ENGLISH LECTURERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE USE OF MACHINE TRANSLATION TOOLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Mohamad Syafri[1], Zuhra[2]
[1,2] UIN Datokarama Palu

Correspondence Email: syafri@uindatokarama.ac.id

Abstract

The use of technology in language learning has developed at a significant pace. The development of language-supporting applications, including Machine Translation tools, has increased. The integration of Machine Translation tools in English learning becomes the focus of this research, specifically on how the English lecturers perceive the use of Machine Translation tools in their courses. The research is qualitative research with a survey design. The participants of this research are English lecturers at Islamic State University Datokarama Palu. The findings show that, generally, lecturers have good perceptions of Machine Translation tools. English lecturers see Machine Translation tools as an effective and easier way to learn and search for the meaning of words. However, most lecturers disallow the use of Machine Translation tools in language classes. Overreliance and the tendency to mislead students in understanding words fully and contextually are the negative aspects of Machine Translation tools. Additionally, Machine Translation tools need to be seen as supplementary and should not replace the aims of language learning. The research concludes that English lecturers have positive views regarding Machine Translation tools. However, its use in class still needs to be guided and lecturers need to accommodate the use with proper and effective learning methods and techniques.

Keywords: *Machine Translation tools, English Lecturers, Perception*

Abstrak

Penggunaan teknologi dalam pembelajaran bahasa telah berkembang dengan pesat. Perkembangan aplikasi pendukung pembelajaran bahasa, termasuk di antaranya adalah Mesing Penerjemah, semakin meningkat. Integrasi Mesin Penerjemah dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris menjadi fokus penelitian ini, khususnya bagaimana persepsi dosen bahasa Inggris terhadap penggunaan Mesin Penerjemah dalam mata kuliah mereka. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan desain survei. Partisipan dari penelitian ini adalah dosen bahasa Inggris di Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, secara umum, para dosen memiliki persepsi yang baik terhadap Mesing Penerjemah. Dosen bahasa Inggris melihat Mesing Penerjemah sebagai cara yang efektif dan lebih mudah untuk belajar dan mencari arti kata. Namun, sebagian besar dosen tidak mengizinkan penggunaan Mesing Penerjemah di kelas bahasa. Ketergantungan yang berlebihan dan kecenderungan untuk siswa salah dalam memahami kata-kata secara penuh dan kontekstual adalah aspek negatif dari Mesing Penerjemah. Selain itu, Mesing Penerjemah perlu dilihat sebagai pelengkap dan tidak boleh menggantikan tujuan pembelajaran bahasa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa dosen bahasa Inggris memiliki pandangan positif mengenai Mesing Penerjemah. Namun, penggunaannya di kelas masih perlu diawasi dan dosen dituntut untuk memiliki kreativitas dalam mengakomodir Mesin Penerjemah dengan metode dan Teknik pembelejaran Bahasa yang tepat.

Kata Kunci: *Mesin Penerjemah, Dosen Bahasa Inggris, Percepsi*

A. INTRODUCTION

The development of technology is a part of human civilization. Nations' characteristic is to find the best and most suitable way to live. By that, people tend to adapt and adopt almost all aspects of their life, including education. Language education, for example, integrates the use of technology into its system since the implementation of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning), and currently the use of the internet and more advanced mobile technology.

Despite its rapid changes, technology is still a double-edged tool. Language educators, learners, and stakeholders are asked to use it purposively and accordingly. It should be admitted that up until this time, the use of technology and online sources in language teaching is still a debatable topic, with teachers often caught in the great dilemma of whether to use it in their classes or not (Chun et al., 2016; Guaqueta & Castro-Garces, 2018). On one hand, the use of language-assisted technology is considered to help the learning process, both for teachers and students, easier and more

480

efficient. However, there is much consideration regarding students' performance and competence.

Among the technologies that are familiar with the language learning classes are Machine Translation tools. These tools are developed to help people translate words from one language to another. It starts from online dictionaries to state-of-the-art applications like Google Translate and DeepL. The applications can work not only autonomously but also process large-scale translation jobs. For instance, with Google Translate, people can translate thousands of words in just one click. As a free web-based service, it also helps people translate words and detect suitable phrases to be used in context (Groves & Mundt, 2015).

The existence of Machine Translation tools is surely really helpful. It cannot only offer good translation quality but also reduce working time. However, as mentioned before, there are also considerations for language learning. Over-dependence, for example, is one of the problems that could arise from the use of Machine Translation tools. Students progress will be limited when the role of the teachers and supervision is lack. Lee (2020) stated that there is a need for teachers guidance and awareness regarding the Machine Translation tools limitations to gain the maximum benefits of these tools.

The question then arise is how to ensure that Machine Translation tools to be effective in language learning. In this case what to be understood is the role of language educators. Their view regarding Machine Translation tools are crucial, as it will lead to how the role of Machine Translation tools be maximized and bring positive impact to language learners.

This research is focusing to see the views of language lecturers in UIN Datokarama Palu regarding the use of Machine Translation tools in language class. Despite numerous research that focusing on online Machine Translation tools, such as Prates et al. (2020), Lee (2020), Guaqueta (2018), and others, most research were focusing on the implementation of Machine Translation tools. This research on the other hand focusing on the main indirect user of the Machine Translation tools, the lecturers, whom believed to be the one impacted on the effect that could be brought by Machine Translation tools in language class.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW
1. Technology for Language Learning

The use of technology for language learning is not something new. Since the beginning of advancement of human civilization, technology has been intertwined with language. The invention of writing, five millennials ago, to preserve language is one of the longest-traced about the relation of language and technology (Chun et al., 2016).

As the human civilization developed, the language also develops. Currently, for example language learning has inseparable with the use of technology. In this context, technology stand for the use of technical processes, methods, or

knowledge to accomplish a learning task (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Therefore, in terms of technology for language learning the main core is to completing or helping learning process.

By that perception, language experts started to instil technology to language learning. Since the 20th century, language learning researchers introduce what is called Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). By the help of computer technology, learners can develop their knowledge and skills. It is not only known as one of the most innovation in 20th century for education, but also open broader opportunity for all (Ahmadi, 2018; YAMAN & EKMEKÇİ, 2016).

As the name implies Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is the use of computer to help and assist language learning. However with the improvement of technology, the definition has shifted (YAMAN & EKMEKÇİ, 2016). Not only the technology provided by the computer become more dynamic, but also the software and applications also become more various.

The previously know terms CALL is now changed and developed to MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning). This current technology is believed to provide a much easier than previous iterations of technology in language teaching (Kessler, 2018). The terms MALL, unlike CALL that supported just by computer, encompasses the use of mobile devices like cell phones, PDA's, smartphones, and others (YAMAN & EKMEKÇİ, 2016).

The help of technology or MALL has resulted a more independent, autonomous, and learner-centred (Rao, 2019). Despite the technology and language learning development, there are still some lack in how to use the technology for learning properly. Language teachers still unfamiliar with the technology (Kessler, 2018). While students also use it not only as support and over dependent with the technology.

2. Machine Translation tools

Machine Translation tools is one of the results of technology's development. It is a automated machine that based on computer software to translate from one language to another (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017). It has broad range of variety, from mobile dictionary application to web-based machine. Not only accessible to many, it also offers relatively small price and even free. Some well-known technology giants also develop their own Machine Translation tools, such as Microsoft and Google.

Not only able to translate, these tools also able to provide features that are very helpful for their user. For example, Google translator able to translate in more than a hundred languages around the globe (Google, 2024) and Microsoft that have voice-to-text technology and multi-device users to help quicker and more effective

translation (Microsoft, 2024). These not to mention, some famous star up in this market, such as Quillbot and DeepL.

However, when it comes for language learning purposes there are some considerations of how these technologies should be used. In terms of learning, the purpose is not only finding words' meaning, but to ensure there are learning experiences and knowledge given to the students. There are still debates and criticism regarding the functions of Machine Translation tools (Prates et al., 2020).

For example the study of Lee (2020) highlighted that machine translation tools has positive effect on improving the writing of the students. However, the author boldly stated to be benefitted from the tools, the awareness of the teacher and guidance is needed. Another study by Groves and Mundt (2015) also found that machine translation tools have positive effect for both learners and teachers. However, those tools are not error-free tools. Therefore, over reliant should be forbidden.

To conclude the idea of machine translation tools, it can be said that this technology have improved significantly for the past decade with state-of-art features. Not only translating one language to another, but also help for direct communication with multiple users. However, in English teaching and learning process, it still need to be guided by the lecturers or teachers. It is still has some weaknesses and potential to create a bad habit for learners, such as over reliant.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research within the design of survey (Braun et al., 2021). To collecting the data, open-ended question instrument was developed. The questions developed to extract information range from familiarity to expectations towards Machine Translation tools. There were 11 questions in total, as a qualitative surveys smaller number of questions were used to ensure less disengagement of participants. The questions convey four aspects in this research; familiarity and usage, benefits and challenges, the implementation of Machine Translation tools for language learning, and evaluation of the tools.

There were total 9 English lecturers that became the participants of the research. The participants have been teaching for 4-14 years. The data were collected by phone call or texting. The data collected then analyse through several steps, condensation, display, and verification (Miles et al., 2014).

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
A. Findings
1. Familiarity and Usage

Regarding the aspect of familiarity, the findings show that all the English lecturers is well-aware with Machine Translation tools, either web-based or application dictionary. The result is surely in line with the development of technology in which Machine Translation tools developed in rapid pace, not only getting easier to be used, but also more accessible.

The second aspect is relate with the usage of Machine Translation tools in class or during the learning process, such as doing tasks or understanding the material. When asked about how often the lecturers see students using Machine Translation tools in class, mostly answered occasionally. The responses excluding the exams or tests. Well there are only less than 20% that answer rarely. The findings show that students of English class still find that Machine Translation tools, either in form of dictionary applications or web-based tools, are helpful for their English tasks. The data is shown in the following chart.

The Usage of Translation Tools in English Tasks

22%
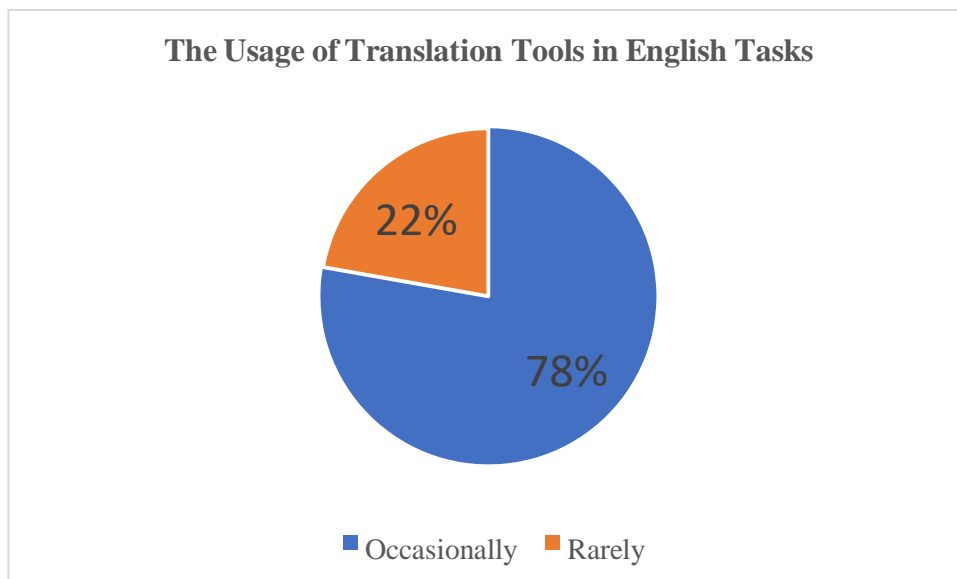
78%

■ Occasionally ■ Rarely

Chart 1. The Usage of Machine Translation tools in Language Class.

2. Benefits and Challenges

As mentioned before that Machine Translation tools are a double-edged technology. This view is also shared by English lecturers in UIN Datokarama Palu. This study unveils what kind of benefits and challenges offer by Machine Translation tools in language class. In terms of benefits the Machine Translation tools is not only effective in improving the understanding and vocabularies, it also able to help students sharpen their language skill, for example Reading and Writing.

One of the lecturers stated that Machine Translation tools help the students to become better writer

As I have observed in my writing classes, it can also assist the students in improving their writing skills.

It is in line that Machine Translation tools able to provide a richer vocabulary, some Machine Translation tools for example have features that could give thesaurus or alternative translation. In other word, for writer it could provide a better engagement of meaning.

Lecturers also see Machine Translation tools helping the students to become a more independent learner. It could create a more student-centred learning atmosphere.

the students can use Translation tools for independent learning.

The statement also strengthens by other lecturer, that goes with the idea to build independency

students will be accustomed to and assisted in finding the meaning of vocabularies.

The next finding regarding the benefits of Machine Translation tools is the context. Language learning is always related with culture and context. Numbers of learners for example, find no difficulty to understand a word meaning. However, they could not get the message of a sentence when put in different context. This aspect is seen by English lecturers could be minimized with the help of Machine Translation tools as for some tools to be facilitated with contextual meaning or accustomed to uncommon words. This is stated by one of the lecturers

Learners can use Translation tools to grasp the nuances and subtleties of expressions, idioms, and cultural references in the target language.

To sum up, from lecturers perspective Machine Translation tools help students to understand words, boosting vocabulary mastery, providing context for learning, improving language skills, train students to be more independent, and using time more efficient.

Despite the benefits, English lecturers also find Machine Translation tools to have their own backlash. There are some negative effects that could arise from the use of Machine Translation tools in language class. At least there are four main challenges to be considered regarding the use of Machine Translation tools for English learner; over reliant, potential of misleading and misunderstanding, unable to give proper understanding regarding the context, and decrease students' language skills, competences, and critical thinking.

The first aspect, over reliant, is the most common responses given by the lecturers. As a tool, Machine Translation tools should be used as a support for the user to improve in a better. However, features offered in the tools could lead to negative effect. This is stated by the lecturer

Some challenges in class when teaching English are sometimes students only use google translate and they take it before finding it out whether it's correct or not.

It also followed by the other statement given

One common challenge is that learners may become overly reliant on Translation tools

From this answer it can be seen that there is tendency of Machine Translation tools to become obstacle in achieving language classes' goals. This challenges also to another problems, the lack of critical thinking in learning language. By this, one lecturer stated

Some learners may become overly reliant on Translation tools, using them as a crutch rather than developing their language skills. This dependency can hinder progress in areas such as listening, speaking, and critical thinking in the target language.

Not only the problems about the impact of the tools for creating a bad habit, the lack in the tools also become one considerations in learning. Despite the fact that Machine Translation tools is able to give a better engagement of words, it is still not a learning tools. Therefore, most of Machine Translation tools still not provided with proper material in understanding context. It will then create a misleading or misunderstanding to the user, especially those with lower language competencies. This is admitted by lecturers, saying that

To translate vocabulary in one sentence and many paragraphs, Translation tools will give quite confusing results.

This supported by other statement, saying

Translation tools may not always capture the nuances, idioms, or cultural context of a language accurately. Learners might miss subtle meanings or cultural references, leading to misunderstandings.

From the findings, it can be seen that despite the benefits and positive tone given by the lecturers to Machine Translation tools. Obstacles and challenges regarding the use of Machine Translation tools still can be found in English classes.

3. Machine Translation tools for Language Learning

The third aspect in this study reveal how the English lecturers see the roles of Machine Translation tools in their English classes. In terms of using Machine Translation tools for learning process, there are only a third of the English lecturers that used Machine Translation tools in their class. As in the following chart
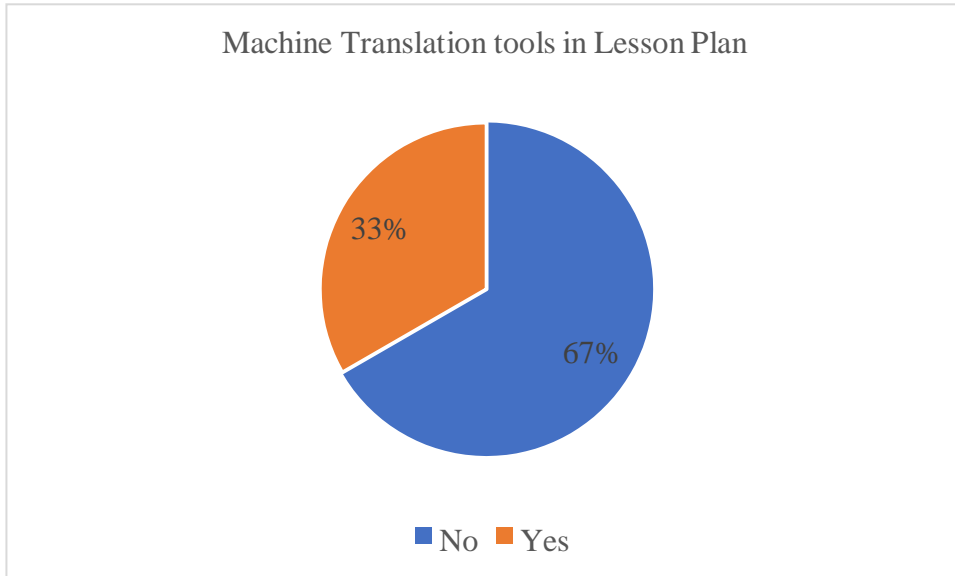

Chart 2. The Incorporation of Machine Translation tools in Lesson Plan

From those who incorporated the tools in their English class, there are several reasons, such as the function of Machine Translation tools that aligned with the materials or teaching method. As stated by the lecturer

Yes, becoz' in the preparation of the lesson plan, there is reading subject so I use the grammar translation method (GTM) and it requires a dictionary, so the online dictionary also help in learning.

Another lecturer also stated similarly

It is commonly just used in teaching translation, or when learners translate a text written in one language (source language) into another language (target language). That is usually used in teaching activities when learners find out the class of words in dictionary or how to pronounce the word in online dictionary.

On the other hand, the use of Machine Translation tools are still totally forbid for some lecturers. Just like the previous statement, the condition is learning method that not aligned with the tools. As stated by one lecturer

No I don't. I use Translation tools only for teaching not for the students' use. I use communicative language learning.

From this perspective, it can be said that there are different point of views regarding whether the Machine Translation tools be implemented in English class. On the other hand, those who use Machine Translation tools in class mostly do not use it blindly or without guidance. For example reminding the students the status of Machine Translation tools as supplementary or giving tasks that still focusing on developing students performance and skill. The following statements are the response regarding what kind of guidance they implement in their classes

I teach pronunciation and I need my students to check English pronunciation by using Translation tools. After that, I ask them to report the pronuciation of the words. Repetition is one of the techniques of audio-lingual method

Another lecturer also stated

There are a lot of language teaching methods that can be used. In teaching "daily activities", the learners are taught by applying Translation tools in Total Physical Response (TPR) Method. The learners translate the English verb (eat, sleep, etc) by using the translation tool an then they show the meaning by gesture.

The findings show that lecturers are not one hundred percent forbid the use of technology in class, in fact there are creativity that arises from the lecturers themselves regarding the use of Machine Translation tools.

4. Evaluation of Machine Translation tools

The last aspect to be seen is how English lecturers evaluate the role of Machine Translation tools now and in the future. From the aspect of evaluation what can be found is that there are common understanding about how the use of Machine Translation tools in class will become more inseparable, especially future development will enhance the quality of the tools. Lecturers also have a positive tone regarding the use of Machine Translation tools for language learning.

Such statement given by one lecturer

In general, a translation app is actually can be used as one of the tools for language learning because it is very helpful in translating quickly and lightly, but it still cannot replace a person in analyzing the language, because language requires creativity, art and imagination.

It also strengthens by other, saying

Translation tools would be a great tools for teachers/lecturers particularly if they teach English in specific major

However, despite the positive views about Machine Translation tools in English classes, most lecturers still give some highlight for the consideration. This to ensure that Machine Translation tools are not one hundred percent reliable for

learning, both language learners and teachers/lecturers should adapt and play their own role to have benefitted from the tools.

One lecturer stated that Machine Translation tools still lack on the "sense of language" as they merely a machine.

I predict that even the most advanced translation machine in the future can only translate word by word, but no one can use "sense of language", which is "the feeling of fitting and correctness when using a word/sentence". Only humans can feel (have feelings), not translation machines.

While other highlighted that learning experience should be able to be delivered by the lecturers, which creating balance in the learning process.

it's crucial to balance their use with other methods to ensure a whole learning experience

both statements also agreed in which another lecturer saying about how teachers and learners should act and response with the technology

For Teachers: Establish clear guidelines on when and how Translation tools should be used in the classroom. Communicate the role of these tools as aids rather than substitutes for active language engagement. For Learners: Utilize Machine Translation tools primarily for comprehension and vocabulary expansion. Use them to clarify meanings, but strive to understand how words and phrases are used in context.

From the findings, it can be seen that English lecturers have good concerns, especially about balancing the learning experience and technology adaptation.

B. Discussion

The use of machine translation tools in language learning is always has its negative and positive effect. However, numerous experts agree that by proper guidelines and implementations, the tools could be maximized (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017; Groves & Mundt, 2015; Lee, 2020). On the other hand, the highlight is the role of the language educators. It is inevitable that the advancements of technology will always affecting the language learning, including the machine translation tools.

The research findings unveil, English lecturers in UIN Datokarama Palu are not only familiar with the machine translation tools, but also has positive tone towards it. Contrary with the statement of Kessler (2018) in which unfamiliarity become one of the challenges in language learning technology. According to this there are several assumptions; firstly, the interactions of the lecturers with technology create more adaptive lecturers towards technology. Secondly, the age of the lecturers.

Most of the lecturers in this research are below 40's or classified as millennials. This generation is considered as digital native, those who have good relations and understanding towards technology.

The findings of this research also in line with the research Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017). Most of the lecturers believed that machine translation tools bring positive effect in improving language skills, including writing, reading, and vocabulary. However, lecturers also give some highlight regarding the negative impact that could arise, such as over dependent and less critical thinking. Students still take for granted what they get from the tools without rechecking the result. This part become the main differences between this research and the previous one, because the research of Alhaisoni and Alhaysony focusing on students' attitudes. On the other hand, this research provided the point of view of the lecturers.

This research also show that most of the lecturers are adaptive with technology, but also aware with the negative impacts. Therefore, most English lecturers agree with the importance of guidelines and innovations to use machine translation tools with proper teaching method and materials. For example, giving tasks that allow students to practice pronouncing words they find in the tools or do recheck to minimize the mistakes.

The lecturers also aware that machine translation tools still has problems in giving proper translation, especially for large scale translation task. Mistakes still commonly found. Besides that, there is a need to teach students about the contexts or "the sense of language" which believed unable to be learnt by students in machine translation tools only. This findings is in line with the some previous research (Groves & Mundt, 2015; Lee, 2020).

To conclude, UIN Datokarama Palu's English lecturers have a good and positive perspective towards machine translation tools for English learning. They also aware with the weaknesses and negative impacts of machine translation tools. Therefore, lecturers highlighted the importance of guidelines and proper teaching strategy.

E. CONCLUSION

The researchers unveil how English lecturers' perspective towards the use of machine translation tools in language learning. The research find that most lecturers have positive opinions regarding the use of translation tools in language learning. Not only that, they also familiar with various type of machine translation tools and their features. However, there is also some concerns regarding the impact that could arise, such as over dependant and less critical thinking. This condition makes most lecturers highlighted the importance of having a proper guideline in the use of machine translation tools in class. Not only guidelines, lecturers also stated the need

to have a creative and good teaching strategy to accommodate the use of machine translation tools without forgetting the aims of the teaching.

This research able to give a new perspective regarding the language learning technology. However, there are also weaknesses in this research, including the variety of the respondents' background and specifying the type of the translation machine tools. This could be the considerations for the future research.

Despite the weaknesses, this research could provide a new insight in the field of language learning technology. It is believed to be helpful for other researchers in this field.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmadi, D. M. R. (2018). The Use of Technology in English Language Learning: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, *3*(2), 115–125. https://doi.org/10.29252/ijree.3.2.115

Alhaisoni, E., & Alhaysony, M. (2017). An Investigation of Saudi EFL University Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Google Translate. *International Journal of English Language Education*, *5*(1), 72. https://doi.org/10.5296/ijele.v5i1.10696

Braun, V., Clarke, V., Boulton, E., Davey, L., & McEvoy, C. (2021). The online survey as a qualitative research tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *24*(6), 641–654. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550

Chun, D., Smith, B., & Kern, R. (2016). Technology in Language Use, Language Teaching, and Language Learning. *Modern Language Journal*, *100*, 64–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12302

Google. (2024). *Mendownload & menggunakan Google Terjemahan*. https://support.google.com/translate/answer/6350850?hl=id&co=GENIE.Platform%3DAndroid

Groves, M., & Mundt, K. (2015). Friend or foe? Google translate in language for academic purposes. *English for Specific Purposes*, *37*, 112–121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2014.09.001

Guaqueta, C. A., & Castro-Garces, A. Y. (2018). The Use of Language Learning Apps as a Didactic Tool for EFL Vocabulary Building. *English Language Teaching*, *11*(2), 61. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n2p61

Kessler, G. (2018). Technology and the future of language teaching. *Foreign Language Annals*, *51*(1), 205–218. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12318

Lee, S. M. (2020). The impact of using machine translation on EFL students' writing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *33*(3), 157–175. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2018.1553186

Microsoft. (2024). *Features*. https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/translator/languages/

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcebook* (H. Salmon (ed.); 3rd ed.). Sage Publication, Inc.

Prates, M. O. R., Avelar, P. H., & Lamb, L. C. (2020). Assessing gender bias in machine translation: a case study with Google Translate. *Neural Computing and Applications*, *32*(10), 6363–6381. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00521-019-04144-6

Rao, P. S. (2019). THE USE OF MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (MALL)TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS. *Research Journal of English*, *4*(2), 2456–2696. www.rjoe.org.in

Shadiev, R., & Yang, M. (2020). Review of studies on technology-enhanced language learning and teaching. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *12*(2). https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020524

YAMAN, İ., & EKMEKÇİ, E. (2016). A Shift from CALL to MALL ? *Participatory Educational Research (PER)*, *IV*, 25–32. http://www.partedres.com