of GT (Ducar & Schocket, 2018).

Due to its massive use as a learning tool for EFL learners, continuous debates occur on whether it is totally beneficial for learners or, on the other hand, make them lazy to enhance their own knowledge and skills. Even though GT offers benefits for EFL learners, this application may not satisfactorily foster students' knowledge and skills if they overly rely on it (Olkhovska & Frolova, 2020). In academic writing, the issue of whether the translation results of GT are considered plagiarism may also arise. Contemporary college students, who are digital natives and grow up in a 'Google, copy, and paste' culture, may not intuitively understand the importance of academic integrity (Ducar & Schocket, 2018).

Students' reliance on GT is getting higher among EFL learners across nations since they consider it as very useful, although the translation results still sometimes include several errors (bin Dahmash, 2020; Chandra & Yuyun, 2018; Chompurach, 2021; Rodríguez-Castro et al., 2018; Xu, 2020). Even though GT is mostly used by undergraduate and graduate students (Deng & Yu, 2022), it is also utilized to facilitate learning by primary and secondary school students (Organ, 2022; Stapleton & Kin, 2019). Mostly, it benefited beginner learners to communicate and produce words in the target language, but it could make them lazy to create their original words due to the ease in their hands (Krisdayanti et al., 2022). Meanwhile, students with intermediate and advanced English proficiency are less likely to use this kind of machine translation, and they can critically identify incorrect translation results and ultimately select better options between their own translation results and those of GT (Kelly & Hou, 2022). Therefore, in terms of knowledge and skill enhancement and learning, GT can be more beneficial for intermediate and advanced learners (Lee & Briggs, 2021) since beginner students may miss recognizing errors in the translation results of GT due to their limited knowledge and skills (Lee, 2020).

Several studies have scrutinized EFL learners' use of GT, but specifically the excessive use of GT by EFL preservice teachers are still unexplored. Drawing on a systematic review, Deng and Yu (2022) reported that both teachers and students utilized GT and suggested to use it as a language learning resource in formal education although they had mixed attitudes towards the use of GT. Some students perceived GT as very beneficial while many students became reliance on it, and their knowledge and skills were not improved. Furthermore, Tsai (2022) investigated Chinese university students' perceptions on the use of GT as a computer-assisted language learning tool in EFL writing. It was reported that students who used GT significantly performed better compared to students who did not utilize GT. In fact, GT could help foster students' direct writing to be better. In this study, non-English major students exhibited more positive attitude towards the use of GT. The benefits of GT to assist revision were echoed by Cancino and Panes (2021), Chang et al. (2022), and Lee (2020) who reported that students' written works that had been revised using GT showed varied syntactic complexity in the average length of clauses, better writing accuracy, and less lexical-grammatical errors.

Students' reliance on GT was previously explored by bin Dahmash (2020) and Chompurach (2021). bin Dahmash (2020) reported that EFL learners in Saudi Arabia used GT intensively on a daily basis. Although GT seemed to help students enhance their English knowledge and skills, they faced more challenges with the language when they were not using GT. In Thailand, Chompurach (2021) explored EFL university students' use of GT in the completion of writing assignments.

Although many students considered GT reliable, they still found that some translation results were incomprehensible, especially for idioms, long phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. This resulted in a bad habit when they overly relied on GT and did not do any checking and editing. It is aligned with Ghasemi and Hashemian (2016) and Kreger et al. (2019) who reported that the translation results of GT were inconsistent and still included errors in lexico-semantic and sentence structure. Therefore, the translation results of GT must be proofread by expert humans (Mundt & Groves, 2016)).

This present study explores EFL pre-service teachers' use of GT, which still lacks of attention in the previous studies. EFL pre-service teachers will be EFL in-service teachers in the future, and their attitudes and behaviors will become role models for their students. The excessive use of GT, which can result in dependency on the tool, might become a challenge in their professional development and English proficiency. EFL teachers must be able to demonstrate adequate English proficiency which contribute to their confidence in teaching. However, the dependency on GT can reduce the opportunity for genuine language practice (Karatas & Tuncer, 2020; Bekereci-Sahin, 2022). While teachers are the ones who deliver instruction and learning materials, the potential of mistranslation by GT may disrupt the clarity of the message conveyed by pre-service teachers (Channia, 2023). Therefore, developing language proficiency without reliance on translation tools is crucial for EFL pre-service teachers. It could better develop teachers' critical thinking and analytical skills, promoting better language acquisition.

A preliminary observation of EFL pre-service teachers at a university in Indonesia showed that most of them used GT excessively during classroom activities, such as doing writing tasks, asking questions, and responding to questions. However, how they use GT beyond classrooms and how they evaluate the translation results of GT remain unexplored. This is an interesting issue since they want to exhibit good English proficiency, but their reliance on GT seems contradictory and hinders the enhancement of their knowledge and skills as indicated in the previous studies. Therefore, this study investigates EFL pre-service teachers' use of GT according to the following research questions:

- 1) Why do EFL pre-service teachers often use Google Translate?
- 2) How do EFL pre-service teachers use Google Translate?
- 3) What are the drawbacks of using Google Translate?

METHODS

Informed by qualitative research methods, a case study design was adopted in this study. Case study design enables researchers to do in-depth investigation of particular case of phenomenon within its real life context through various data collection techniques, such as interview, observation, open-ended questionnaire, and documentation. This current study specifically investigated the use of GT by EFL pre-service teachers and the implications resulted from their activities in using GT.

Six EFL pre-service teachers from a public university based in Central Java, Indonesia, participated in this study. All participants were in the second and third years of an undergraduate program, and they had intermediate and upper-intermediate English proficiency levels based on the university-based English proficiency test. Drawing on a purposive sampling (Neuman, 2003), they were recruited through invitations and voluntarily made the decision to participate in this study. The specific criteria for the participants included: 1) being active students in the English education department, 2) frequently using GT in classrooms and beyond classrooms (daily activities), and 3) having the willingness to participate in this study. Prior to their agreement to become participants, informed consent was provided to elaborate on the procedures, benefits, and possible risks of the study. Furthermore, to maintain their privacy and adhere to research ethics, they were called Participant 1 until Participant 6 in this study.

An open-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were deployed to garner qualitative data from participants. Both the questionnaire and interview were delivered in Bahasa Indonesia to avoid any misunderstandings. In light of the research questions, the questionnaire consisted of 14 questions which elicited the demographic information and the use of GT by the participants both in classroom setting and daily practice. It also portrayed the experience of the participants regarding the benefits and drawbacks of using this application. The interview was subsequently undertaken in several sessions. It was based on an interview protocol consisting of 18 questions that were derived from the research questions as well. The participants were interviewed online by utilizing the WhatsApp application. The interview sessions were done through chats and voice notes according to the participants' convenience. The interview was

undergone to further investigate the use of GT and to confirm prior information conveyed from the open-ended questionnaire.

With regard to data analysis, the participants' reflections on the questionnaire as well as the chats and voice notes from the interview sessions were transcribed, translated into English, and analyzed by employing thematic analysis, which represented the procedure of data coding by categorizing or grouping particular statements into themes that best captured the phenomenon of interest (Lee et al., 2024). Thematic analysis allowed researchers to derive significant insights and to understand complex phenomena through systematic examination of patterns in the data. Drawing on the findings generated from thematic analysis, several themes emerged and were supported by significant excerpts from both questionnaire and interview data. These findings were then discussed with current theories and previous relevant studies to gain a more comprehensive insight. Subsequently, several conclusions, implications, and suggestions were finally drawn. To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, triangulation of data collection techniques was employed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Why EFL pre-service teachers often use Google Translate

The causes of EFL pre-service teachers' excessive use of GT can be classified into two categories, including linguistic and non-linguistic causes. Linguistically, EFL pre-service teachers often used GT due to their lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. On the other hand, in terms of non-linguistic causes, their excessive use of GT was influenced by their lack of confidence to express their own sentences and quick and easy use of GT.

EFL pre-service teachers' lack of vocabulary could be assisted by using GT since they could easily find the translation of a word or phrase. They often did not know the meaning of a word or phrase in English. Sometimes, they also wanted to check the correct spelling of a word that they had already known. In fact, GT even provided synonyms for the word being translated, so they could choose the most suitable word for their context. For this purpose, they needed to have sufficient background knowledge about the words and, of course, a certain level of English proficiency. Obviously, GT assisted them in overcoming their limited vocabulary, either dealing with the meaning of words or their spellings, which was crucial for comprehending English materials, understanding lecturers' elaboration, and supporting their learning.

"I need GT to look for the meaning of a word or a phrase, to translate confusing sentences, and to check the correct spelling of a word." (Participant 4, Questionnaire)

In relation to pronunciation, GT offered several useful features that enabled the users to translate written words, phrases, or sentences as well as spoken ones through the 'Translate by Speech' feature, which was indicated by the microphone symbol. It also enabled the users to listen to the words, phrases, or sentences that they had translated through the 'Listen' feature, which was indicated by the speaker symbol. In this way, the EFL pre-service teachers were assisted in practicing their pronunciation through pronouncing the words or listening to the words' pronunciation.

Moreover, the EFL pre-service teachers also doubted their own grammar mastery, which caused them to use GT excessively. In fact, it was not because they did not have any ideas about sentence structure and grammatical rules; they just wanted to check and make sure whether their sentences had already been grammatically correct or not.

"I am not really good at grammar, and I also want to improve my pronunciation." (Participant 2, Interview)

Therefore, their excessive use of GT as EFL pre-service teachers has shown that they used it as a helping tool to understand and perform the language. It was not merely used as a survival tool that they totally depended on. They had already got the basic competence of the language, but they needed a tool for helping them perform better in the target language.

In terms of non-linguistic causes, the EFL pre-service teachers excessively used GT due to their lack of confidence to express their own sentences and quick and easy use of GT. This finding seems to have a relationship with the affective aspect of learning, including self-confidence and motivation. Most of the EFL pre-service teachers confirmed that they felt more confident if they utilized GT. This was because they were worried about making mistakes in choosing appropriate vocabulary and using correct

grammatical structure. This got worse when it occurred in a forum or classroom in which they could not talk with others without using GT because they felt shy if they made mistake. In such a condition, they directly translated their Indonesian utterances into English ones since they needed quick results. For instance, it happened when they needed to response questions or ask questions.

“I feel more confident when I use GT since I cannot create good sentences, and I perceive that my English grammar is not really good.” (Participant 2, Questionnaire)

“In a class that uses full English, I am afraid that I cannot understand the talk or respond well without using GT.” (Participant 1, Interview)

On the contrary, when they had more time, they had carefully created their own sentences first before they utilized GT to do their assignments. By doing this, they could compare their own sentences and those translated by GT. This did not indicate their doubts without using GT, but it gave them a feeling of satisfaction. One of the EFL teachers perceived that GT did not increase or decrease her confidence. She utilized GT due to its easy use, which could help her work faster. This showed that the use of GT did not always decrease the self-confidence of its users. She could still do assignments without utilizing GT although it took longer time.

“No, I do not think that I am not confident without GT. I can work on it by myself, but it may take longer and my sentences are not good enough, but it is okay.” (Participant 4, Interview)

Other EFL pre-service teachers asserted that most of their classmates also used GT in classrooms. They observed that it was something very common. Drawing on this evidence, it can be identified that the use of GT was also influenced by environmental causes, such as classmates and teacher educators. In some classes, the teacher educators did not allow the EFL pre-service teachers to use GT in classrooms, but, in other classes, the students were allowed to use mobile phones and work with GT for daily learning activities.

“In our third semester, we were not allowed to use GT in writing class, and we were encouraged to use dictionary.” (Participant 2, Interview)

“For daily practices, it is okay, but it is not allowed when we have an examination.” (Participant 4, Interview)

In terms of its quick and easy use, all the EFL pre-service teachers agreed that GT worked very quickly; it was also practical and free. With its features, GT enabled its users to translate texts (up to 5000 characters), images (by capturing a text using a camera or taking it from a phone gallery), documents, and websites. The EFL pre-service teachers also stated that GT did not require much memory in their phone storage, and it even provided translation services for many languages other than English. It really helped them when they needed quick translation results, such as when they need to communicate in classrooms by translating their sentences (text) or when they felt unsure. Meanwhile, images, documents, and websites services helped them in other contexts, such as doing take-home assignment, reading course materials, and undergoing daily activities.

“GT can be easily accessed by using application or website. It also provides translation services for so many languages.” (Participant 1, Questionnaire)

In summary, quick and easy use of GT became one of the non-linguistic causes of excessive use of GT in which the EFL pre-service teachers could obtain translation results they needed in a relatively short time without paying much effort to create their own sentences whenever they felt unsure or doubtful.

How EFL pre-service teachers use Google Translate

How the EFL pre-service teachers used GT can be categorized into several subthemes regarding the context and how they incorporated GT with other applications to enhance the translation results. Based on the context, GT was employed both in classrooms and beyond classrooms on a daily basis.

The EFL pre-service teachers did not only use GT for academic purposes but also for general purposes, such as creating or translating quotes or captions on social media.

“I use GT for doing assignments for my courses, and, in general, I use GT to translate English quotes into Bahasa Indonesia or translate Indonesian quotes into English because I do not know the meanings of all words If I use a printed dictionary, it takes a lot of time.” (Participant 4, Questionnaire)

While GT was perceived to assist the EFL pre-service teachers in some ways, their English proficiency still played an important role for using GT more effectively since they had been competent enough to check its translation results before they decided to use the results.

In classrooms, the EFL pre-service teachers asserted that GT assisted them in practicing all English language skills, including reading, listening, writing, and speaking, through its features. ‘Translate by Speech’ and ‘Listen’ features could help the EFL pre-service teachers check the pronunciation of words and listen to longer expressions, and these features eventually helped them speak more confidently and foster their listening skill.

“All four language skills [reading, writing, listening, and speaking] are related to each other. I use GT features to help me with these four language skills.” (Participant 1, Questionnaire)

In fact, they got the greatest benefit from using GT for writing skill. They asserted that it was difficult to convey ideas directly in English for writing a long essay in a relatively short time, so they utilized GT to work on it faster. By translating the essay into English, they could learn the sentence structures and word choices. Sometimes, it could be challenging when they checked the translation results, such as when they found new vocabulary that they did not know previously. This stimulated them to check the words in more detail to make sure that the translation results were equivalent with their ideas or thoughts.

“I usually write my essay in Bahasa Indonesia first because it is easier to convey my ideas. Then, I translate it by using GT. Even though I understand what I write in Bahasa Indonesia, I sometimes find it a little difficult to understand the English version.” (Participant 6, Questionnaire)

In addition, they utilized GT for reading skill as well. They used to translate an English text by using GT, and they read the Indonesian version. It was quite easy to grasp the information even though the Indonesian translation did not seem natural. Although they could generally understand the text from the Indonesian version, this did not enhance their reading comprehension in English or make them learn English vocabulary and sentence structure in various English texts. It seems that they did not effectively utilize GT for reading, and they, thus, should try another way to use GT for reading more effectively.

As EFL learners, they have already known that GT translation results might contain errors, and, as users who had English learning backgrounds, they should not rely on GT all the time. Instead of utilizing GT only, the EFL pre-service teachers incorporated GT with other applications to gain better results, such as Grammarly for checking grammar and YouTube for seeking additional materials when they had not understood the translation results of GT. They typically incorporated GT with other applications for academic purposes, such as doing assignments. On the other hand, they simply used GT without employing additional applications for non-academic purposes, including daily communication and entertainment (e.g., watching English movies and listening to English songs).

“Sometimes, the translation results are still confusing, so I have to use another application, such as YouTube, that provides more explanation.” (Participant 3, Questionnaire)

“I always check its translation results first before I use them for my assignment, and I sometimes check the grammar again by using Grammarly because the translation results of GT are sometimes not good Meanwhile, for non-academic purposes, I simply use the translation results because I think it is okay if the grammar is sometimes not accurate.” (Participant 4, Questionnaire)

Although GT could provide translation results quickly and easily, the EFL pre-service teachers were already aware that they should not use its translation results directly without any checking. They were already aware that GT might make errors, such as inappropriate vocabulary. Therefore, they had to check its translation results first before they decided to use them. They also reported common errors that were found in pronouns and idiomatic expressions. It has already been known that Bahasa Indonesia does not have gender in its pronouns, but English does. The translation results of GT for idiomatic expressions were often too literal, so their meanings were lost. Therefore, they should always check the translation results and look for the equivalent translation from other sources.

“Yes, the use of ‘she’ and ‘he’ are often incorrect.” (Participant 2, Questionnaire)

The EFL pre-service teachers also used GT beyond classrooms. They utilized GT for understanding texts on social media and popular articles that consisted of many unknown words for them. They could also scan images and translate written sentences by using GT. This decreased their burden in understanding any kind of text.

“Outside the classroom, I use GT to help me understand pieces of writing on social media and popular articles that are written by foreigners.” (Participant 3, Questionnaire)

To sum up, GT was used for various purposes, both academic and non-academic purposes. It can help EFL pre-service teachers in understanding English texts as well as to demonstrate their language skills on the target language. As language learners, they used GT critically by checking the translation results before using them and incorporated GT with other tools or sources for better results.

The drawbacks of using Google Translate

Despite the benefits of GT, the EFL pre-service teachers also identified the drawbacks of using GT. First, they realized that GT could decrease their learning ability because they did not need to pay much effort to create English sentences or memorize vocabulary.

“I think GT can decrease our learning ability because it makes us lazier to understand English texts or memorize vocabulary. I also perceive that, when I use GT, I cannot exhibit my own English knowledge and skills.” (Participant 6, Questionnaire)

This evidence actually shows that the EFL pre-service teachers have already been aware of the negative effects of using GT excessively on their English language skills development; therefore, they should not depend on GT. They should use it as an additional tool for checking their English. This can be simply done by comparing their own sentences with the translation results of GT. In this way, the EFL pre-service teachers could consider which one was better in terms of vocabulary and grammar, for example, as informed by Participant 1 and Participant 3.

“I use GT to check whether the sentences that I have made are correct or incorrect. It also helps me when I forget the translation of words.” (Participant 3, Questionnaire)

“We can check the suggested words below the translation results, so we can choose the most appropriate alternative.” (Participant 1, Questionnaire)

Unfortunately, as it was commonly found in their classes, not all of the EFL pre-service teachers did it this way. Some of them directly used GT for working on assignments without trying their own attempts first. As a result, they did not employ their own knowledge and skills, and the final products of the assignments were not their own works. This was obviously in contrast to the objectives of language learning because they did not really learn from the learning activities that were arranged through assignments. It eventually comes to an awareness that EFL pre-service teachers should not be reliant on GT, and they must truly use GT for learning purposes wisely.

“It is okay to use GT, but it is better if we can use English without this application.” (Participant 3, Questionnaire)

One of the EFL pre-service teachers also suggested learning by comparing and examining the translation results of GT, the results from other applications, and their own works without the assistance of any applications. In such a way, their English knowledge and skills would be developed.

“We should not use GT only to get the results, but I think we need to learn from and understand the results. So, we can use this knowledge on the next occasion.” (Participant 4, Questionnaire)

The second drawback is that the translation results of GT were sometimes poor. These poor results were typically related to inappropriate vocabulary. In relation to this drawback, all the EFL pre-service teachers realized it and used to check the translation results of GT before using the translation results for assignments or other purposes. This obviously required sufficient background knowledge, and the EFL pre-service teachers already had the knowledge. However, few of them still skipped checking the translation results of GT. It implies that the users of GT need to have good English proficiency so that they can be more critical and able to identify errors in the translation results of GT.

“GT is quite satisfying, but we should not depend on it because it is not 100% accurate. We need to always check the translation results again, so we have to keep learning while using GT.” (Participant 1, Questionnaire)

Accordingly, despite the benefits of GT, the EFL pre-service teachers had realized to be not dependent on this tool as it could have detrimental effects on their language skills development. Moreover, they should critically assess the results of GT translation before using them for any purposes.

Discussion

The findings reported that the excessive use of GT by the EFL pre-service teachers was caused by linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Both linguistic and non-linguistic causes of the excessive use of GT were also experienced by EFL pre-service teachers in other countries, in which they actively used GT for learning vocabulary, creating sentences, reading, and translation (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017). This demonstrates GT as a beneficial helping tool accepted by many English learners around the world. On the other hand, other studies documented its negative side that was frequently caused by low competence in vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and pronunciation (bin Dahmash, 2020; Knowles, 2022).

In fact, GT was utilized more often by EFL pre-service teachers with lower English proficiency to help them create or comprehend English sentences (Lee, 2020). However, in this study, the EFL pre-service teachers had better English proficiency that might affect how they utilized GT. Although their English proficiency levels were still intermediate and upper-intermediate, they were not reliant on this application and only used it when they found difficulties or needed quick translation results to help them in reading, speaking, listening, and writing. They were also able to choose appropriate vocabulary, which reflected their sufficient background knowledge. It might be because they had spent one or more years in the English education department, where they gained English language skills and knowledge. It implies that the excessive use of GT was not mainly caused by lower English proficiency, especially in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, but it could also be influenced by lack of self-confidence, the need to confirm their own sentences, as well as quick and easy use of GT. It was also affected by the learning environment, whether it allowed them to use the tool or not.

In terms of purposes, the EFL pre-service teachers utilized GT for both academic and non-academic purposes. The academic purposes included understanding course materials, practicing English language skills in classrooms, and completing other academic tasks. On the other hand, the non-academic purposes included helping them understand English texts on social media or popular articles that helped them gain new knowledge and insights. This finding echoes the previous studies reporting that GT assisted students a lot to understand course materials (Kelly & Hou, 2022) and helped them practice English language skills, especially writing (Tsai, 2022). To enhance their language skills, especially writing, students can utilize GT to do revision on their own works, as suggested by Chang et al. (2022) and Lee (2020). This has also been practiced by the EFL pre-service teachers when they compared their own sentences with the translation results of GT and when they checked the English translation of their essays that were translated from Bahasa Indonesia. During this process, they were stimulated to explore new vocabulary.

In addition, the EFL pre-service teachers had been aware of the disadvantages of GT as the previous studies also reported that the users of GT actually knew that the translation results of GT were not always correct and reliable (Chompurach, 2021; Rodríguez-Castro et al., 2018; Xu, 2020). Thus, they undertook some additional actions to generate quality translation, such as checking the grammar, either doing it themselves or using other applications. They also had good digital literacy, which was reflected from their behaviors when using GT. They understood how to use GT appropriately, such as when they had to double-check the translation results of GT. It was also supported by their background knowledge of English that enabled them to critically assess the translation results.

Although the use of GT provided several benefits, the EFL pre-service teachers also mentioned some drawbacks of using GT for academic and non-academic purposes. They already realized that using GT excessively did not automatically help improve their English knowledge and skills. They still needed to consciously learn English through the use of GT and other applications. It implies that they will not necessarily use GT anymore someday. This finding confirms Olkhovska and Frolova (2020) who asserted that while GT helped language learners, it could not improve their English proficiency. Alternatively, GT is more appropriate for checking sentence structure and having more choices of vocabulary, for instance. In writing, these can be done in editing and revision stages. Ultimately, EFL pre-service teachers should improve their English proficiency levels because they can gain greater benefits from GT if it is used by intermediate and advanced learners (Kelly & Hou, 2022; Lee & Briggs, 2021). It implies that language learners with more advanced English proficiency can utilize GT more effectively since they can identify the errors in the translation results of GT.

CONCLUSION

The EFL pre-service teachers utilized GT to help find the meaning of words or phrases and recognize their pronunciation. GT was also perceived to improve their confidence to practice English language skills because it is free, fast, and easy to use. However, they could still practice their English language skills without utilizing GT although they required more time. GT was used on a daily basis for both academic and non-academic purposes. The EFL pre-service teachers also employed additional applications to obtain better results because they already realized that the translation results of GT were not always correct and reliable. They typically employed additional applications if they were working on academic assignments. They were also aware that using GT excessively did not automatically improve their English proficiency level. Ultimately, it was suggested that GT should be used as a learning resource. It should not be merely utilized to obtain translation results without meaningful learning activities, such as just doing copy and paste. It is also suggested that EFL learners foster their English proficiency level to effectively use GT for academic and non-academic purposes.

It can be concluded that GT should be utilized wisely and truly for learning purposes. More advanced language learners can utilize GT more effectively since they already have sufficient knowledge to identify any errors in the translation results. GT should also be integrated with other applications to examine its translation results in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and other aspects. In writing, GT is more appropriately used in editing and revision stages. However, EFL pre-service teachers must be confident enough to practice their English language skills without using GT. They should not be reliant on GT. It means that they do not need to use GT when dealing with interactions and communication in classrooms, such as asking and responding to questions and having conversations with classmates.

This present study implies that GT can be utilized in EFL classrooms, but teacher educators must guide and monitor how EFL pre-service teachers utilize GT. Teacher educators should also try to foster their English proficiency so that they can have an advanced English proficiency level. Although this study has contributed several advantages, it still has several limitations. First, it only engaged a small number of participants with limited English proficiency levels. It also merely employed qualitative data, and the analysis of the data was not guided by a specific theory. Therefore, future studies are highly encouraged. Future studies can employ more participants who utilize GT with more varied English proficiency levels. Quantitative and mixed-methods studies were also suggested to investigate this topic from different paradigms. A specific theory may also be used in the analysis of data to gain results or findings that are more deductive and within a more specific framework.

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