

Students' Accuracy and Perceptions in Translating Descriptive Text with The Assistance of DeepL Translate

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Abstract

The study investigates the accuracy of students' translations of descriptive texts assisted by DeepL Translate and students' perception toward the use of this translation tool in translation learning. The presence of machine translation tools in academic contexts has raised concerns regarding translation quality and students' overreliance on automated systems. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the study involved 32 undergraduate students of English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. Data were collected through translation tasks consisting of three descriptive texts and a perception questionnaire. Students' translation accuracy was measured using Nababan translation quality assessment model, while students' perceptions were examined across four aspects: attractiveness, relevance, perceived usefulness, and perceived motivation. The findings show that students achieved the highest translation accuracy in texts with explicit meanings and simple sentence structures (mean score 2.75), while accuracy declined in texts containing figurative language, abstract expressions, and longer sentence constructions (mean scores 2.48 and 2.44). The overall mean score of translation accuracy was 2.55, categorized as accurate. The questionnaire results reveal that students generally hold positive perceptions toward the use of DeepL Translate, with an overall mean score of 3.02, particularly regarding its relevance (3.20) and attractiveness (3.17). However, positive perceptions were not consistently aligned with high translation accuracy. These findings suggest that although DeepL Translate can support translation learning, students' still need strong linguistic competence and post-editing skill to ensure accurate translation outcomes.

Keywords: *students' perception, DeepL Translate, translation accuracy, machine translation, descriptive text.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki keakuratan terjemahan teks deskriptif siswa yang dibantu oleh DeepL Translate dan persepsi siswa terhadap penggunaan alat terjemahan ini dalam pembelajaran terjemahan. Kehadiran alat terjemahan mesin dalam konteks akademik telah menimbulkan kekhawatiran mengenai kualitas terjemahan dan ketergantungan siswa yang berlebihan pada sistem otomatis. Menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini melibatkan 32 mahasiswa sarjana Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Negeri Padang. Data dikumpulkan melalui tugas terjemahan yang terdiri dari tiga teks deskriptif dan kuesioner persepsi. Akurasi terjemahan siswa diukur menggunakan model penilaian kualitas terjemahan Nababan, sedangkan persepsi siswa diperiksa melalui empat aspek: daya tarik, relevansi, kegunaan yang dirasakan, dan motivasi yang dirasakan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa siswa mencapai akurasi terjemahan tertinggi dalam teks dengan makna eksplisit dan struktur kalimat sederhana (skor rata-rata 2,75), sedangkan akurasi menurun pada teks yang mengandung bahasa kiasan, ekspresi abstrak, dan konstruksi kalimat yang lebih panjang (skor rata-rata 2,48 dan 2,44). Skor rata-rata keseluruhan akurasi terjemahan adalah 2,55, dikategorikan sebagai

akurat. Hasil kuesioner mengungkapkan bahwa siswa umumnya memiliki persepsi positif terhadap penggunaan DeepL Translate, dengan skor rata-rata keseluruhan 3,02, terutama mengenai relevansi (3,20) dan daya tarik (3,17). Namun, persepsi positif tidak secara konsisten selaras dengan akurasi terjemahan yang tinggi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun DeepL Translate dapat mendukung pembelajaran terjemahan, siswa masih membutuhkan kompetensi linguistik yang kuat dan keterampilan pasca-pengeditan untuk memastikan hasil terjemahan yang akurat.

Kata kunci: *persepsi mahasiswa, DeepL Translate, keakuratan terjemahan, terjemahan mesin, teks deskriptif.*

Introduction

Translation plays a crucial role in facilitating communication between different language and cultures Sawant (2010). It enables the exchange of ideas, information, and cultural values among individuals who speak different languages. According to Meng (2022) translating is one important skill to learn for learning English, and English students at colleges all over the world learn it as part of their course work. In English education, one of the items that must be understood by students is translation quality. It is because students must learn not only how to translate but also how well a translation conveys a message to prepare them to be able to become a good translator.

In line with the development of translation practice in educational contexts, as technology continues to reshape the field of translation, students are also introduced to various machine translation tools. According to Moneus and Sahari (2024), artificial intelligence (AI)-powered translation tools like DeepL, Google Translate, and Microsoft Translator have gained popularity as effective solutions to these communication challenges. However, relying on these tools can sometimes lead to difficulties, particularly concerning the accuracy of the translated meanings. Al-Sulaimaan and Khoshaba (2018) emphasize, translation involves more than simply substituting words from one language for another; it also requires preserving the contextual integrity of the original message.

This concern regarding translation accuracy is further supported by theoretical perspective, according Hatim and Munday (2019), translation plays a crucial part in bridging language barriers by conveying ideas, information, and cultural values between speakers of different languages. However, the use of machine translation tools presents challenges, especially concerning accuracy and deep understanding of language nuances. Students need to be aware that while machine translation can provide quick results, these outputs often require critical evaluation and post-editing to ensure accuracy and appropriateness in the target language context. Previous research has examined various aspects of machine translation. Ardi et al., (2022) found that Google Translate, Bing, and Yandex Translate experienced difficulties in capturing implicit meanings and idiomatic expressions in translating humorous text.

Similarly, Fitria (2023) compared DeepL and Google Translate in translating scientific texts, showing that both tools struggle with technical terminology and complex sentence structures. Läubli et al., (2018) also found that AI translation systems can struggle with complex structures, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances.

Beyond studies on machine translation tools, previous studies in translation research have examined translation techniques and expressive utterances in literary

texts, particularly those produced by professional translator. For instance Rahmania and Ardi (2023) focused on the translation techniques used in rendering anger expressive utterances in novels and found that established equivalent and adaptation were dominantly applied to achieve cultural and pragmatic equivalence. Within the context of translation learning, descriptive text becomes one of the keys focuses of this research. According to Gerot and Wignell (1995) a descriptive text is defined as a text that aims to "describe a particular person, place or thing." It focuses on describing specific features such as appearance, behavior, or function, and it attempts to paint a clear and vivid picture in the reader's mind through carefully selected language. Understanding how students use translation tools in learning descriptive texts can also provide insight into their broader attitudes toward educational technologies.

The use of machine translation tools such as DeepL Translator may influence several linguistic aspects of translation. When students rely on automated translation systems, errors may occur in grammar, vocabulary selection, sentence structure, and meaning transfer. Although neural machine translation systems have significantly improved in producing fluent sentences, they may still fail to accurately convey contextual meanings, figurative expressions, and complex syntactic constructions. Therefore, examining which linguistic aspects are most affected when students use DeepL Translator becomes essential in understanding the effectiveness and limitations of machine translation in translating learning.

In addition to translation accuracy, students' attitudes and experiences toward machine translation tools also play important role in determining how these technologies are used in educational setting. Students may perceive DeepL Translate as helpful; for completing translation tasks quickly, understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, or improving writing efficiency. However, excessive reliance on machine translation tools may reduce students' critical evaluation skills and limit the development of their translation competence. Therefore, it is important to explore students' attitudes and experiences toward using DeepL Translate as a translation tool in learning.

Despite the contributions of previous studies, several research gaps remain. First, most prior research has primarily focused on the accuracy of the translation results obtained, without considering other factors that might influences the quality of the translations. Additionally, some studies have discussed the use of AI-based translation tools such as DeepL Translate, but these discussions have been limited to evaluating accuracy alone. In this study, the researcher will not only assess the accuracy of translation produced by students but will also emphasize the use of DeepL Translate as a supportive tool in the translation process.

Based on these gaps, this research aims to (1) evaluate the accuracy of students in the Translation class when using DeepL Translate in translating descriptive texts from English to Indonesian, and (2) identify students' perceptions of DeepL Translates accuracy in translating descriptive texts. By examining both translation accuracy and student perceptions, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how machine translation tools function in actual learning contexts. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to translation studies and provide practical contributions for instructors, students, and curriculum designers in integrating translation technology into learning.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to describe students' accuracy and perception in translating descriptive text with the assistance of DeepL Translate. Nassaji (2015), descriptive research aims to describe and categorize phenomena as they occur in particular context. The data of thus research consisted of two types; translation data and perception data. The translation data were obtained from students' translation outputs of three English descriptive texts translated into Indonesian with the assistance of DeepL Translate. Meanwhile, the perception data were collected from students' responses to a questionnaire that explored their attitudes and experiences in using DeepL Translate during translation actives.

The source of the data was 32 undergraduate students oof the English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang who are enrolled in a translation course. These students were selected using purposive sampling because they had already learned basic translation concepts and were familiar with machine translation tools. Their translation outputs and questionnaire responses served as the primary data for this research.

In this study, the researcher employed a translation test and questionnaire as research instruments. To answer the first research question about students' accuracy in translating descriptive texts, students were given three English descriptive texts and asked to translate them into Indonesian using the assistance of DeepL Translate within 60 minutes. Translation accuracy was assessed using the accuracy assessment rubric proposed by Nababan et al., (2012).

Table 1. Translation Accuracy Assessment Rubric

Category of Translation	Score	Qualitative Parameters
Accurate	3	The meaning of source language words, technical; terms, phrases, clauses, sentences or text is accurately transferred into the target language; there is absolutely no distortion of meaning.
Less Accurate	2	Most of the meaning of source language words, technical terms, phrases, clauses, sentences or texts have been accurately transferred into the target language. However, there are still distortions of meaning or double-meaning translations or omitted meanings, which disrupt the integrity of the message.
Inaccurate	1	The meaning od source language words, technical terms, phrases, clauses, sentences or text are inaccurately transferred into the target language or omitted.

To collect students' perceptions, a closed-ended questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale was used, consisting of statements measured with the following responses: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D). Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). The

questionnaire comprised 20 statements measuring four perception aspects: attractiveness, perceived attractiveness, relevance, and perceived motivation.

Table 2. Questionnaire Classification

No.	Aspect	Question Number	Total
1	Attractiveness	2, 7, 9, 18	4
2	Perceived Attractiveness	3, 8, 14, 16, 20	5
3	Relevance	1, 4, 5, 6, 10, 15, 19	7
4	Perceived Motivation	11, 12, 13, 17	4

The data were analyzed by dividing them into two parts: first, students' accuracy in translating descriptive texts using DeepL Translate; second, students' perception of using DeepL Translate in translating activities. To determine students' translation accuracy, each translation test was scored and analyzed based on the level of accuracy in translating descriptive texts. In addition, the questionnaire data were analyzed to identify students' perceptions of the accuracy and usefulness of DeepL Translate by calculating the mean score for each perception indicator.

Result and Discussion

1. Students' Translation Accuracy

The data on students' translation accuracy were collected from the translation test consisting of three English descriptive texts. Each sentence produced by the students was assessed using accuracy assessment rubric and classified into three categories: Accurate (score 3), Less Accurate (score 2), and Inaccurate (score 1). The findings reveal variations in students' translation accuracy across the three descriptive texts.

a. Accurate Translation

A translation is categorized as accurate when the message is completely conveyed in the target text without any distortion or omission of meaning. There are 16 students who were found to have achieved an accuracy level of 3 in translating the text. The following is an example of an accurate translation from the students' number 9 in translating of descriptive text:

ST: Their homeland, midway along the north/south axis of Sumatra, consist of a series of fertile upland rice plains stretching eastward from the foothills of the Bukit Barisan, the mountainous western spine of the island, to the beginnings of the lowlands which mark the Riau coastal district on the Straits of Malaca.

TT: Tanah air mereka, yang terletak di tengah sumbu utara-selatan Sumatra, terdiri dari serangkaian dataran tinggi subur yang membentang ke timur dari kaki pegunungan Bukit Barisan, tulang punggung barat pulau tersebut, hingga awal dataran rendah yang menandai wilayah pesisir Riau di Selat Malaka.

The translation above is categorized as accurate because all meaning in the source text was fully and precisely transferred into the target text without any omission or addition of information. Geographical and descriptive elements such as midway

along the north/south axis of Sumatra and the Straits of Malaca are rendered equivalently. Although structural adjustment was made to conform to Indonesian, no semantic distortion or ambiguity was found.

b. Less Accurate Translation

A translation is considered less accurate when the message of the source text is mostly delivered into the target language, but certain parts contain distortions, ambiguities, or omissions that affect its clarity. Even though the general ideas are understood, the message is not fully accurate or complete. The following is an example of a less accurate translation from the students' number 1 in translating of descriptive text in text 2:

ST: It's small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath.

TT: *Rumah itu kecil dan berwarna merah, dengan tangga yang sempit di depan dan jendela-jendela yang begitu kecil hingga seolah-olah mereka menahan napas.*

The translation above is categorized as less accurate because, although the main idea of the source text is still conveyed, there are shifts in meaning and stylistic nuance that reduce accuracy. In the source text, the phrase tight steps refer to closely spaced or steep steps, whereas in the target text it appears more literal and loses the intended sense of closeness or steepness. In addition, the metaphorical expression windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath, which functions as a subtle personification in the source text, although understandable in the translation, appears more literal and slightly weakens the original stylistic effect.

c. Inaccurate Translation

A translation is considered inaccurate when the meaning of source language words, technical terms, phrases, clauses, sentences or texts are inaccurately transferred into the target language or omitted. The following is an example of an inaccurate translation from the students' number 8 in translating of descriptive text in text 3:

ST: But my mother's hair, my mother's hair, like little rosettes, like little candy circle all curly and pretty because she pinned it in pin curls all day, sweet to put your nose into when she is holding you, holding you and you feel safe, is the warm smell of bread before you bake it, is the smell when makes room for you on her side of the bed still warm with her skin, and you sleep near her, the rain outside falling and Papa snoring.

TT: *Tapi rambut ibuku, rambut ibuku, seperti roset kecil, seperti lingkaran permen munggi, keriting dan cantik karena seharian ia jepit dengan pin curls, manis sekali saat kucium ketika ia memelukku, memelukku hingga aku merasa aman, aromanya seperti adonan roti yang hangat sebelum dipanggang, seperti bau hangat ketika ia memberi ruang untukku di sisinya di tempat tidur, masih hangat oleh kulitnya, dan aku tertidur di dekatnya, sementara hujan turun di luar dan Papa mendengkur.*

The translation above is categorized as inaccurate because there is a meaning distortion caused by an inappropriate lexical choice, which affects the clarity and precision of the message. In the source text, the phrase "like little candy circle", and sweet

put your nose into” convey vivid sensory and emotional imagery related to shape, smell, and intimacy. In the target text, these expressions are rendered as “*seperti lingkaran permen munggi*” and “*manis sekali saat kecium*”, where the lexical choices are ambiguity and loss of essential metaphorical meaning, leading the target text to misrepresent the author’s intended imagery and emotional nuance.

Table 3. Mean Scores of Students Translation Accuracy

No.	Text	Mean Score	Category
1	Text 1	2.75	Accurate
2	Text 2	2.48	Less Accurate
3	Text 3	2.44	Less Accurate
	Total	2.55	Accurate

The results show that students achieved higher accuracy in Text 1, followed by Text 2, while Text 3 showed the lowest level of accuracy. This pattern indicates that students' translation accuracy tends to decrease as the complexity of the descriptive text increases. Text 1, which contains factual information and relatively simple sentence structures, achieved the highest accuracy score. This suggests that DeepL Translate performs effectively when translating texts with explicit meanings and minimal figurative language. This result supports Nababan et al., (2012) theory that accuracy is more easily achieved when the source text presents clear semantic equivalence and straightforward lexical choices.

2. Students' Perception of Using DeepL Translate

Students' perceptions were collected through a questionnaire consisting of 20 statements measured using a four-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed based on four perception aspects: attractiveness, perceived attractiveness, relevance, and perceived motivation. The result show that students generally have positive perceptions toward the use of DeepL Translate.

a. Attractiveness Aspect

The attractiveness aspect was measured using four questionnaire items, namely Q2, Q7, Q9, and Q18. The findings show that students generally perceived DeepL Translate as an attractive tool, with a total mean score of 3.16, which falls into the positive category. A total of 96.87% of the respondents expressed agreement that DeepL Translate is easy to use, resulting in a mean score of 3.43. This finding indicates that most students found DeepL Translate easy to operate, suggesting that the tool does not require complicated procedures and is accessible even for users with limited technical skills. However, the influence on increasing students' interest in learning English showed a relatively lower level of agreement (68.76%), with a mean score of 2.78, suggesting that DeepL Translate is not always perceived as a tool that significantly increases students' motivation to learn English, but rather as a functional aid for translation purposes.

b. Perceived Attractiveness Aspect

The perceived attractiveness aspect was measured using five statements, namely Q3, Q8, Q14, Q16, and Q20. The perceived attractiveness aspect obtained a

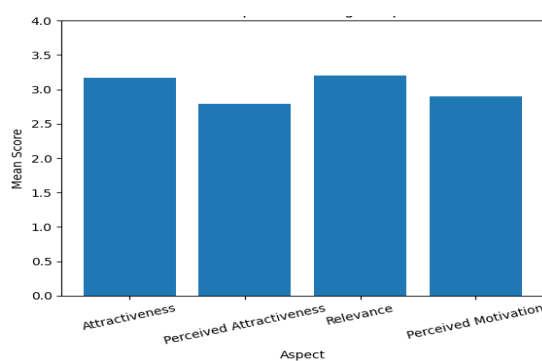
total mean score of 2.83, indicating a positive perception. The findings reveal that while students generally trust DeepL Translate to produce correct sentence- and paragraph-level translations, many students acknowledged the presence of grammatical and lexical errors and reported revising the output to improve translation quality. A total of 90.63% of the respondents expressed agreement that they revised DeepL Translates output, suggesting that they were aware of the need for human intervention to enhance translation quality.

c. Relevance Aspect

The relevance aspect was measured using seven questionnaire items, namely Q1, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q10, Q15, and Q19. The relevance aspect recorded a total mean score of 3.16, categorized as positive. The findings indicate that students frequently use DeepL Translate to assist with English assignments, understand unfamiliar vocabulary, and translate difficult sentences. The statement regarding ease of completing English assignments obtained the strongest positive response, with 100% of the respondents expressing agreement and the highest mean score of 3.46. However, not all students perceived DeepL Translate as an essential tool in learning English, with a relatively lower mean score of 2.59 for the statement on the importance of using DeepL Translate.

d. Perceived Motivation Aspect

The perceived motivation aspect was measured using four questionnaire items, namely Q11, Q12, Q13, and Q17. The perceived motivation aspect achieved a total mean score of 3.02, which is classified as positive. The findings show that students perceived DeepL Translate as helpful in improving vocabulary, writing skills, and confidence in using English, although its contribution to listening and pronunciation skills was less pronounced. The statement regarding the usefulness of DeepL Translate for sharpening writing skills and increasing English vocabulary received the strongest positive response among all statements, with the highest mean score of 3.68.



Graphic1. Students' perception use of DeepL Translate

The graph illustrates a comparison of the mean scores of students' perception of using DeepL Translate across four main aspects. Visually, it can be seen that the relevance achieved the highest score, followed by attractiveness, perceived motivation and perceived attractiveness as the aspect with the lowest score. The relevance aspect (mean = 3.20) ranked the highest, indicating that the students perceived DeepL

Translate as highly aligned with their academic needs, particularly in translating descriptive texts. The high score in this aspect suggest that students primarily use DeepL due to its perceived usefulness and relevance, rather than solely because of visual appeal or emotional.

The attractiveness aspect (Mean = 3.17) also demonstrated a relatively high score. This finding indicates that DeepL Translate is perceived as easy to use and reasonably appealing tool, both in the terms of interface design and accessibility. This factor contributes to enhancing students' comfort when using AI-based translation tools. In contrast, the perceived motivation (Mean= 2.90) and Perceived attractiveness (Mean= 2.79) aspect showed lower scores compared to the other aspects, although they remained within the positive category. These findings indicate that the use of DeepL Translate has not significantly enhanced students' learning motivation or provided sufficient appeal to encourage active engagement in the translation process.

The variation in the scores shown in the graph suggest that the students' positive perceptions are driven more by functional usefulness than by affective factors such as motivation. This indicates that students tend to use DeepL Translate as practical tool to produce translations efficiently and quickly, rather than as means to develop deeper translation competence. Therefore, the graph supports the findings on translation quality that high level of positive perception does not necessarily correspond to optimal translation quality. Students who perceived DeepL Translate as relevant and easy to use may not always critically evaluate the translation output, which allows the potential for translation errors to persist.

Discussion

The finding that students achieved different accuracy levels across the three descriptive texts. Higher accuracy in Text 1 can be explained by its simple sentence structures, factual content, and familiar topic. According to Nababan et al., (2012), accurate translation is more likely the source text has clear structure and explicit meaning. These findings are consistent with Kamaluddin et al., (2024), who found that DeepL showed high accuracy (average 2.8 out of 3.0) when translating texts with simple structure and factual content, but demonstrated decreased accuracy when handling idiomatic expressions and implicit meanings. Similarly, Fitria (2023) reported that both DeepL and Google Translate achieve high accuracy for simple declarative sentences but struggle with complex structures and specialized terminology. Liu and Zhu (2023) also found that neural machine translation systems demonstrate strong surface level accuracy but tend to produce semantic distortion when dealing with implicit meaning. This comparison suggest that the limitations observed in the presents study are not isolated but reflect a broader pattern in machine assisted translation.

In contrast, lower accuracy scores in Text 2 and Text 3 indicate that the students experienced greater difficulty when translating texts containing figurative expressions, implicit meanings, and cultural nuances. These findings support Newmark (1988) argument that literal translation is often inadequate for abstract or figurative expressions and may lead to meaning distortion. Läubli et al., (2018) similarly found that AI-based

translation system struggle with complex sentence structures, idiomatic expression, and cultural nuances. Research by Ardi et al., (2022) on translation of humors text revealed comparable findings, showing that translation tools frequently fail to capture implicit meanings. These results reinforce the view that text complexity plays a crucial role in determining translation accuracy.

From perspective of this study, these findings can be explained by the notion that meaning emerges as holistic unity rather than as a sum of individual linguistic elements. While neural machine translation system process language in segmented units, accurate translation, as evidenced in this study, requires an understanding of meaning as an integrated whole. This perspective helps explain why translation inaccuracies often occur even when grammatical structures appear correct. According to Kirana et al., (2024) found that use of DeepL Translate significantly improved EFL students' writing performance after they revised their texts using the tool. Their study revealed that students became more aware of grammatical errors, vocabulary misuse, and sentence organization when comparing their original text with the translation output.

Rahmania and Ardi (2023), found that various translation techniques are employed in translating expressive utterances of anger in the novel *The Hate U Give*, including adaptation, amplification, modulation, and established equivalent. The study highlights how translator apply specific linguistic strategies to preserve meaning and emotional nuance from the source language to the target language. However, the research mainly focuses on identifying translation techniques in literary texts and does not evaluate translation quality based on parameters such as translation accuracy. Moreover, the study does not address the role of AI-assisted translation tools in the translation process. In this regard, the present study extends previous research by examining the accuracy of academic phrase translation produced by students with the assistance of DeepL Translate.

Based on Utami and Maharani, (2019), reported that the students employed several translation techniques such as literal translation, established equivalent, and reduction when translating narrative texts from English to Indonesian. Their findings indicate that students rely on various linguistic strategies to convey meaning from the source language to the target language. However, the study mainly focuses on identifying translation techniques rather than evaluating the quality of the translated output. In contrast, the present study examines the accuracy of translations produced by students with the assistance of DeepL Translate.

In addition, the finding also align with the study conducted by Munawwarah et al., (2024), which reported that students generally have positive perceptions toward the use of DeepL in English learning. Their research shows that most students believe that DeepL helps them understand English texts more easily, expand their vocabulary, and complete academic tasks more efficiently. The positive perception identified in their

study supports the findings of this research, suggesting that machine translation tools can enhance students' confidence and engagement in language learning activities

Another significant finding of this study is the mismatch between students' positive perceptions of DeepL Translate and their actual translation accuracy. Although students expressed high confidence in DeepL's accuracy (2.83) and considered it relevant and attractive (3.16), their translation performance showed varying accuracy levels, with two out of three texts categorized as less accurate, this gap indicates that students may rely excessively on machine translation outputs without sufficient critical evaluation or post-editing. This finding aligns with Chen (2021), who reported that the students tend to overtrust AI translation tools and often accept machine-generated outputs without adequate verification. Similarly, Laksana and Komara (2024) found that although students appreciate DeepL for its speed and ease of use, they also recognize its limitations in capturing linguistic nuance and culture context.

This findings are further reinforced by recent empirical on the use of machine translation in educational context. Pan and Zheng (2025), quantitatively demonstrated that while machine translation assistance significantly improved Chinese to Japanese translation accuracy, grammatical proficiency exerted a substantially greater influence on translation quality than machine translation usage (standardized 0.421 vs 0.0266), supporting the present study's position that fundamental linguistic competence remains essential despite technological assistance. Similarly, Arnita et al., (2025) found that Indonesian EFL students perceived DeepL positively for its ability to translate complex academic terms and accelerate literature comprehension, paralleling this study's finding of high perceptions score (M= 3.02). However, both studies identified a critical perception performance gap, indicating that positive attitudes toward machine translation tools do not necessarily correlate with actual translation accuracy.

According to Tavares et al., (2023), corroborate these concerns in a Portuguese context, reporting that although most students engaged in repeated reading and post-editing, the widespread use of machine translation poses challenges for translator training, particularly in assessing students' actual proficiency levels. Across different language pairs and text types, these studies consistently demonstrate that while machine translation tools enhance efficiency and support comprehension, their effectiveness depends heavily on students' underlying linguistic competence, text complexity, and the presence of structured pedagogical guidance that fosters critical machine translation literacy rather than tool dependency

Overall, the findings indicate that the students' translation accuracy using DeepL Translate is influenced by text characteristics, with higher accuracy observed in descriptive texts containing explicit meanings and simple structure, and lower accuracy in texts involving figurative language and complex constructions. This result is consistent with previous studies showing that machine translation system still struggle with implicit meaning and semantic nuance Yang et al., (2023); Peng et al., (2024).

Although students generally demonstrate moderate translation accuracy, the findings suggest that DeepL is valued more for efficiency than for quality improvement Yang et al., (2023). While guided use of DeepL can contribute positively to language learning Polakova and Klimova (2023), the present findings emphasize that machine translation should function as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for students' translation competence.

The findings of this study further indicate that translation quality is primarily determined by the translator's ability to capture holistic meaning rather than by formal accuracy at the lexical or syntactic level. In contrast, studies on neural machine translation quality assessment emphasize measurable performance improvements through computational models. Toral and Way (2018) found that neural machine translation significantly outperforms phrase-based systems in literary texts in terms of fluency and overall acceptability, yet still struggles to preserve deeper semantic and stylistic meaning. Similarly, Gong (2025) reported that neural network based quality assessment models show a strong correlation with human evaluation ($r = 0.84$), indicating improved consistency and objectivity in assessing translation quality. However, unlike the findings of the present study, these approaches define quality primarily through accuracy scores and evaluation metrics rather than through meaning construction.

Furthermore, research on translation quality estimation highlights the limitations of automated systems in capturing implicit meaning and discourse level coherence. Zhao et al., (2024) found that despite advances in deep learning and large language models, quality estimation systems still rely heavily on surface level indicators and struggle with semantic interpretation beyond sentence boundaries. This contrasts with the findings of the present study, which demonstrate that translation inaccuracies predominantly arise from a failure to grasp meaning as an integrated whole. While computational approaches focus on prediction, scoring, and consistency Sepesy Maučec & Donaj (2020), the findings of this study underscore that true translation quality depends on holistic meaning comprehension.

These findings have important pedagogical implications for English language teaching and translation learning. Instructors need to guide students in using machine translation tools effectively as assistive resources rather than as substitutes for human translation competence. This includes training students in post-editing strategies, critical evaluation of machine outputs, and awareness of when machine translation can be relied upon and when human intervention is necessary. Students should also be trained to identify common error types produced by machine translation tools, such as literal translation of idiomatic expressions, inappropriate word choices for ambiguous terms, failure to capture cultural nuances, and inadequate handling of complex syntactic structures.

CONCLUSION

Based on data collected from 32 students through translation tests and questionnaires, this research concludes that most students demonstrated accurate translation performance in translating descriptive texts from English to Indonesian with DeepL Translate assistance, although accuracy levels varied depending on text complexity. Text 1 achieved the highest accuracy (2.86, accurate), while Text 2 (2.75) and Text 3 (2.70) were less accurate. Questionnaire results reveal that students generally held positive perceptions of DeepL Translate, with highest scores in relevance (3.16) and attractiveness (3.16). However, a significant gap existed between positive perceptions and actual accuracy performance, indicating students may be overly reliant on machine outputs without adequate critical evaluation.

These findings underscore the importance of training students not only in linguistic and technical translation skills but also in technological literacy and critical evaluation of machine outputs. This research provides theoretical contributions to translation studies by expanding understanding of how machine translation tools affect students' translation accuracy in descriptive text contexts. Practically, these findings can assist English language instructors, students, and curriculum designers in effectively integrating translation technology into learning. Future research should explore students' post-editing strategies and compare the accuracy of various machine translation tools in translating other text types.

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