



Research Article

UTILIZING GOOGLE TRANSLATE AND IMTRANSLATOR AS INTELLIGENT ARTIFICIAL TOOLS IN EFL CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how EFL university students at two institutions in Vietnam utilized Google Translate and ImTranslator for English language acquisition. A mixed method was deployed to collect data. In particular, 138 participants filled out a questionnaire and 20 random students participated in semi-structured interviews. The quantitative and qualitative results revealed that every student owned a smartphone and frequently utilized Google Translate and ImTranslator. They primarily used the applications to translate single words and difficult paragraphs. Although the participants appreciated the convenience of the applications, they reported that the translations were not always accurate and occasionally led to sloth in language acquisition. Moreover, respondents did not rely much on applications to acquire grammar structures. In addition, the study concludes with recommendations for language instructors to help their students use translation apps more effectively.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; EFL students; Google Translate; ImTranslator; intelligent artificial tools

1. Introduction

Effective communication in a global context is a crucial life skill, making teaching English an essential educational objective. Raphael (2017) emphasizes the significance of acquiring English not only for personal growth but also for intellectual and professional advancement. Educational programs and strategies aimed at fostering motivation and a growth mindset in language study are crucial for acquiring communication, teaching, and learning skills. Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have significantly impacted language learning in the classroom. Cutting-edge AI-based voice recognition technology has achieved high accuracy, leading to various applications in the modern world (Raphael, 2017; Hua et al., 2017). This technology, closely linked to language acquisition,

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is interconnected with other AI technologies such as language translation, speech synthesis, speech testing, speech conversion, and voiceprint recognition. Machines can now comprehensively understand and provide feedback on human discourse, presenting both exciting opportunities and challenges in the educational realm. AI applications, as highlighted by Walker et al. (2017) and Wilks (2009), prove valuable in improving students' writing, reading, and sentence-building skills through intelligent dialog windows and language development processors. These AI-driven tools utilize various intelligence sources to enhance reading comprehension by generating reading materials and extracting information. Additionally, the text discusses the rise in popularity of machine translation applications like Google Translate and ImTranslator in recent years, facilitating automatic translation from one language to another (Hua et al., 2017). In contexts where English is considered a foreign language, such as Vietnam, many students, including college students, utilize these AI machine translators to aid in learning English, enabling faster and easier translation of texts and web pages.

Many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at universities in Hanoi increasingly depend on machine translators. They must utilize Google Translate and ImTranslator when dealing with academic or scientific literature. They have no notion how fantastic the results will be. Despite the program's extensive availability, some students are still having difficulty utilizing it. Because of this, one's opinions on employing translation tools like Google Translate and ImTranslator in the classroom may change. Perception, according to Hua et al. (2017), is an external element that focuses on one's viewpoint, understanding, belief, and reaction to an innovation. The goal of this study is to investigate students' frequent use and patterns of Google Translate and ImTranslator and determine how students perceive using machine translations offered by AI.

1.1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its application in education

Since the beginning of the 21st century, education has undergone significant transformations in terms of inputs, procedures, and outcomes. Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the dynamics between educators and students by integrating intelligent machines into the educational environment. These machines are poised to reshape both face-to-face and online communication norms within classrooms. They facilitate information exchange and goal achievement by engaging educators and students with machinery. These AI-enabled machines offer discussion forums, enabling students to pose questions and receive responses, thus addressing issues related to concentration, motivation, diverse learning styles, and special needs (Wilks, 2009). Moreover, they promote student participation, constructive critique, academic excellence, and positive attitudes toward education, thereby enhancing various facets of the educational experience. AI, a subfield of computer science, utilizes complex programming to achieve human-like performance in specific tasks. Its theoretical objective is to understand human intelligence, studying

cognitive abilities in naturalistic settings to create computational models simulating mental processes. According to Baihaqi and Mulyana (2021), these models are then translated into numerical equations for solving complex problems. In empirical research, the integration of AI software in classroom settings is increasingly prevalent. The effectiveness of AI applications in classrooms hinges on their adaptability to individual students, consideration of diverse learning styles, and accurate assessment of student progress. These AI tools accommodate various learning styles, bolster student motivation, enhance focus amidst distractions, and provide insights into strengths and weaknesses related to the subject matter. They ensure logical progression and mastery of each topic before advancing to the next, often presenting scientific content as puzzles aligned with students' interests. In some scenarios, AI tutoring systems may even replace traditional instructors by offering automated assistance while encouraging self-study skills. The rising utilization of AI in classrooms underscores its potential to revolutionize education, catering to individual needs and improving the overall learning experience.

1.2. Teaching English as a foreign language with AI

English as a foreign language instruction involves language practice. The lack of real-world experience reduces the likelihood that students will acquire these skills. To overcome difficulties in English teaching/learning, communicative strategies and digital resources must be utilized (Wilks, 2009).

Modern existence necessitates instruction in the English language. The purpose of teaching English is to increase communicative competence by improving listening, speaking, reading, and writing through the use of language features and terminology. It addresses literacy and writing. Communication promotes language development. Thus, teaching and learning must employ both conventional and digital modes of communication. Consequently, AI applications such as simulation and communication programs are required to simulate real-world English conversations, educate language skills, and provide language-based educational activities. Applications based on AI generate aural exercises and visual media for practicing letter and word pronunciation. These resources teach listening, description, and pronunciation guidance.

They assist students with practice and provide feedback. Some programs employ language exercises to teach communication and guarantee competency (Barnes-Hawkins, 2016):

- Enhancing reading comprehension by using Information Retrieval.
- Teaching students how to utilize machine translation.
- Utilizing AI applications to enhance pronunciation.
- Text-to-speech for students with visual impairments.
- Increasing student vocabulary through the use of free digital language dictionaries.
- Improving the diction of English language learners with ingenious programs.
- Teaching paragraph and essay writing and assessing student writing.

1.3. AI translator machines with Google Translate and ImTranslator in language learning

1.3.1. Key concepts of Google Translate and ImTranslator

Google Translate is a prominent machine translation tool offered by Google, supporting over a hundred languages and facilitating cross-language communication (Nguyen et al., 2021). According to Muzdalifah et al. (2020), it assists in teaching writing, reading, and vocabulary, accessible on various platforms with online and offline capabilities. Users can input translations through typing, speaking, photographing, and writing, and even use the "talk" feature for discussions. ImTranslator, another AI-powered translation tool, is versatile and compatible with multiple input sources, including text and documents. It employs AI techniques like machine learning and neural networks, utilizing vast datasets to refine translations and offer multiple translation options. ImTranslator presents both translation and dictionary modes, aiding language learners by providing alternative translations and definitions. These tools showcase advanced technology that is continuously evolving to enhance translation capabilities.

1.3.2. Using Google Translate and ImTranslator in English language learning

Google Translate and ImTranslator are AI-powered translation tools frequently studied and utilized in the education sector.

Researchers like Muzdalifah et al. (2020) have investigated the impact of Google Translate on language learning, particularly speaking ability, emphasizing its significance in enhancing language skills and public speaking confidence. Wirantaka and Fijanah (2021) explored how educators perceive and utilize Google Translate for student writing, highlighting its benefits in vocabulary expansion, linguistic resource access, and grammatical rectification. They identified various effective techniques for optimizing machine translation use in writing tasks. Chompurach (2021) examined how Thai EFL university students utilize and revise Google Translate outputs for English writing, revealing diverse student perspectives and post-editing practices. The study emphasized the need for educating students on effective Google Translate usage. Baihaqi and Mulyana (2021) characterized machine-translated versions of a literary narrative using Google Translate and ImTranslator, highlighting their usefulness for expediting translation but acknowledging limitations related to accuracy, context, and connotative meanings. The study recommended additional discussion and adjudication to refine translations. These studies collectively shed light on the potential and challenges of incorporating AI-based translation tools like Google Translate and ImTranslator in educational contexts.

In Vietnamese academic research, Phan and Chen (2020) explored how engineering students in Vietnam used Google Translate to prepare for the Test of EFL, emphasizing its benefits in providing a quick understanding of essential concepts, despite limitations in accurately translating technical language and complex vocabulary. Nguyen et al. (2021)

discussed the advantages and drawbacks of Google Translate, highlighting its time-saving benefits despite limitations in task responsiveness, coherence, lexical resource, and grammar when compared to human translation. They stressed its usefulness in specialized disciplines where English is the instructional language. Nguyen and Khau (2022) analyzed Google Translate's translation of a grammar textbook into Vietnamese, revealing its ability to preserve social function meanings, though with issues in translating indirect or courteous meanings in English modal verb past tenses. They recommended improvements for English-Vietnamese translations. Nguyen (2022) investigated English majors' perception of Google Translate, finding that over half used it frequently and were generally satisfied with its advantages and disadvantages, providing insights for the future use of Google Translate in language learning.

It is common knowledge that Google Translate as an AI translating machine has been utilized to advocate its influences on second language learners in Vietnam, but not much research has been conducted on the use of ImTranslator. In the specific context of an institution in Hanoi, those AI machines including both Google Translate and ImTranslator are widely used to serve students' needs and wants to grasp contents in learning materials in all fields; which has not been found in other Vietnamese pedagogical institutions with only Google Translate. Hence, this study aims to investigate learners' perceptions of using those AI applications in their learning process.

2. Participants and methodology

2.1. Setting and participants

The study was carried out during the first semester of the 2022 – 2023 academic year. The population of the research included 138 students who were both English and non-English majors at two public universities in Hanoi, Vietnam. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20 years old. Their experience of learning English was recognized for 5 to 7 years. In particular, there were fifty-two males and thirty females participating in the study. Google Translate is so popular with non-English major students who report using this AI application regularly for exercising completion or seeking reference materials for their specialized fields. English majors have been educated and trained to become translators or interpreters; hence they were accustomed to other several digital translating machines like ImTranslator, TripLingo, SayHi, etc.

2.2. Research questions

The study aims to explore students' experiences and perspectives of using Google Translate and ImTranslator in their EFL learning process. Hence, four research questions were addressed:

- How frequently do students use Google Translate in their EFL classes?
- How frequently do students use ImTranslator in their EFL classes?
- What patterns emerge in students' use of Google Translate in their EFL classes?
- What patterns emerge in students' use of ImTranslator in their EFL classes?

2.3. Data collection instruments

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data collection through a five-point Likert Scale questionnaire and qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews. Creswell (1994) advocates for this approach, stating that questionnaires yield quantitative data for statistical analysis, while semi-structured interviews provide rich qualitative insights and participants' perspectives.

The questionnaire, adapted from Nguyen (2022), gauged students' frequency of AI translation tool usage, their preferences, and the reasons behind their choices. The advantages of AI translation tools, such as speed and precision, were explored, along with their impact on language confidence and grammatical understanding. The questionnaire also delved into difficulties faced, including mistranslations and cultural misunderstandings.

Semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants were conducted via Zoom, employing online translation tools to analyze the students' experiences and perspectives. Open-ended questions were used to gather extensive information, and follow-up questions were adapted based on responses to understand participants better. All questions were presented in Vietnamese to ensure clarity and encourage students to express their experiences with Google Translate and ImTranslator.

2.4. Data analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0, employing Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency ($\alpha=0.841$), signifying high item correlation. The questionnaire's validity was confirmed through content, construct, and criterion-related checks by five academics, enhancing the study's accuracy and trustworthiness.

In the qualitative analysis, students' usage patterns, experiences, benefits, challenges, and expectations of AI translation tools (Google Translate and ImTranslator) in EFL classes were explored through thematic analysis. The aim was to understand students' perspectives on these tools and categorize data into themes. The study uncovered EFL students' and instructors' expectations regarding integrating such translation tools into the classroom, offering valuable insights for their effective utilization.

2.5. Ethical considerations

Safety and respect for the participants' rights should be the primary concerns of the researchers, making ethical considerations a top priority. Before beginning their investigation, the researchers obtained sanction from the appropriate institutional ethical review committees. In addition, all participants received accurate information and were aware that they could withdraw at any time without repercussions. Researchers also ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants and the security of their data. The safety of research participants, as well as their anonymity and autonomy, must always be protected.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. The frequency of patterns in the students' use of Google Translate and ImTranslator in their EFL classes

The first section of the questionnaire is designed to gather information about students' frequency of using Google Translate and ImTranslator for various purposes, such as translating texts, comprehending reading texts, understanding teachers' instructions, or translating individual words or phrases. The measurement is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Google Translate and ImTranslator frequency used by students

Items	Mean	SD
I often use Google Translate or ImTranslator for translating texts in my English classes	4.19	.592
I often use Google Translate or ImTranslator to understand the meaning of the reading texts	4.49	.644
I often use Google Translate or ImTranslator to understand teachers' instructions to complete tasks	3.33	.596
I often use Google Translate or ImTranslator to translate individual words or phrases	2.51	.592
I often use Google Translate or ImTranslator to translate entire sentences or paragraphs	3.87	.492

According to the presented data, the standard deviation ranges between 0.492 and 0.644, and the feasible range of mean scores lies between 2.51 and 4.49. The highest mean score (2.49 out of 5) indicates that students frequently use Google Translate and ImTranslator to understand the content of reading materials, while the lowest mean score (2.51 out of 5) indicates that students do not regularly use these services to look up specific words or phrases. According to the standard deviations, the consistency of the individuals' responses across questions was reasonable. According to the statistics, it appears that a large number of English language learners utilize online translation tools like Google Translate and ImTranslator.

Regarding the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews, every participant in the study possesses a smartphone and employs Google Translate or ImTranslator for translation. They utilized these resources as necessary to translate words and paragraphs from their textbook and acquire a comprehensive understanding of a more difficult topic. This may contradict the results of a survey in which some students admitted to using Google Translate and ImTranslator to locate terms.

Muzdalifah et al. (2020), Wirantaka and Fijanaj (2021), Chompurach (2021), Baihaqui and Mulyana (2021), Phan and Chen (2020), Nguyen et al. (2021), Nguyen and Khau (2022), and Nguyen and Khau (2022) all reached comparable conclusions regarding students' utilization of AI applications. Participants rated Google Translate and ImTranslator highly for their efficacy and usability. According to the findings, students use digital tools to analyze and comprehend foreign languages, the overarching meanings of texts, and their

instructors' instructions. According to these findings, both Google Translate and ImTranslator are beneficial for quickly and easily translating written English texts.

3.2. Students' viewpoints on the benefits of using Google Translate and ImTranslator

Table 2 displays the students' attitudes toward using Google Translate and ImTranslator in their English classes. From the mean scores, it can be seen that students generally had positive attitudes toward the use of these AI translation tools. Almost all the students reported their comfort using Google Translate and ImTranslator because of their free expenses and easy access, indicating that convenience is a major factor in their use of these tools.

Table 2. Students' viewpoints on the benefits of using Google Translate and ImTranslator

Items	Mean	SD
I often use Google Translate or ImTranslator because they are free and easy to access	4.35	.722
Google Translate and ImTranslator help me understand English while reading texts quickly	4.06	.396
The quality of texts translated by Google Translate and ImTranslator is better than my translation	3.32	.563
Google Translate and ImTranslator help me write English essays/ other writing pieces better	3.73	.482
I gain a lot of vocabulary knowledge when I use Google Translate and ImTranslator	2.57	.530
I feel more confident when using Google Translate and ImTranslator for English writing	3.33	.622
I can rely on the accuracy of texts translated by Google Translate and ImTranslator (English to Vietnamese translation)	3.16	.482
I can rely on the accuracy of texts translated by Google Translate and ImTranslator (Vietnamese to English translation)	4.76	.429
I gain translation skills by using Google Translate and ImTranslator	2.08	.548
Google Translate and ImTranslator help me solve most of my problems with vocabulary	3.95	.580
Google Translate and ImTranslator help me check the pronunciation of words	3.25	.439

Table 2 indicates that the participants felt Google Translate and ImTranslator helped improve their English writing skills (3.73 out of 5) and reading comprehension (4.06). There are differing views on the trustworthiness of services such as Google Translate and ImTranslator. Other students said that employing an artificial intelligence-powered translation tool resulted in a more accurate translation than they could have achieved on their own. Furthermore, although the majority of students trust translations from Vietnamese to English (4.76), they trust translations from English to Vietnamese (3.16). This finding is consistent with the findings of Baihaqui and Mulyana (2021) and Nguyen and Khau (2022), who discovered that machine translations sometimes misread indirect or courteous meanings

in English parts of speech, as well as the findings of Nguyen et al. (2021), who discovered limitations in task responsiveness, coherence, lexical resource, and grammar. On the other hand, not many students found Google Translate and ImTranslator useful in increasing their vocabulary size (2.57) or improving their translation skills (2.08).

Users liked the ease and usefulness of Google Translate and ImTranslator, as validated by semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire replies to the conclusions that Google Translate and ImTranslator delivered excellent translation results for easy and non-specialized texts, which the students commended. According to the research, many students have resorted to AI tools to help them interpret complicated texts and improve their English language abilities. Some students questioned claimed that they seldom utilize internet translation tools like Google Translate and ImTranslator to check their grammar, enhance their pronunciation, and develop their speaking abilities. This discovery contradicts Phan and Chen's (2020), Muzdalifah et al.'s (2020), and Wirantaka and Fijianah's (2021) results. Several students reported utilizing Google Translate to verify spelling, enhance pronunciation, and boost speaking and writing abilities throughout the various processing processes.

3.3. Students' viewpoints on the challenges of using Google Translate and ImTranslator

The third section of the questionnaire highlights students' difficulties when they used Google Translate and ImTranslator.

Table 3. Students' viewpoints on the challenges of using Google Translate and ImTranslator

Items	Mean	SD
Google Translate and ImTranslator make me lazy to think and to use my effort in reading	4.43	.499
Google Translate and ImTranslator make me lazy to think and to use my effort in writing	2.33	.475
Using Google Translate and ImTranslator, I am too lazy to remember new vocabulary or guess the meanings of words	4.59	.496
Google Translate and ImTranslator cannot help me learn to speak English better	3.73	.601
To use Google Translate and ImTranslator, I need to have access to the Internet, which is sometimes difficult	3.63	.601
Google Translate and ImTranslator translations are not always reliable	3.59	.557
Google Translate and ImTranslator can help me improve my speaking skills	2.41	.496
I find grammatical explanations in Google Translate and ImTranslator	2.21	.408

The widespread adoption of these translators powered by artificial intelligence may discourage people from acquiring new words and phrases (4.59) and from reading written English (4.43). The majority of students did not care whether or not tools such as Google

Translate and ImTranslator could help them become better public speakers. Similarly, the majority of students cannot recall if they had difficulty establishing an Internet connection, which is necessary to use these programs.

Many students have questioned the veracity of the results from online translation services such as Google Translate and ImTranslator (3.59). Students interviewed for a cross-cultural comparison reported using Google Translate and ImTranslator to complete their English assignments, despite their reservations regarding the veracity of machine translation. It is possible that students lacked confidence in their self-translation despite the absurdity of their opinions. Despite their reservations about their dependability, they utilized Google Translate and ImTranslator. They were confident that their efforts would significantly enhance their interpretations. Findings by Baihaqui and Mulyana (2021) and Nguyen (2022) are consistent with this one in indicating that Google Translate may not always provide accurate translations, resulting in "silly responses" with improper word selection and grammatical errors. In these situations, user confusion is conceivable. It should come as no surprise that the varied experiences and writing styles of students are a common source of conflict.

With a mean score of 2.21, most students disagreed that Google Translate provided grammatical explanations. From the qualitative analysis, this was confirmed when one interviewee reported, *"I do not learn grammar with Google Translate and ImTranslator because grammatical structures were displayed in a table with forms and we are provided with its specific uses and examples in classes by the teachers. If I do not understand, you know, I will ask the teacher immediately in class. Of course, in Vietnamese, 'cause it is easier to understand."* It is undeniable that the interviewees did not use Google Translate or ImTranslator to learn grammar structures. They mainly used the apps to translate their English works.

The findings of this study are supported by Baihaqui and Mulyana (2021), Chompurach (2021), and Nguyen et al. (2021). In contrast, the results of Phan and Chen (2020), Muzdalifah et al. (2020), and Wirantaka and Fijanah (2021) appear to contradict these findings. In this study, students identified several problems and limitations of Google Translate and ImTranslator that Phan and Chen (2020) did not address, such as the tools' inability to improve students' speaking and pronouncing skills, their unreliability in translations, and their need for a constant internet connection. This disparity highlights the need to take into consideration the broad variety of factors that may influence the adoption and satisfaction of machine translation systems among users.

4. Conclusions

This study examines EFL students' perceptions of utilizing online translation tools like Google Translate and ImTranslator. A mixed-methods approach was employed, using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather quantitative and qualitative data. Thematic analysis categorized students' routines, experiences, advantages, and

disadvantages with these tools. Reliability and validity were assessed using SPSS 22.0. The study revealed heavy reliance on these tools due to their speed and accuracy in translating basic, non-technical content, despite encountering inconsistent translations and lacking grammatical explanations. However, the study faces limitations due to a small sample size, exclusive focus on Google Translate and ImTranslator, and potential biases in self-reported data. Recommendations include cautious use of translation tools for general materials, supplemented with access to grammatical explanations and other language-learning resources. Future research should explore alternative translation tools and methodologies to enhance language proficiency. Triangulating data through observation and testing could offer a more comprehensive understanding of students' behaviors. These findings can assist EFL educators in developing effective language-learning activities.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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SỬ DỤNG GOOGLE TRANSLATE VÀ IMTRANSLATOR NHƯ CÔNG CỤ TRÍ TUỆ NHÂN TẠO TRONG LỚP HỌC TIẾNG ANH

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TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp để tìm hiểu quan điểm của sinh viên học tiếng Anh tại hai trường đại học ở Việt Nam có sử dụng Google Translate và ImTranslator để nâng cao khả năng sử dụng tiếng Anh. Có 138 sinh viên tham gia khảo sát, 20 sinh viên được lựa chọn ngẫu nhiên tham gia phỏng vấn. Kết quả cho thấy các sinh viên đều sở hữu điện thoại thông minh và thường xuyên sử dụng Google Translate và ImTranslator để dịch từ đơn hoặc các đoạn văn phức tạp. Mặc dù sinh viên đánh giá cao tính tiện lợi của hai ứng dụng trên, nhưng vẫn bày tỏ sự e ngại vì độ chưa chính xác của các bản dịch; đôi khi tiện ích này có thể làm cho sinh viên trở nên thụ động và lười biếng hơn trong việc nâng cao khả năng sử dụng ngôn ngữ. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra sinh viên không phụ thuộc nhiều vào hai ứng dụng khi họ muốn tăng cường kiến thức ngữ pháp của mình. Từ kết quả nghiên cứu này, bài viết đưa ra các đề xuất nhằm giúp sinh viên sử dụng các ứng dụng dịch thuật hiệu quả hơn.

Từ khóa: trí tuệ nhân tạo; sinh viên tiếng Anh; Google Translate; Imtranslation; công cụ trí tuệ nhân tạo