

Student Perceptions on Using ChatGPT as a Translation Tool at Sriwijaya University

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* Nito Septian Putra, Amrullah^{ab} 

¹²Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: nitoseptianp@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explored the perceptions of sixth-semester students from the English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University regarding the use of ChatGPT as a translation tool. With the increasing integration of AI technologies into education, understanding students' experiences and attitudes toward such tools is essential, particularly as empirical studies on students' perceptions of AI-based translation tools in higher education remain limited. This study employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire that measured four aspects: ease of use, usefulness, effectiveness, and attitude. The participants consisted of 93 students, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the students held an overall positive perception of ChatGPT. The highest mean score was found in the ease-of-use category, indicating that students found the tool user-friendly and accessible. The usefulness and attitude categories also received positive responses, while the effectiveness category scored slightly lower, suggesting some limitations in translation accuracy. These results highlight the growing role of AI-based tools in language learning and support the use of ChatGPT as a supplementary translation resource.

Keywords: *Chatgpt, Translation, Perception, AI, Language Learning*

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly influenced educational practices, particularly in the field of language learning. AI-based tools are increasingly used to support various learning activities, including writing, reading, speaking practice, and translation. These technologies are designed not only to provide instant answers but also to simulate interactive learning experiences that were previously limited to classroom settings. As digital literacy becomes an essential component of 21st-century education, integrating AI tools into language learning environments has become both a practical necessity and an academic interest.

One prominent innovation is OpenAI's ChatGPT, an AI-powered language model that has attracted considerable attention for its ability to generate human-like text and assist learners in various language-related tasks, especially translation. Unlike conventional machine translation systems that primarily focus on word-to-word or sentence-level equivalence, ChatGPT is designed to process contextual information, provide explanations, and generate alternative expressions. This capability allows learners not only to obtain translated texts but also to understand the linguistic reasoning behind them. As translation serves as a bridge between comprehension and

communication in second language learning, examining the role of AI tools in this process has become increasingly important.

Translation plays a crucial role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly in countries where English exposure outside the classroom is limited. Through translation activities, learners compare linguistic structures between their first language and English, identify grammatical differences, and expand their vocabulary repertoire. Aydınalp (2020) states that translation enables learners to recognize language patterns and improve their writing skills, while Kalyani (2023) highlights its contribution to understanding idiomatic expressions and complex texts. In addition, translation fosters metalinguistic awareness, encouraging students to think critically about meaning, context, and cultural nuances. Therefore, translation is not merely a mechanical transfer of words but a cognitive process that enhances overall language competence.

With the integration of AI technologies, translation activities can now be supported by fast, interactive, and context-aware tools. AI-based systems can provide instant feedback, suggest synonyms, explain grammatical structures, and offer multiple translation alternatives. Such features potentially enhance students' autonomy and motivation, as learners can independently explore language use without waiting for teacher feedback. Moreover, AI tools may reduce anxiety in language learning by creating a low-pressure environment where students can experiment with language use freely.

Recent studies have shown growing interest in the use of AI-based translation tools in language education. Roza and Zulhirawati (2023) reported that students perceived ChatGPT as a useful tool for improving translation skills and vocabulary development. Similarly, Athanassopoulos et al. (2023) found that ChatGPT supports second language acquisition by providing immediate feedback and contextualized language input. Hariri (2023) also noted that ChatGPT demonstrates stronger contextual understanding compared to traditional translation tools, making it more suitable for academic language tasks. These findings suggest that AI-powered tools may offer pedagogical benefits beyond simple translation functions.

However, despite these advantages, several studies have raised concerns regarding the accuracy, consistency, and cultural appropriateness of AI-generated translations, particularly when dealing with complex or idiomatic texts (Yao et al., 2023; Almhasees et al., 2024). AI systems may occasionally produce grammatically correct but semantically inaccurate translations or overlook cultural subtleties embedded in the source language. Overreliance on AI tools may also limit students' critical thinking and independent language production if not guided appropriately. These limitations indicate the need for further empirical investigation, especially from the learners' perspective, to understand how students perceive the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT in real academic contexts.

In the Indonesian higher education context, where English is learned as a foreign language, the adoption of AI tools like ChatGPT is increasing rapidly among university students. However, research specifically examining students' perceptions of using ChatGPT as a translation tool remains limited. Understanding learners' perspectives is essential because their perceptions influence how effectively the tool is utilized and integrated into learning practices. Positive perceptions may encourage meaningful use, while negative experiences may hinder its pedagogical potential.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University regarding the use of

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ChatGPT as a translation tool. The study focuses on four key dimensions: ease of use, usefulness, effectiveness, and attitude. By examining students' experiences and perceptions, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on AI-assisted language learning and provides deeper insights into the role of ChatGPT in supporting translation practices in higher education. Ultimately, the findings are expected to inform educators and curriculum developers about the appropriate integration of AI tools in EFL classrooms, ensuring that technology enhances rather than replaces meaningful language learning processes.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to explore students' perceptions of using ChatGPT as a translation tool. A survey-based method was utilized to collect standardized data from a specific target population. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of 19 items, which were grouped into four aspects: ease of use, usefulness, effectiveness, and attitude. The ease-of-use aspect consisted of 4 items, the usefulness aspect included 4 items, the effectiveness aspect was measured using 7 items, and the attitude aspect comprised 4 items. Each item was rated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing respondents to indicate the degree of their agreement with each statement.

Research Participants

The population of this study included sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University during the 2024/2025 academic year. A total sampling technique was applied, involving all 93 students from both Palembang and Indralaya campuses. This technique was selected due to the relatively small and accessible population, enabling the researcher to obtain comprehensive and representative data regarding students' perceptions of ChatGPT as a translation tool.

Research Instruments

Prior to the main data collection, a try-out was conducted with students from the Palembang campus to examine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The instrument used in this study was **adopted from Roza and Zulhirawati (2023)**, who had previously developed and validated it in a similar research context. Although the questionnaire had been validated in earlier studies, validity and reliability testing were conducted again to ensure its suitability, consistency, and relevance for the current research sample.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics via SPSS version 26. The analysis involved calculating mean scores and standard deviations for each questionnaire item and category. These statistical tools were used to identify overall trends and patterns in student perceptions. The interpretation of mean scores followed the interval classification suggested by Sugiyono (2019), which categorizes responses as very positive, positive, neutral, negative, or very negative. Results were also visualized using tables and figures to enhance understanding.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this study reveal that sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University generally hold positive perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT as a translation tool. All four evaluated dimensions—ease of use, usefulness, effectiveness, and attitude—obtained mean scores within the positive range, indicating favorable student responses.

First, the ease of use dimension obtained the highest mean score among the four aspects. This result indicates that most students perceived ChatGPT as simple, intuitive, and easy to operate. Students reported that they could quickly input text, receive translations

instantly, and interact with the system without requiring technical assistance. The clarity of instructions and conversational format allowed students to refine or request alternative translations easily. This suggests that ChatGPT provides a low technical barrier, enabling students to focus on the translation task rather than struggling with system navigation.

Second, the usefulness dimension also received a high mean score. Students perceived ChatGPT as beneficial in supporting translation tasks, particularly in expanding vocabulary knowledge, clarifying sentence structures, and providing contextual explanations. Many respondents indicated that ChatGPT helped them understand unfamiliar words and offered alternative expressions that enriched their linguistic repertoire. In addition to producing translations, the tool functioned as a supplementary learning resource by offering explanations when prompted.

Third, the effectiveness dimension received the lowest mean score among the four categories; however, it still remained within the positive range. This finding indicates that although students generally found ChatGPT helpful, they also recognized certain limitations. Some respondents noted that translations involving idiomatic expressions, culturally specific terms, or complex academic texts occasionally required further revision. This suggests that students did not perceive ChatGPT as entirely flawless but rather as a supportive tool that still requires human evaluation.

Finally, regarding attitude, students demonstrated a favorable disposition toward using ChatGPT for translation purposes. The majority expressed enjoyment, interest, and willingness to continue using the tool in future translation activities. This positive attitude reflects students' openness to integrating AI-based tools into their language learning process.

Overall, the findings suggest that students perceive ChatGPT as an accessible, useful, and supportive translation tool, while still acknowledging its limitations in handling more complex translation challenges.

Discussion

The positive perception in the ease-of-use dimension aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of user-friendly AI interfaces in education. Kohnke et al. (2023) argue that intuitive AI tools reduce cognitive load associated with technical operations, allowing learners to allocate more mental resources to language processing. In this study, the high ease-of-use score indicates that students were able to interact with ChatGPT efficiently without technical distractions. This is particularly important in EFL contexts, where excessive cognitive demands may hinder language comprehension and production. The conversational format of ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, likely contributes to its accessibility and ease of integration into academic tasks.

The findings regarding usefulness support earlier studies that highlight the pedagogical value of AI-assisted language tools. Roza and Zulhirawati (2023) reported that ChatGPT enhances vocabulary development and comprehension through contextualized responses. Similarly, Athanassopoulos et al. (2023) emphasized that AI tools foster learner autonomy by providing immediate, on-demand linguistic support. In the present study, students' perception of usefulness suggests that ChatGPT serves not only as a translation generator but also as a learning facilitator. By requesting explanations, synonyms, or alternative phrasings, students engage in deeper interaction with language forms. This process may enhance metalinguistic awareness and promote independent learning strategies.

Although effectiveness received the lowest mean score, this finding is particularly significant. It indicates that students critically evaluated the quality of AI-generated translations rather than accepting them unconditionally. This aligns with Yao et al. (2023), who found that AI systems may struggle with idiomatic language and context-sensitive meanings. The awareness demonstrated by students reflects a mature and informed approach to AI usage. Instead of relying entirely on ChatGPT, students appear to use it as an initial reference point before refining translations based on their linguistic knowledge. Such critical engagement is essential in academic environments, as it prevents overdependence on technology and promotes responsible AI use.

The positive attitude toward ChatGPT is also consistent with findings from Lo et al. (2024), who reported that AI-assisted tools can increase motivation and engagement in language learning. A favorable attitude toward technology significantly influences continued usage and long-term adoption. In this study, students' willingness to continue using ChatGPT suggests that AI integration in translation activities is well received in higher education settings. Positive emotional responses, such as enjoyment and curiosity, may further enhance learning outcomes by increasing students' engagement with language tasks.

Furthermore, the balanced perception observed in this study – high scores in ease of use and usefulness combined with moderate effectiveness – indicates that students do not view ChatGPT as a replacement for teachers or traditional learning methods. Instead, they perceive it as a complementary resource. This finding supports Almhasees et al. (2024) and Hariri (2023), who emphasize that ChatGPT's strength lies in its supportive role rather than in functioning as an autonomous translator.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that integrating ChatGPT into translation courses may enhance students' learning experiences if accompanied by proper guidance. Educators should encourage critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs and promote reflective comparison between machine translations and students' own interpretations. By doing so, ChatGPT can function as a scaffolding tool that strengthens translation competence without diminishing analytical skills.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights that ChatGPT holds strong potential as an accessible and useful translation support tool in EFL higher education. However, its optimal use depends on students' critical awareness and educators' instructional strategies. When integrated thoughtfully, ChatGPT can complement traditional translation practices and contribute meaningfully to language learning development.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University hold an overall positive perception of using ChatGPT as a translation tool. The tool was perceived as easy to use, helpful in improving vocabulary and translation skills, and enjoyable to interact with. Although students identified certain limitations in ChatGPT's effectiveness, particularly when translating idiomatic or complex texts, its accessibility, user-friendliness, and multilingual features contribute significantly to its value in educational settings. These findings have several practical implications. For students, ChatGPT can function as a supportive learning tool that facilitates independent practice, helps clarify unfamiliar vocabulary, and increases confidence in completing translation tasks. For lecturers, the results suggest that ChatGPT may be integrated as a supplementary resource in translation instruction, provided that guidance is given on how to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs and correct potential inaccuracies. Encouraging reflective and critical use of AI can help students develop higher-order thinking skills rather than relying solely on automated translations. For curriculum designers, the positive perception of ChatGPT highlights the importance of incorporating AI literacy into language learning curricula, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills to use AI tools responsibly and effectively. In summary, ChatGPT demonstrates transformative potential in foreign language education when integrated thoughtfully into the learning process. Its increasing presence in academic contexts emphasizes the need for educators and institutions to adapt instructional strategies that maximize the benefits of AI-based tools while simultaneously addressing their limitations through pedagogical guidance and critical awareness.

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