STUDENTS' PREFERENCE ON USING ONLINE TRANSLATOR IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Agus Hidayat*

UIN Raden Intan Lampung
Indonesia

Article Info	Abstract
	This study investigates the preferences of fifth-semester students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung regarding the use of online translators in academic writing. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected from 180 students via a six-item questionnaire focusing on general usage and the impacts on academic writing. The findings indicate that online translators are widely utilized, with the majority of students using them daily or weekly. Google Translate emerged as the most preferred tool due to its ease of use and comprehensive language support. Students primarily use online translators to translate words or phrases, understand foreign texts, and check grammar and sentence structure. The impact on academic writing is generally positive, with many students finding these tools effective in improving their writing quality and efficiency. However, challenges such as over-reliance on translators, misinterpretation of context, and lack of technical vocabulary were also noted.

INTRODUCTION

In today's ever-changing academic world, technology is playing a bigger role than ever before in students' academic pursuits. Online translation has become increasingly popular among students as a useful tool (Xu & Wang, 2011). These digital platforms provide a convenient and efficient method for students to translate text from one language to another, helping them with their academic writing assignments. Online translators are convenient and accessible (Khamitov, 2022), but there is an ongoing debate among educators and researchers about how they affect students' learning and academic development.

Online translation services have captured the attention of various communities and expert translators. People have been discussing the possible effects of it. Since the early 2000s, researchers from different countries have been studying the use of online translation in the translation community (Sreelekha et al., 2016). Online translation is a widely used technology in the field of technological innovation. The goal is to automate the process of translating spoken or written material from one language to another. Translation services on the internet have become extremely popular worldwide due to the increasing need for translation (Sabtan, 2020). Back in the old days, people learning a new language used dictionaries to figure out the exact meanings of words they did not know in that language. When it comes to using traditional dictionaries, it can be a bit of a hassle, and learners might face difficulties in grasping the meaning of certain words (Graves, 2009).

There are four essential skills in English: reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Sadiku, 2015). These skills are crucial for effective communication in both personal and professional settings. Reading helps individuals understand written information, while writing allows them to

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***** **Corresponding author:**

Agus Hidayat, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia. ✉ agushidayat@radenintan.ac.id

express their thoughts and ideas clearly. Speaking and listening are important for engaging in conversations and understanding others. Mastering all four skills is necessary for becoming fluent in English and successfully navigating various social and academic situations (Douglas & Dominique, 2019).

Writing is considered the most challenging skill to master (Sağlamel & Kayaoğlu, 2015), as it requires not only a strong grasp of vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to organize ideas coherently. However, with practice and dedication, individuals can improve their writing skills and become more confident in expressing themselves through written communication (Benali, 2013). Honing all four skills will enable individuals to effectively communicate with others, convey their thoughts and opinions, and participate actively in a global society where English is a widely spoken language.

Academic writing can be defined as the ability to convey complex ideas and arguments in a clear and concise manner, using evidence and critical analysis to support one's claims (Gabi, 2022). It is a key skill that is necessary for success in higher education and the professional world. By mastering academic writing, individuals can effectively communicate their knowledge and expertise in their field, contributing to the advancement of research and innovation (Cronin, 2005). Academic writing is a powerful tool that empowers individuals to engage in intellectual discourse and make meaningful contributions to their respective fields of study.

Academic writing is especially important for students, as it allows them to demonstrate their understanding of complex concepts and theories in a clear and concise manner (Hamp-Lyons & Heasley, 2006). By learning how to structure arguments and provide evidence to support their claims, students can excel in their studies and achieve academic success. Additionally, academic writing helps individuals develop critical thinking skills and the ability to analyses information from various sources (Pu, 2021), which are valuable assets in today's competitive job market. Mastering the art of academic writing is essential for both personal and professional growth.

Academic writing is now made easier with the help of online translation services, allowing students and researchers to quickly and accurately translate texts into different languages. This has not only improved the efficiency of language learning but has also facilitated global communication and collaboration. The advancements in translation technology have revolutionized the way we interact with different cultures and languages (Doherty, 2016), breaking down barriers and bringing people closer together.

It is worth exploring and analyzing the topic of using online translators in academic writing. It is important to understand why students are drawn to these tools because it can help us see the advantages and disadvantages of using them in educational settings (Maged et al., 2006). When educators and policymakers explore this topic, they can learn important lessons on how to successfully incorporate technology in the classroom while encouraging students to think critically and improve their language skills.

Technology is changing the way we learn and communicate (Swamy, 2020), so it's important to look at how online translators are affecting students' writing habits. These tools have become quite popular among students who may have difficulty with language barriers or complex vocabulary, thanks to their easy accessibility (August et al., 2005). They worry that there may be inaccuracies in the translations (O'Hagan, 2011) or that it could hinder language development.

By investigating the preferences of students when it comes to using online translators in academic writing, we can gain valuable insights into how educators can best support student learning while making the most of technology. By understanding the reasons behind students' choice to use these tools, educators can customize their teaching methods to effectively tackle the unique needs and difficulties encountered by learners (Hatim, 2012). Furthermore, taking a closer look at how online translators are used in academic writing can provide valuable insights for developing curriculum and assessment methods that are in line with the skills and competencies needed in the 21st century.

Using online translators in academic writing brings up significant concerns regarding plagiarism, intellectual property rights, and ethical considerations (Hadi et al., 2014). As educators, it is important for us to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to responsibly navigate the complexities of the digital world, all while taking advantage of the benefits it offers for language learning. By promoting a culture of honesty and responsibility in academic writing,

teachers can inspire students to improve their critical thinking abilities and language proficiency by actively engaging with course content (Nieto, 2017).

Analyzing students' preferences towards utilizing online translators in academic writing presents a special chance to investigate how technology, language acquisition, and educational methods intersect. By understanding the reasons why students are drawn to these tools, educators can provide better support for student success while also encouraging responsible digital citizenship. By conducting research and engaging in discussions about this topic, we can all collaborate to build a more inclusive and creative educational setting that equips students for success in a world that is becoming more interconnected.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to its technique. The methods used in qualitative research include document analysis, interviewing subjects, and observational data collection. Narrative or verbal methods are the main means of summarizing the results (Lodico et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the research design for this study will be descriptive. Analysis of data gathered from multiple sources, including documents, field notes, interviews, and recordings, is a component of descriptive qualitative research. This kind of research enables a thorough grasp of the subject. The research findings are presented in the study (Ary et al., 2009). As a result, in order to present the research findings, the researcher would gather data retrieved from a survey.

For their data analysis, the researcher used the Miles and Huberman approach. Three interrelated procedures comprise qualitative data analysis, according to Miles and Huberman: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research was conducted in May 2024 at the English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Intan Lampung. The subjects were 180 fifth semester students who have completed the Academic Writing course. The researcher distributed an online questionnaire via Google Form. The finding and discussion of the questionnaire responses analysis are presented below.

The General Use of Online Translator

The first section of the questionnaire investigated the use of online translator. The first item focused on the frequency of online translators' usage. The data can be seen in the following figure.
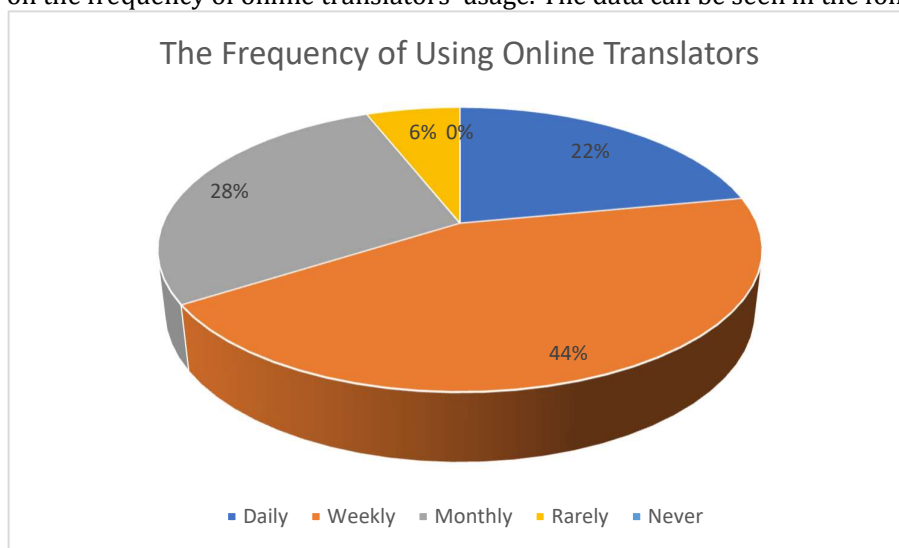

Figure 1. Students' Frequency in Using Online Translators

The data on the frequency of using online translators among fifth-semester students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung reveals the following distribution. A significant portion of students (43%) use online translators on a daily basis, 22% of the students use online translators on a weekly basis, a smaller group of students (6%) utilize online translators on a monthly basis, and 28% of the students use online translators rarely.

Interestingly, none of the students (0%) reported never using online translators. This indicates that all students surveyed have, at some point, engaged with these tools, highlighting their pervasive presence in the academic environment.

The data shows a strong inclination towards the frequent use of online translators, with the majority of students using them daily or weekly. A similar finding is found in Viberg's research that the integral role these tools play in supporting students' academic endeavours (Viberg & Grönlund, 2013).

The second item on the first section of the questionnaire investigated the most preferred online translators. Students' responses on this item are presented in Figure 2.
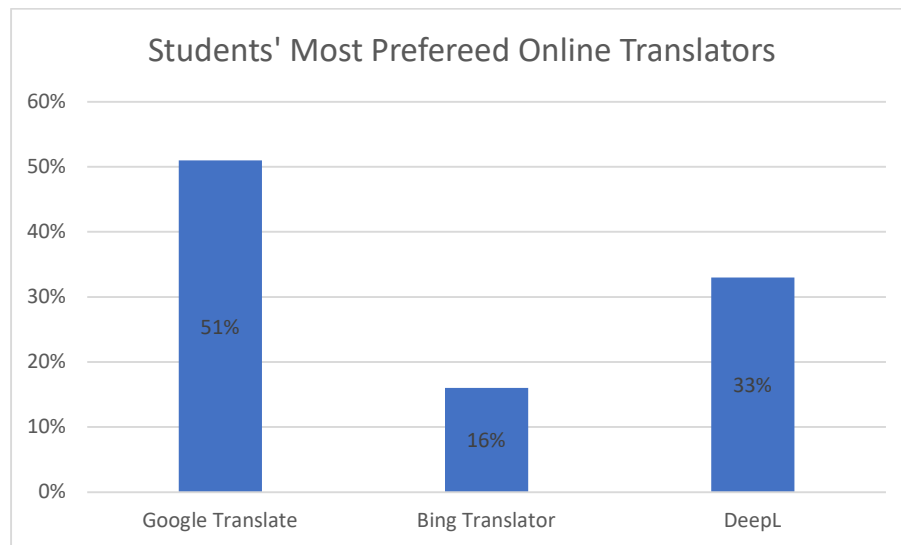

Figure 2. The Most Preferred Online Translators

Figure 2 contains information that Google Translate is the most preferred online translator, with 51% of respondents choosing it as their favourite. This indicates that more than half of the participants rely on Google Translate for their translation needs. This finding confirms Groves and Mundt's research finding that likely due to its widespread availability, ease of use, and extensive language support (Groves & Mundt, 2015).

DeepL is the second most popular choice, preferred by 33% of respondents. DeepL is known for its high-quality translations and accuracy, which may explain why a significant portion of users favors it despite it being less well-known than Google Translate.
Bing Translator is the least preferred among the options, with only 16% of respondents selecting it. Although it offers good functionality, it appears to lag behind Google Translate and DeepL in terms of user preference.

Next, the researcher investigated the students' reasons in utilizing online translators in academic writing. Students' responses were varied, as displayed in Figure 3.
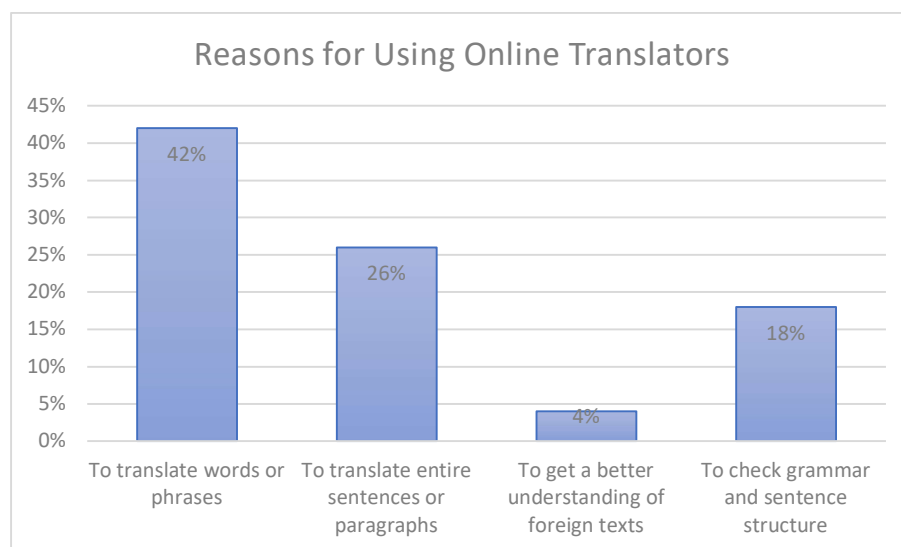
Figure 3. Students' Reason in Using Online Translators

The data presents the various reasons why students utilize online translators in their academic writing, broken down into four primary categories: translating words or phrases, translating entire sentences or paragraphs, understanding foreign texts, and checking grammar and sentence structure.

The highest percentage (42%) of students use online translators to translate individual words or phrases. This suggests that students primarily rely on these tools for quick, straightforward translations. This usage likely reflects the need to understand or incorporate specific terminology from another language into their academic work.
A significant portion of students (26%) use online translators to translate longer text segments, such as entire sentences or paragraphs. This indicates a reliance on these tools for more substantial translation tasks.

Only 4% of students use online translators primarily to understand foreign texts better. This relatively low percentage indicates that while some students use translators to grasp the meaning of non-native texts, it is not the primary reason for most. Furthermore, 18% of students use online translators to check grammar and sentence structure.

This finding indicates that students rely on the online translators in the academic writing context. It indicates a significant reliance on these tools for editing and proofreading purposes. This finding is supported by Tavares' research that online translators might spark over-reliance in writing activities (Tavares et al., 2023)

The Impacts on Academic Writing

The second section of the questionnaire investigate the impact or influence the online translation on students' academic writing. The first item asks the effectiveness of online translators for improving academic writing. The responses show a varied range of opinions among respondents, as can be seen in Figure 4

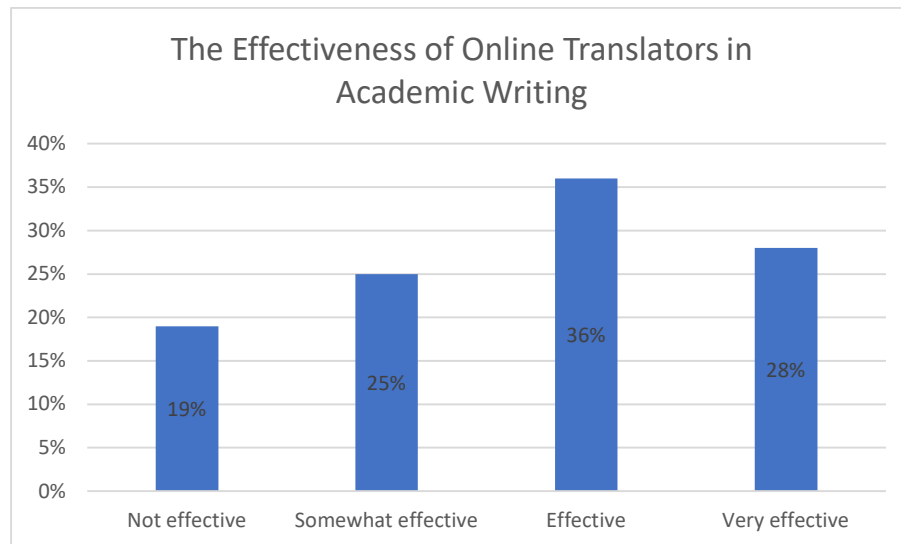## The Effectiveness of Online Translators in Academic Writing

Figure 4 reveals that 19% of respondents believe that online translators are not effective in improving their academic writing, 25% of respondents find online translators somewhat effective, 36% of respondents consider online translators effective for improving academic writing, and 28% of respondents view online translators as very effective.

While a majority (64%) of respondents find online translators to be effective or very effective for improving academic writing, a notable portion (19%) finds them not effective, and 25% see them as only somewhat effective. This indicates a general positive perception of online translators, though there is still room for improvement to address the concerns of the less satisfied users. This finding is supported by Castilho's research finding that varied response in the usage of an application necessitates improvement (Castilho et al., 2018).

The second item investigates how online translators influence students academic writing. The responses are contained in Figure 5 below.

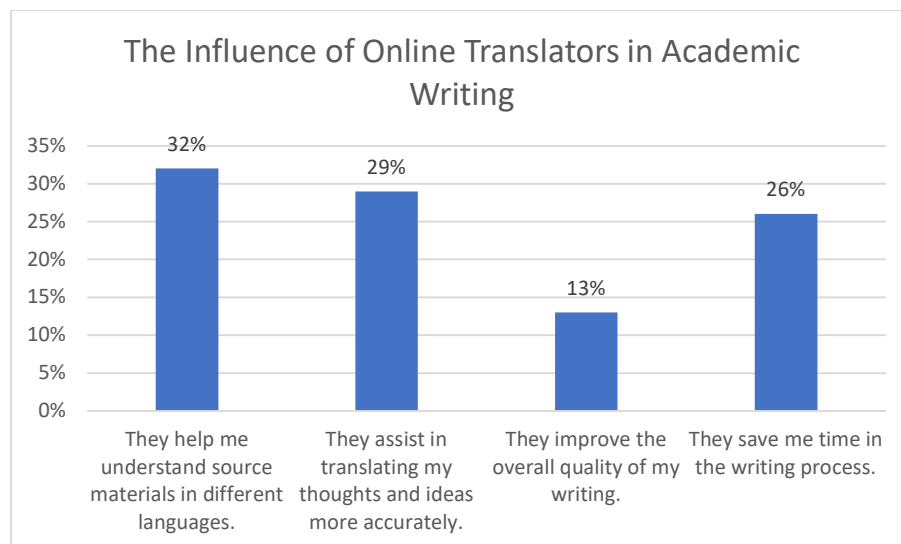## The Influence of Online Translators in Academic Writing

Figure 5. The Influence of Online Translators in Students' Academic Writing

Based on the responses, online translators have various impacts on the academic writing process. The most significant influence of online translators is helping users understand source materials in different languages, with 32% of respondents highlighting this benefit. This suggests

that many students and academics rely on translators to access and comprehend research and information that would otherwise be inaccessible due to language barriers.

In terms of translating thoughts and ideas, 29% of respondents find that online translators assist in translating their thoughts and ideas more accurately. This indicates that a considerable number of users utilize these tools to ensure their intended meaning is conveyed correctly when writing in a foreign language or when aiming for more precise language use.

Based on the responses, 26% of respondents reveals that online translators save time in the writing process. This benefit underscores the efficiency and convenience of using these tools, allowing users to focus more on content creation and less on language translation.

The least cited influence, yet still notable, is the improvement of overall writing quality, as indicated by 13% of respondents. While this is a smaller percentage, it shows that some users believe that online translators contribute to enhancing the clarity, coherence, and professionalism of their written work.

Overall, online translators play a multifaceted role in the academic writing process, primarily by aiding in the understanding of diverse source materials and enhancing the accuracy of expressed ideas, while also contributing to time efficiency and writing quality to a lesser extent. This finding confirms the statement that accuracy and time-saving factors foster the popularity of machine translators (Austermuhl, 2001).

The last item of the questionnaire focuses on the challenges experienced by the students in using online translators. The results highlight several challenges users face when using online translators for academic writing, as presented in Figure 6.
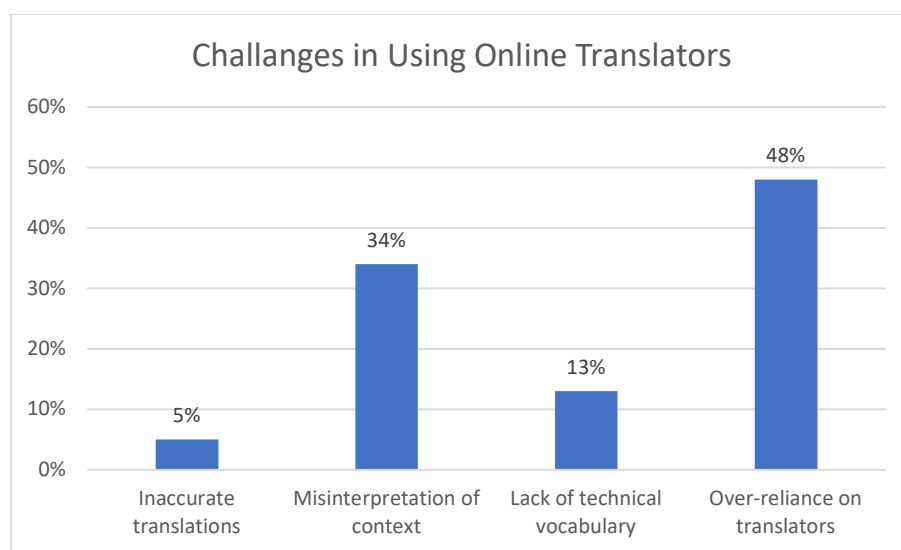

Figure 6. Challenges in Using Online Translators

Over-reliance on translators is the most significant challenge, with 48% respondents indicating it as an issue. Over-reliance on translators can lead to a lack of critical engagement with the text and potential inaccuracies going unnoticed, ultimately affecting the quality and originality of academic writing.

Misinterpretation of context is the second most common challenge, with 34% respondents mentioning it. Online translators often struggle with understanding the nuanced context of academic texts, leading to translations that may not convey the intended meaning accurately.

The lack of technical vocabulary is expressed by 13% respondents. This challenge pertains to the translators' inability to accurately translate specialized or technical terms commonly used in academic writing. This can result in imprecise or incorrect translations that undermine the integrity of the academic work.

The least cited challenge is the inaccurate translations, with 5% respondents mentioning it. While online translators are continuously improving, inaccuracies still occur, which can compromise the quality of the translated text.

This finding is in line with Doherthy's finding tha the primary concerns revolve around the dependency on translators, contextual inaccuracies, and the limited technical vocabulary (Doherty, 2016). These factor, all of which can significantly impact the effectiveness of using online translators for academic writing.

CONCLUSION

The study on English Education Study Program students' preference for using online translators in academic writing at UIN Raden Intan Lampung reveals several key insights. Firstly, online translators are widely used by students, with a significant number utilizing them daily. This highlights the growing reliance on these tools in academic settings due to their accessibility and convenience. The most preferred online translators among students include Google Translate and other popular platforms, indicating their trust in the accuracy and efficiency of these tools.

The impact of online translators on academic writing is multifaceted. A majority of students find online translators effective or very effective in improving their academic writing. They help students understand source materials in different languages, translate thoughts and ideas more accurately, and save time during the writing process. These benefits are particularly valuable for students dealing with language barriers or complex vocabulary.

However, the study also identifies some challenges associated with using online translators. These include concerns about the accuracy of translations, potential hindrance to language development, and issues related to plagiarism and ethical considerations. Despite these challenges, the overall positive perception of online translators suggests that they play a crucial role in supporting students' academic endeavors.

In conclusion, while online translators offer significant advantages in terms of efficiency and accessibility, it is essential for educators to address the challenges and guide students in using these tools responsibly. By promoting a balanced approach that combines the use of technology with critical thinking and language development, educators can enhance students' academic writing skills and prepare them for success in an interconnected world.

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