

# TACKLING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF STUDENTS' ADDICTION TO GOOGLE TRANSLATE

Oleh:

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## Abstract

Instant access and convenience provided by Google Translate have made it a very popular tool for students to learn especially for English language learners. Google Translate as one of the types of Mobile Assisted Language Learning can be accessed easily from a smartphone by students during the class. However, too much access to smartphone can also be counterproductive for students, especially during speaking practice. This study aims to describe the negative impacts of students' addiction due to Google Translate usage and how to tackle or minimize negative impacts during class. The study was conducted by using descriptive-qualitative method. The data was collected by distributing questionnaires and conducting class observation. The results show that there were negative impacts found due to students' addiction to Google Translate usage during presentation class despite the benefits they gained. Anticipating or minimizing the overuse or misuse of Google Translate or any other type of translation application requires a commitment between the lecturer and students. The negative impacts can be tackled by setting class ground rules and state clear learning objectives before the class.

**Keywords:** Google Translate, students' addiction, negative impacts

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, information and knowledge can be accessed by learners easily and instantly through their mobile phones or smartphones. It facilitates students with a huge database of information from which they can learn and practice their English. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) can benefit lecturers due to its rich source of teaching materials. Lecturers can create a fun and interactive atmosphere in a class by using MALL so students can implement their English knowledge efficiently. During the language learning process, users can use MALL before or after a conversation to smoothen their practice and create a fluent conversation. In listening class in Korea, (Nah et al., 2008) found that the use of mobile phones to access the internet is found to be effective for students-centered teaching and collaborative learning.

One example of MALL is a translation application called Google Translate (GT). Google Translate is a machine translation developed by Google that functions to translate text, documents, and websites from one language into another. With all the convenience that GT provides, it is a regular thing for teachers or lecturers to find students grab their smartphones directly when they encounter some language difficulties during the class. They can translate all English vocabularies both in the form of words or sentences so they can catch up with the learning process more easily.

However, GT has not been able to handle a longer sentence (Medvedev, 2016). A longer sentence will be translated by a word-per-word translation. (Santoso, 2010) also stated 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. Therefore, (Jin & Deifell, 2013) added that GT is used as a complementary tool because this tool does not have a grammatical function. Despite all the issues, students still prefer to use GT as online dictionary to help them study since it is cheap and easy to use.

The existence of both smartphones and GT give many positive impacts on the language learning process and its advantages have recently been explored by few researchers (Garcia & Pena, 2011; Groves & Mundt, 2015; Jin & Deifell, 2013; Josefsson, 2011). In the aspect of pedagogy, using a smartphone can be an ideal tool to support situated learning theory, which states that learning is more likely to take place when information is contextually relevant and can be put to immediate use (Lave & Wenger, 1991). By using GT, students can directly find the meanings and usage of new vocabulary, phrases, or sentences; they can listen to the pronunciation of each word. (Chandra & Yuyun, 2018) stated that all respondents in their research used GT mostly for finding or translating vocabulary. They use this tool frequently from Bahasa Indonesia to English. Although, GT does not provide accurate translation for idioms and certain phrases, most students also still prefer to use this application during class. Therefore, the use of GT contributes greatly to students learning progress.

However, too much access to smartphone can also be counterproductive for students especially during speaking practice in undergraduate classes. It

was found that some teachers express misgivings about the way they prepare students for how to deal with these technologies both inside and outside the classrooms (Davis, 2006; Watkins et al., 2004). Students' habit of checking their smartphones for every word they come across has become an addiction during class practice. For example, students preferred to access their smartphones to formulate sentences instantly. Instead of trying to formulate English sentences by themselves, they google translate all the sentence and read it during speaking practice. As a result, the English skill level of undergraduates is still very low because they are not actually learning during the class. This habit also influences their confidence whenever they want to deliver their opinion in English. They are not able to speak without checking their smartphone first. Although GT has become beneficial for students, the reality tells the opposite. We still can find most undergraduates difficult to speak English. This low level of English ability paired with low learning motivation can be a disaster.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the negative impacts of students' addiction due to GT usage and how to tackle or minimize the negative impacts during class. This study focuses only on the usage of Google Translate since it is the application students access frequently during the class. It is expected that the findings of this study can help educators to anticipate the negative impacts of this addiction when it begins to influence students' confidence and interfere with the learning progress. This study also aims to find out whether (Yanti & Meka, 2019)'s research findings also occur in the case of speaking skills. According to them, the accuracy of Google Translate made students kept learning and practicing grammar. The introduction should be clear and provide the issue to be discussed in the manuscript. Before the objective, authors should provide an adequate background, and very short literature survey in order to record the existing solutions, to show which is the best of previous researches, gap analysis to show the scientific merit or novelties of the paper and purpose of the research. At the end of the paragraph, the author/s should end with an objective of the research.

## 2. METHOD

The study was conducted by using descriptive-qualitative method. The data was collected by distributing questionnaires and conducting class observation. Questionnaires were designed in the form of Google Form to find out students' perceptions toward the use of GT in class. The impacts were identified during class observation and through questioners filled by students. Class observation was conducted by lecturer during presentation practices and interactive Q&A with other students who acted as audiences.

The training was divided into two stages. Each stage consists of 2 rehearsals and a final presentation. Before delivering a final presentation, they were asked to rehearse it (see figure 1) with the assistance of the lecturer. During the presentation rehearsal 1, 2 and final presentation 1 (stage 1) students were allowed to use GT as they preferred. Then, the use of GT was restricted by lecturer in the preparation of final presentation (stage 2). Students could only check GT in a proper amount and limited time. Rehearsal was conducted in class. After the rehearsal was assessed by the lecturer, students were required to fix their presentation and rehearse again for the second time in front of the class in the next meeting. Then, in the third meeting, they were required to execute the final presentation independently. This process was repeated for the next three meetings by using different topics.

All presentation rehearsals were also recorded by using smartphone so the students can evaluate their progress. Figure 1 represents the process of presentation rehearsal before the students executed the final presentation 1 and 2.

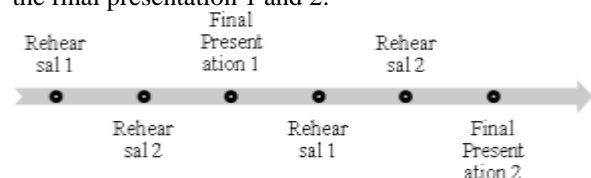


Figure 1

Process of presentation rehearsals

## Participants

A total of 71 undergraduate students of Informatics Engineering department who were taking English for Presentation Training participated. The participants distribution was 24 students (semester V) and 47 students (semester VII) and divided into three classes.

## Data Analysis

Data obtained through questionnaires were then classified and analyzed by using percentage calculation while data obtained through class observation were analyzed by comparing students' grades and attitudes during the class interactions and group presentation. During class observation, a speaking assessment rubric was also used to evaluate students' progress in each presentation practice. The objective is to find out whether using GT during presentation rehearsal and final practice could either increase students' English-speaking ability or encourage them to be lazy to learn.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

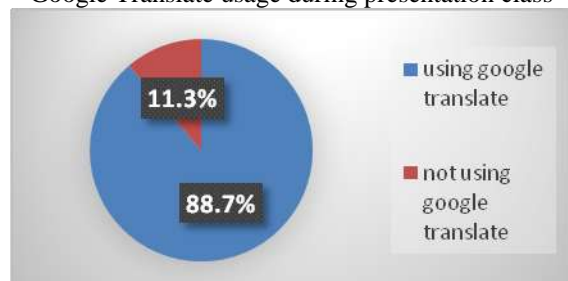
### Google Translate Usage during Learning Process

During the presentation rehearsals, all students were free to interact with the presenter during Q&A sessions. They were encouraged to ask questions by creating English sentences by themselves. However, during the first and second rehearsals, they were not able to produce the sentence confidently before checking GT first. Based on class observation, this

condition occurred several times during the class rehearsals. To keep up with the learning process, almost all students relied themselves completely on GT in order to collaborate in learning especially low-level learners. In order to keep up with the training and tackle the difficulties, most of them decided to use GT during the training as showed below:

Figure 2

Google Translate usage during presentation class



It was also found that the frequency of GT usage during the class was divided into five categories: sometimes (47.9%), often (23.9%), seldom (15.5%), always (7%), and almost never (5.7%). It means that GT has become a preferred translation app for students during the class since it is easy to use.

Based on the data, 73.2% of students like to study English although 71.8% of students felt that English is a difficult subject to learn. It means that students have an interest in learning English despite the difficulty they faced during the training. As (Triarisanti & Purnawarman, 2019) pointed out that the high level of interest and motivation has influenced students' learning outcomes. Every learner is still interested in learning, no matter how small the interest is.

### The Impact of Google Translate Usage on Students' Ability

Based on students' perceptions toward the use of GT, it was found that students considered GT usage during class to be beneficial for them and it can improve their English knowledge. Although most of the students (53.5%) perceived GT as useful in improving their language skills; some of the students, however, have felt vice versa. 46.5% of students stated that they did not feel any improvement or the use of GT did not give any effect on them.

However, the students also realized some negative impacts of GT usage during the class. They stated that GT usage during class was addictive, they had difficulty in developing their English skills independently for example making sentences on their own, they also stated that learning became difficult because GT did not give an accurate translation, GT did not really give them any significant progress but it did help with the meaning and pronunciation, GT made them feel lazy to learn and memorize new words, and they felt lack of confident in class if they did not use GT.

Meanwhile, it was also found that 57.7% of students thought that GT usage during class did not

give them any negative impacts, 29.6% of students thought maybe there was a negative impact on them, and 12.7% of students thought that it gave no negative impacts. In addition, most students also felt that GT usage made them feel confident during class practice (60.6%).

Although it was found that GT usage during the class is beneficial, does not give a bad impact on students, and can boost their confidence during the class; most students believe that instructors or lecturers should limit the use of GT during class (59.2%). They also believe that students should use GT accordingly, using only to check the meanings of new or difficult vocabularies, to check pronunciation during class practice, and not to use it to translate all sentences.

Based on class observation and students' progress, the negative impact of GT usage during the class is very significant. For students with low English levels and low motivation, GT usage without limitation and guidance can lead to stagnant learning. The instant process offered by GT and other similar applications facilitates students to only type the whole sentences without really knowing how those sentences are actually constructed. It was also found that a few minutes later when they encountered the same word, they could not recall the meaning of the sentence or how to construct the same sentence.

In addition, beginner learners tend to memorize the whole sentences they had created by using google translate. When they forgot a word or two, it was difficult for them to continue the presentation smoothly. Thus, this condition creates ineffective learning.

### How to Minimize the Negative Impact of GT During Class

Learning a new language needs persistence and consistency that both are reflected through practices. Nowadays, all the language applications and software can be used optimally to facilitate creative and interactive language learning. This era also shifts traditional learning (teacher-centered) to student-centered learning process. The use of mobile phones to access the internet is found to be effective for student-centered teaching and collaborative learning (Osifo, 2019). In this digital era, lecturers are required to both guide their students to use learning application such as Google Translate in accordingly and teach digital literacy for self-learning. By doing so, GT addiction can be avoided.

The findings imply that not every student know how to use the right learning strategies. Learning Strategy is an approach in learning and using information. It is the mental process, which learners employ to learn and use the target language (Nunan, 1991). Meanwhile, speaking is considered as the hardest skill in learning English and needs various strategies that should be integrated with speaking class (Mistar et al., 2014). (Syafriyadin, 2020) stated that speaking practice is probably the

most reliable route to authentic communication in developing the learner's proficiency.

Improper learning strategies combine with poor learning styles can lead to poor learning outcome. Student learning styles are shaped by their mindset and habits from school. The variety of students learning style are influenced by their experiences, genders and ethnic (Philbin et al., 1995) and it is attached to each individual (Prastiti & Pujiningsih, 2009). Therefore, it is essential for lecturers to identify the characteristics of their students and show them the proper learning strategies during the class. It is essential for lecturers to educate them the proper way to use technology to enhance their English skills.

In the case of English for presentation class for undergraduate students with a low level of English ability, some practical strategies were implemented by lecturer as an approach to minimize negative impacts of GT during class:

First, teach the students the language focus commonly used in presentation and guide them to make presentation outline together. For example, lecturers show what phrases or sentences are used in the opening, signaling, and closing of a presentation. For this material, students are asked to memorize one or two phrases they are going to use later in their presentation. During this session, students can use GT to check the meaning of every phrase and how it is used in the sentences. When they are ready, lecturers can start to train them to make a presentation outline.

Second, ask them to use those phrases they learned in step one to open a presentation in a form of individual practice. In this session, some low-level students will find it hard to open a presentation in the beginning but with repetitive practices, they will be able to open a presentation naturally. Most students in the class will feel the urge to google some words they do not know, but it is suggested that during this session lecturer restrict the GT usage so they can construct the sentences by themselves. The role of the instructor or lecturer in this session is very important. He or she is obligated to guide or help students if they still have some difficulties. As (Grasha, 2002) stated each student has different needs and learning styles that affect how they achieve knowledge and how they interact with other people. Teachers' interaction with students can shape and support the way students adopt themselves, choosing different learning styles.

Third, ask the students to list all new vocabularies related to their presentation topic. In this session, students are asked to find out the meanings and pronunciation of all new words listed by using their smartphone or laptop. By doing this, they can enrich their vocabulary knowledge. Lecturers can guide them to use GT correctly and effectively so students do not only translate all the complete sentences without knowing how to construct them.

During this process, lecturer functions as a facilitator to show them self-directed learning so they can learn independently based on their pace.

Fourth, record all the presentation and pronunciation activities. Nowadays, all smartphones provide recording features both sound and video. Using this feature optimally, lecturers can boost students' confidence and help them evaluate their own progress. Students' evaluations can be conducted by watching or listening to recording together in class. Lectures and other students can give input to presenter in order to increase their English skills. During this session, students can also practice how to give opinions and advice by using GT accordingly and in minimal amount. In addition, lecturers can create an interactive class by describing the proper ways to deliver a presentation through videos. As (Puspitasari & Panggabean, 2016) stated that students will do more activities for learning because they not only listen, but also observe, read, and demonstrate.

Fifth, limit to only one laptop or smartphone during a presentation or English practice. Put only one laptop or smartphone in front of the class for students to check words they do not know or forget. By limiting their googling time, students automatically will remember the word or try to construct the sentence independently. This condition will trigger them to study harder. Another way to limit GT usage can be conducted by giving students only 15 minutes to check their smartphones during class. In this 15-minute-window they can check every learning app they have on their smartphone to solve some problem or task given by the instructor.

Sixth, students are free to mix their language when they cannot recall or do not know a certain word in English. During Q&A sessions, give students the freedom to mix their language when they want to ask or answer a question as long as they do not use smartphones to study. This practice will increase their confidence although they probably make a wrong grammatical order in their sentences. Lecturers can correct the grammar at the end or students can use their smartphones after practice.

Seventh, repetition is key. Repetition is an important part of learning. The more practice and repetition students do, the more fluent their English will be. In order to make them practice regularly, it is required to make them stay motivated during the class. (Komara & Ramdani, 2014) stated that motivation has a very crucial role in a learning process, especially related to the students' achievement in mastering a particular subject. Motivated learners are motivated, eager to work hard, concentrate on the assigned tasks, do not require constant reinforcement, face challenges enthusiastically, and may even inspire others, promoting collaborative learning (Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013). Lecturers can give several interesting topics for them to present. By doing so, they can improve their presentation skills, vocabulary and



eventually become confident speaking in public. In addition, lecturers are required to know what suitable teaching approach for their types of students and how to communicate with them. As (Sari et al., 2020) stated instructor who can communicate well with students can encourage students to ask question and to have a discussion in order to answer things they do not understand.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Anticipating the overuse or misuse of GT or any other type of translation application requires a commitment between instructor and students. It is suggested that students understand what skills to achieve and how to achieve them before starting the course. When students know what to achieve during the class or training, the use of GT can be minimized by setting class ground rules.

In this digital era, both students and lecturers can make use of GT and any kind of learning application to create a fun and creative learning situation. The role of the lecturer during class is essential since he/she can maintain and guide students to use a smartphone and all types of applications wisely and efficiently in order to increase their English skills.

Compared to the findings by (Yanti & Meka, 2019), in the case of Presentation Skills, it is concluded that GT usage can help improve students' English ability and boost their confidence during class practice. However, the use of GT does not always keep them learning as it was found in translation class. The convenience offered by GT can be counterproductive for students since it can lead to addiction without supervision.

The use of technology such as GT in Second Language Learning Class should be balanced with the students' mindset about the technology itself. Therefore, lecturers should be able to guide their students in using technology and adapt their pedagogy style based on the classroom they are going to teach. Smith & Conti (2016) in (Walsh, 2019) stated that there is no longer an agreed prognosis for what would be best in all classrooms. Many now speak of teaching methodology entering into a "post-method" era, where teachers should choose their approach off the shelf from a range of possible approaches.

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