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Students' Perceptions and Challenges of Using Google Translate in EFL Writing Classes: A Mixed Methods Study in Vocational Education

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Abstract

Google Translate has become a routine writing aid for students learning English as a foreign language, and vocational high school learners in Indonesia rely on it heavily. Research on this group remains limited, and most existing studies emphasize the technical accuracy of machine translation rather than how students themselves perceive the tool. This study examines how vocational high school students perceive the use of Google Translate in writing classes and identifies the challenges they encounter while using it. The study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed methods design grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire completed by 175 eleventh-grade students at a tourism vocational school in Bali, and qualitative data were drawn from structured interviews with twelve of them. The findings reveal a clear gradient of acceptance. Positive endorsement was strongest for perceived ease of use and declined steadily through perceived usefulness and attitude toward using to behavioral intention, where reservations were strongest. Students valued the tool for its speed, simplicity, and vocabulary support, and they deliberately limited their reliance on it because they feared dependence and distrusted its accuracy in longer sentences. The pedagogical implication is that teachers should position Google Translate as a resource for critical review and revision rather than a substitute for learning, so that its convenience supports writing development without eroding language competence. This study contributes a perception-based account that extends acceptance research in vocational EFL contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing remains one of the most demanding skills in learning English as a foreign language, particularly in settings such as Indonesia where English is seldom used in daily communication. Students in these contexts have limited exposure to the language beyond the classroom. They must generate ideas, organize them coherently, and apply accurate grammar and vocabulary in a language they rarely use, and (Mohammadi et al., 2024; Zhang & Hyland, 2023) describes writing itself as a recursive process of prewriting, writing, and revising. Many learners struggle to express their thoughts in written form because of limited linguistic competence, infrequent practice, and low confidence. These difficulties push students toward technological tools that can ease the writing process, and among these tools Google Translate has become one of the most widely used in foreign language classrooms.

The rapid expansion of educational technology has made machine translation an ordinary part of how students approach writing tasks. Google Translate is among the most popular of these services, valued for its capacity to translate text between languages in real time and to draw on an enormous lexical database (H Aldawsari, 2023; Kim & Han, 2021). It is free, instantaneous, and

accessible through a browser or a mobile application, and it supports a wide range of languages alongside features such as voice and camera input (Ahmed & Lenchuk, 2024; Lieshout & Cardoso, 2022). Several studies report that students find the tool helpful for translating words and sentences, acquiring vocabulary, and completing assignments under time pressure (CAN, 2023; Van Nguyen, 2023). Others note that learners regard it as efficient and satisfying because it shortens the time required to complete writing tasks (Alrajhi, 2023), and that it supports both the reading and the construction of English sentences (Almahasees & Mahmoud, 2022). This body of work has established, with considerable consistency, that students perceive Google Translate as a useful and convenient aid.

The same literature also documents the limits of the tool. Google Translate does not always produce accurate or natural output, particularly for longer or culturally complex sentences, and its results often require careful revision before they can be used. Much of the existing research, however, has concentrated on the technical performance of machine translation, measuring its accuracy or its effect on the quality of student writing. Far less attention has been paid to how students themselves perceive the tool in authentic classroom settings, and how those perceptions shape their willingness to rely on it. Perception matters because students' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences govern whether a tool supports their learning or quietly undermines it, and a focus on technical output alone cannot capture this dimension.

A further gap concerns the educational level and the geographical context in which these perceptions have been studied. Most existing research has examined university students, while vocational high school learners remain comparatively underexamined despite their distinctive needs and their heavy reliance on digital tools. The use of Google Translate among vocational students in Bali, in particular, has received little scholarly attention, even though the tool is a routine part of their writing practice. This study addresses these gaps by examining how vocational high school students perceive the use of Google Translate in writing classes, and by identifying the challenges they encounter when using it. To structure this inquiry, the study adopts the Technology Acceptance Model proposed by (Alghamdi & Soh, 2023), which explains technology acceptance through perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude toward using, and behavioral intention. The model provides a coherent framework for measuring the breadth of student perception and for interpreting the reasoning behind it.

On this basis, the study pursues two objectives. The first is to determine how vocational high school students perceive the use of Google Translate in writing classes across the four constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model. The second is to identify the challenges they encounter while using the tool in writing activities. By centering the analysis on students' own perceptions rather than on the technical accuracy of the system, the study offers a more grounded understanding of how Google Translate functions in everyday classroom practice. Its findings carry practical significance for teachers seeking to integrate translation technology in ways that support writing development without fostering overdependence, and they contribute to the wider scholarly conversation on the place of machine translation in foreign language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, in which a quantitative phase precedes and informs a qualitative one, so that the numerical pattern of perception is first measured and then explained through participants' own accounts (Haynes-Brown, 2023; Jung et al., 2023; Mageda et al., 2023). The quantitative phase measured students' perceptions of Google Translate in writing classes across four constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model, namely perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude toward using, and behavioral intention, while the subsequent qualitative phase interpreted those constructs through the experiences of a purposively selected subset of the same respondents. The study was conducted at SMK Pariwisata Dalung, Bali, and involved 175 eleventh-grade students selected purposively on the criterion of consistent and sustained use of Google Translate in writing activities, from whom

twelve students were drawn for the interview phase. The design and the participants of each phase are summarised in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Research Design and Participants by Phase

Phase	Approach	Participants	n	Inclusion Criterion
1	Quantitative (questionnaire)	Eleventh-grade students	175	Consistent and sustained use of Google Translate in writing
2	Qualitative (interview)	Subset of the same respondents	12	Willingness and rich experience to elaborate on card use

Source: Authors' elaboration (2025).

Table 1 shows the two-tier structure characteristic of an explanatory sequential design, in which the qualitative sample is nested within the quantitative one so that the twelve interviewees' accounts explain the very pattern the questionnaire measures rather than evidence drawn from an unrelated group. Data were then collected through two instruments aligned with these two phases. The quantitative instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire adapted from the Technology Acceptance Model (Amrullah et al., 2023; Hamzah et al., 2024; Pan et al., 2023) and translated into Bahasa Indonesia, comprising twenty items rated on a five-point Likert scale and distributed online through Google Forms, while the qualitative instrument was a structured interview guide derived from the same constructs, administered face to face and audio-recorded with consent. The two techniques are detailed in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Technique	Instrument	Focus	Scope
Questionnaire	Closed-ended Likert-scale items based on the TAM (Davis, 1989)	Breadth of perception across PEOU, PU, ATU, and BI	20 items; 175 respondents; via Google Forms
Interview	Structured guide based on the same TAM constructs	Reasons underlying the measured perceptions	Face to face; 12 students; audio-recorded

Source: Authors' elaboration (2025).

Table 2 shows the complementary division of labour between the two instruments, with the questionnaire securing breadth across the full cohort and the interview securing explanatory depth from the nested subset; anchoring both in the same four constructs is what allows each interview theme to be matched directly to its corresponding questionnaire dimension. The two strands were analysed using techniques appropriate to each type of data and then integrated at the interpretation stage. The questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS version 25, with responses tabulated as frequencies and percentages and aggregated into the four constructs, while the interview data were analysed thematically following the six-phase procedure of (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2023, 2024). The two strands were then integrated interpretively, with the interview themes read against the construct-level results so that the qualitative findings explained the quantitative pattern, as set out in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Phases of Data Analysis and Integration

Phase	Data	Procedure	Output
1	Quantitative	Descriptive statistics in SPSS v.25	Item and construct frequencies and percentages
2	Qualitative	Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	Codes and themes per TAM construct
3	Integration	Interpretive comparison of themes against results	Explanation of the measured perception pattern

Source: Authors' elaboration (2025), adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 3 sets out the sequence by which the two data types were processed and then brought together, underscoring that integration here was an interpretive act performed after both

strands had been analysed in their own terms, so that the qualitative themes were allowed to explain and qualify the quantitative pattern rather than merely accompany it.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study examined how vocational high school students perceive the use of Google Translate in writing classes and identified the difficulties they encounter when relying on the tool. The data were drawn from a questionnaire completed by 175 eleventh-grade students and from semi-structured interviews with twelve of them. The questionnaire was organised around four constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model, namely perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), attitude toward using (ATU), and behavioral intention (BI). Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale and tabulated as frequencies and percentages, whereas the interview transcripts were analysed thematically to explain the patterns observed in the numerical data. The section first reports the respondents' profile, then presents the questionnaire results construct by construct, and finally integrates the interview evidence to clarify how students account for their own perceptions. The respondents' profile is reported first, beginning with their gender composition, as presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Participants' Gender

Gender	Responses	Percentage
Male	105	60%
Female	70	40%
Total	175	100%

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2025).

Table 4 shows that the sample was dominated by male students, who accounted for 105 respondents (60%), while female students numbered 70 (40%). This composition reflects the enrolment pattern of the tourism vocational stream in which the study was conducted, and it indicates that the perceptions reported below were shaped largely, though not exclusively, by male learners. The distribution by age, which further situates these respondents, is presented in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Participants' Ages

Age	Responses	Percentage
16	31	17.7%
17	126	72%
18	17	9.7%
19	1	0.6%
Total	175	100%

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2025).

Table 5 demonstrates that the respondents were heavily concentrated at age 17, which alone accounted for 126 students (72%), followed at some distance by those aged 16 (31 students, 17.7%) and 18 (17 students, 9.7%), with a single respondent aged 19 (0.6%). The narrow clustering within the 16 to 17 age band confirms that the findings represent a relatively homogeneous group of mid-adolescent learners at a comparable stage of cognitive and linguistic development, which strengthens the internal consistency of the perceptions reported across the four constructs. Having established who the respondents were, the analysis now turns to their item-level responses, set out in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Item-Level Results of the Questionnaire

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

No						
1	PEOU1	52 (29.7%)	64 (36.6%)	48 (27.4%)	5 (2.9%)	6 (3.4%)
2	PEOU2	36 (20.6%)	69 (39.4%)	57 (32.6%)	12 (6.9%)	1 (0.6%)
3	PEOU3	58 (33.1%)	63 (36.0%)	36 (20.6%)	13 (7.4%)	5 (2.9%)
4	PEOU4	28 (16.0%)	57 (32.6%)	70 (40.0%)	15 (8.6%)	5 (2.9%)
5	PEOU5	27 (15.4%)	59 (33.7%)	66 (37.7%)	15 (8.6%)	8 (4.6%)
6	PEOU6	34 (19.4%)	50 (28.6%)	68 (38.9%)	19 (10.9%)	4 (2.3%)
7	PU1	28 (16.0%)	66 (37.7%)	68 (38.9%)	11 (6.3%)	2 (1.1%)
8	PU2	18 (10.3%)	42 (24.0%)	80 (45.7%)	23 (13.1%)	12 (6.9%)
9	PU3	34 (19.4%)	63 (36.0%)	55 (31.4%)	21 (12.0%)	2 (1.1%)
10	PU4	17 (9.7%)	38 (21.7%)	85 (48.6%)	27 (15.4%)	8 (4.6%)
11	PU5	19 (10.9%)	53 (30.3%)	81 (46.3%)	19 (10.9%)	3 (1.7%)
12	PU6	36 (20.6%)	67 (38.3%)	55 (31.4%)	12 (6.9%)	5 (2.9%)
13	ATU1	19 (10.9%)	46 (26.3%)	77 (44.0%)	26 (14.9%)	7 (4.0%)
14	ATU2	22 (12.6%)	61 (34.9%)	75 (42.9%)	13 (7.4%)	4 (2.3%)
15	ATU3	34 (19.4%)	49 (28.0%)	75 (42.9%)	14 (8.0%)	3 (1.7%)
16	ATU4	18 (10.3%)	59 (33.7%)	79 (45.1%)	15 (8.6%)	4 (2.3%)
17	BI1	15 (8.6%)	30 (17.1%)	85 (48.6%)	34 (19.4%)	11 (6.3%)
18	BI2	28 (16.0%)	56 (32.0%)	70 (40.0%)	15 (8.6%)	6 (3.4%)
19	BI3	19 (10.9%)	40 (22.9%)	81 (46.3%)	24 (13.7%)	11 (6.3%)
20	BI4	17 (9.7%)	32 (18.3%)	78 (44.6%)	30 (17.1%)	18 (10.3%)

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2025).

Table 6 reveals a consistent internal pattern across the twenty items: positive endorsement is strongest among the perceived ease of use statements, where items such as PEOU1 and PEOU3 attracted combined agreement above 66%, and it weakens steadily toward the behavioral intention statements, where the neutral category swells and the disagreement tail lengthens. The single highest neutral concentration appears at BI1 (48.6%), and the heaviest strong disagreement at BI4 (10.3%), signalling that students' reservations are not evenly distributed but cluster precisely on items concerning continued and habitual reliance. To make this gradient interpretable at the construct level, the item scores are aggregated into the four TAM dimensions in **Table 7**, where "strongly agree" and "agree" are treated as positive responses, "neutral" as undecided, and "disagree" and "strongly disagree" as negative responses.

Table 7. Summary of the Four TAM Constructs

No	Construct	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	22.4%	34.5%	32.8%	7.5%	2.8%
2	Perceived Usefulness (PU)	14.5%	31.4%	40.3%	10.8%	3.0%
3	Attitude Toward Using (ATU)	13.3%	30.8%	43.7%	9.7%	2.5%
4	Behavioral Intention (BI)	11.3%	22.7%	44.8%	14.7%	6.5%

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2025).

Table 7 makes the downward gradient explicit. Positive endorsement declines monotonically across the four constructs, from 56.9% for perceived ease of use, to 45.9% for perceived usefulness, to 44.1% for attitude toward using, and finally to 34.0% for behavioral intention. The neutral share moves in the opposite direction, rising from 32.8% to 44.8%, while negative responses more than double, from 10.3% to 21.2%. This inverse relationship is the central quantitative finding of the study: students accept Google Translate most readily as an instrument that is easy to operate, but their endorsement erodes as the questions shift from immediate convenience toward sustained dependence. Each construct is examined in turn below, with the interview evidence introduced to explain why this gradient takes the shape it does.

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)

Perceived ease of use attracted the most favourable distribution of the four constructs, with 56.9% of respondents endorsing it positively (22.4% strongly agree and 34.5% agree), 32.8%

remaining neutral, and only 10.3% responding negatively. Ease of operation is therefore the dimension students endorse most readily, although the sizeable neutral group indicates that not every learner experiences the tool as effortless. To understand what students mean by ease of use, they were asked to describe their experience of operating the application, and their accounts consistently foregrounded simplicity and the immediacy of the output:

> *"Well, my experience using Google Translate has been quite helpful, because I can just enter a word or sentence and the results come out immediately. The interface is also simple. I use it by copying sentences that I don't understand, then the features I often use are text or voice translation to hear how it is pronounced, and sometimes I use the camera for more practicality."* (Student 1)

> *"My experience using Google Translate has been very smooth, as it is simple to use. Just paste and copy, no special skills required. I usually type in Indonesian, then translate it into other languages."* (Student 2)

Both accounts locate ease of use in two attributes: the speed with which a translation is returned and the absence of any specialised skill required to obtain it. The references to text, voice, and camera input further suggest that students value the tool not for a single function but for the range of low-effort entry points it offers. The questionnaire and interview evidence therefore converge on a single conclusion, namely that students regard Google Translate as an accessible and operationally undemanding aid in the writing process.

Perceived Usefulness (PU)

Perceived usefulness drew a positive but more reserved response, endorsed by 45.9% of respondents (14.5% strongly agree and 31.4% agree), against 40.3% who remained neutral and 13.8% who responded negatively. The large neutral share is notable, for it signals that although many students find Google Translate useful, a substantial proportion are not yet persuaded that it materially improves their writing. The interviews help explain why the perceived benefit centres on efficiency rather than on quality, as students repeatedly framed the tool's usefulness in terms of the time it saves and the vocabulary support it provides:

> *"It is very helpful because it speeds up your work and provides vocabulary references. It is like you don't have to look things up one by one as in a dictionary. It is very helpful because it is quicker; with Google Translate, you just type in what you don't know and it translates."* (Student 3)

> *"Using Google Translate shortens your assignment time because you don't need to open a dictionary and type each word one by one."* (Student 4)

> *"Google Translate is very helpful in speeding up the writing process, allowing me to complete assignments more quickly, especially when looking up word meanings and constructing basic sentences. I don't need to consult a dictionary, which saves time."* (Student 5)

Across these accounts, usefulness is understood instrumentally, as a means of accelerating task completion and reducing the labour of vocabulary search, rather than as a means of producing better writing. This emphasis on speed and convenience over linguistic quality is consistent with the moderated questionnaire result, in which usefulness was endorsed by fewer than half of the respondents while a large neutral group withheld stronger agreement.

Attitude Toward Using (ATU)

Attitudes toward using Google Translate were predominantly favourable yet tempered by a large undecided group, with 44.1% of respondents responding positively (13.3% strongly agree and 30.8% agree), 43.7% remaining neutral, and 12.2% responding negatively. The near parity between the positive and neutral categories points to a disposition that is generally accepting but cautious. The interviews revealed an affective dimension behind these attitudes, as students linked the tool to confidence and to reduced anxiety in writing:

> *"Overall, I feel very helped and more confident using Google Translate. It functions as an assistant, facilitating the process of transitioning ideas from my native language to English. The factors influencing my feelings positively are speed, ease of access, and a wide variety of word choices."* (Student 6)

> *"Overall, I am quite satisfied with using Google Translate because it really helps me when I don't know vocabulary. The factors that influence my feelings are convenience, speed, and efficiency."* (Student 7)

> *"Overall, in my opinion Google Translate is very helpful. The factor that makes it positive is its ease and speed of use."* (Student 8)

These responses indicate that students' positive attitudes rest on the same attributes that drive ease of use and perceived usefulness, principally speed, accessibility, and lexical variety. The recurrence of confidence and satisfaction in the accounts suggests that the favourable attitude is as much emotional as functional, which helps explain why the construct retained positive endorsement even as a large proportion of students remained neutral on the questionnaire.

Behavioral Intention (BI)

Behavioral intention recorded the least favourable distribution of the four constructs, with only 34.0% of respondents endorsing it positively (11.3% strongly agree and 22.7% agree), 44.8% remaining neutral, and 21.2% responding negatively. This construct therefore combined the lowest positive share with the highest negative share, an outcome that signals clear hesitation about sustained reliance on the tool. The interviews located the source of this hesitation in students' concern about dependency:

> *"I still use Google Translate, but I don't use it very often or rely on it, because I am afraid of becoming dependent on it."* (Student 2)

> *"I am willing to continue using Google Translate, but I do not want to rely on it too much, because I want my language skills to continue improving."* (Student 7)

Both students articulate a conditional intention: a willingness to keep using the tool that is deliberately qualified by an effort to limit their reliance on it. This guarded stance accounts for the gap between the broadly positive perceptions of ease of use and usefulness on the one hand and the comparatively weak intention to continue using the tool on the other. Students appear to value Google Translate as a present aid while remaining wary of allowing it to displace their own developing competence.

Challenges Students Encounter in Using Google Translate

Although the four constructs were endorsed positively overall, the consistent presence of neutral and negative responses points to difficulties that qualify students' acceptance of the tool. The reservations intensify across the constructs: perceived ease of use carried 32.8% neutral and 10.3% negative responses, perceived usefulness 40.3% neutral and 13.8% negative, attitude toward using 43.7% neutral and 12.2% negative, and behavioral intention 44.8% neutral and 21.2% negative. This progression shows that students' doubts deepen precisely where the questionnaire turns from momentary convenience toward continued reliance. The interviews identified the concrete problems underlying these reservations, with students pointing to dependence on connectivity, inaccurate output, and contextual mismatch as the principal obstacles:

> *"First, there are internet difficulties, sir, because Google Translate cannot be used without internet. Second, there is incorrect word order. Sometimes the Google Translate system has errors, so the words and the meaning don't match."* (Student 10)

> *"Perhaps we need to be more careful when translating long sentences or stories, as there are sometimes system errors involving incorrect grammar and incorrect sentence structure."* (Student 11)

"The difficulty I usually encounter is that sometimes the translation doesn't fit the context or the language. It should be used wisely, because we shouldn't rely on it." (Student 12)

Three recurring problems emerge from these accounts. The first is infrastructural, since the tool depends on an internet connection and becomes unusable without one. The second is linguistic, as students observe that grammar and word order frequently break down when the input consists of longer or more complex sentences. The third is contextual, in that a translation may be literally correct yet still fail to convey the intended meaning. The final account is especially telling, for it couples these technical limitations with the same concern about overreliance that surfaced in the behavioral intention data, suggesting that students read the tool's shortcomings not merely as inconveniences but as reasons to moderate their dependence on it. The convergence between the neutral and negative questionnaire responses and these interview accounts indicates that the challenges students face are patterned and consistent rather than incidental.

Discussion

The central argument of this discussion is that students accept Google Translate readily as an operational aid yet resist it as a sustained crutch, and that this tension, rather than any blanket endorsement, is the most analytically significant outcome of the study. The four constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model did not move together. Acceptance was strongest where the tool demanded least, in ease of use, and weakest where it implied dependence, in behavioral intention. Reading the findings against the existing literature shows that prior research has documented the favourable end of this gradient extensively while paying far less attention to the reservation that grows alongside it, and it is precisely this reservation that the present study brings into focus.

The first finding concerns perceived ease of use, where students described Google Translate as simple, immediate, and undemanding, requiring no specialised skill beyond typing, pasting, or photographing text. This corroborates a substantial body of work reporting that learners find the tool easy to operate and user-friendly (Fingerhut & Moeyaert, 2022; Piccinini et al., 2024), and it aligns with the proposition in (Ibrahim & Shiring, 2022; Sushma Rani, 2025) that perceived ease of use shapes the acceptance of a technology. Where the present study extends this literature is in showing that ease of use is not merely high in isolation but is the highest of the four constructs and the one least qualified by reservation, which suggests that operational simplicity is the most stable and least contested basis of students' acceptance. The convenience documented by earlier studies, in other words, is real, but it is also the shallowest layer of engagement, and treating it as evidence of meaningful uptake risks overstating how deeply the tool is embraced.

The second finding concerns perceived usefulness, which students framed almost entirely in terms of efficiency, namely the speed of obtaining vocabulary and the time saved relative to a dictionary, rather than in terms of improved writing quality. This instrumental understanding echoes prior research emphasising the tool's efficiency and its capacity to translate varied texts rapidly (Bausells-Espín, 2022; Cai, 2022), consistent with the claim in (DuBay et al., 2022) that perceived usefulness reflects the belief that a technology enhances performance. The present study qualifies that literature in an important respect, however, for the questionnaire showed usefulness endorsed by fewer than half of the respondents and held back by a large neutral group, a pattern the interviews explain: students value the tool for accelerating a task, not for elevating its quality. The benefit students perceive is therefore narrower than the term usefulness in the literature often implies, and the gap between speed and quality marks a boundary that prior efficiency-focused accounts have tended to leave unexamined.

The third finding concerns students' attitudes, which were favourable and grounded in confidence, satisfaction, and reduced anxiety when writing in English. This is consistent with studies reporting that learners feel more confident when using Google Translate (Al-Smadi, 2022) and with the argument in (Ali et al., 2025) that attitudes are shaped by perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. The contribution of the present study lies in showing that this favourable attitude is affective as much as functional, since students attached their confidence to the same

handful of attributes that drove the other constructs, principally speed and accessibility. The positive attitude is thus better read not as an independent endorsement of the tool but as an emotional by-product of its convenience, which helps explain why it coexisted with a large neutral group and did not translate into a correspondingly strong intention to continue using the tool.

The fourth finding, behavioral intention, is where the study departs most clearly from the prevailing literature. Whereas earlier research often reports that learners are willing to continue using Google Translate in the future (Gumartifa et al., 2022; Kane, 2021), the present study found intention to be the weakest of the four constructs, with the lowest positive share and the highest negative share, and the interviews located the cause in a deliberate fear of dependency. Students articulated a conditional intention, willing to keep using the tool but consciously limiting their reliance so that their own language skills would continue to develop. This finding complicates the broadly optimistic tenor of much of the literature, for it shows that positive perceptions of ease and usefulness do not automatically produce a commitment to sustained use, and that adolescent learners may exercise a metacognitive restraint that acceptance models centred on convenience do not readily capture.

The challenges students reported reinforce this reading and connect their reservations to concrete experience. Students identified translation inaccuracy, grammatical and word-order errors in longer or more complex sentences, contextual mismatch, and dependence on an internet connection as recurring obstacles. These accounts align with prior work reporting that learners found Google Translate output less precise (Rashed Alkatheery, 2023), that it can alter the meaning of the original text and disorder sentence structure (Otanjac, 2025), and that its output must be re-checked carefully after use (Borodina et al., 2021). The present study situates these well-documented limitations within a coherent perceptual logic rather than treating them as a separate inventory of faults, since the same students who valued the tool's speed also distrusted its accuracy and, on that basis, chose to moderate their use. Their awareness of the risk of overreliance, consistent with cautions raised in earlier research (Avsheniuk et al., 2025; Hussain & Ud Din, 2025; Leahy et al., 2025), indicates a critical stance in which the tool is accepted as a support but consciously refused as a substitute for learning.

Taken together, these findings make a modest but pointed theoretical contribution to the application of the Technology Acceptance Model in language learning. The model assumes a broadly forward flow in which ease of use and usefulness feed attitude, which in turn feeds intention. The present data interrupt that flow, showing that favourable upstream perceptions can coexist with weak downstream intention when learners introduce an external consideration the model does not contain, namely concern for their own long-term competence. This suggests that, at least for adolescent EFL writers, behavioral intention toward a translation tool is governed not only by perceived ease and usefulness but also by a self-protective judgement about dependence, a factor that acceptance studies in this field would do well to incorporate. The study is nonetheless bounded by its single-site design and its reliance on descriptive rather than inferential analysis, so the gradient identified here should be read as a well-evidenced pattern within one vocational cohort rather than as a generalisable causal claim, and confirming it would require larger and multi-site designs capable of testing these relationships statistically.

CONCLUSION

This study establishes that vocational high school students accept Google Translate most readily as an operational aid in writing. Their endorsement grows more guarded as its use implies sustained dependence, and this gradient proved more revealing than any blanket judgment of the tool. Across the four constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model, positive endorsement declined steadily from perceived ease of use, through perceived usefulness and attitude toward using, to behavioral intention, while neutral and negative responses rose in the opposite direction. The interviews explained this pattern. Students value the tool for its speed, simplicity, and vocabulary support but distrust its accuracy, and they deliberately limit their reliance on it to

protect their own developing competence. The challenges they reported, namely translation inaccuracy, grammatical and contextual errors in longer sentences, and dependence on connectivity, reinforced this critical stance. Google Translate is embraced as a support but consciously refused as a substitute for learning. The principal implication is pedagogical rather than technological. Teachers should treat Google Translate not as a shortcut to be encouraged or banned but as a resource whose outputs students must learn to review and revise critically, so that its evident convenience is harnessed without eroding the language skills it is meant to support. Bounded by its single-site design and its descriptive analysis, the study invites larger and multi-site mixed methods research capable of testing whether this restraint toward dependence holds across other learners and settings.

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