

Impact of Translation Tools in Foreign Language Learning

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abstract

New technologies are replacing each-other at a really rapid pace. Progress and modernism are affecting all fields, including education. Whiteboards and computer classes, which until a few years ago were considered advanced technological tools are becoming updated, because the trend is going toward use of the latest technology (tablets and smartphones). Technological progress has created some digital tools as part of the translation process, which are being used by professionals and students. The latest are using various programs to gain knowledge and complete assignments in the most facilitated method. But, one of the challenges of education is the dependence of students on these tools, because their use can have both positive and negative effects on language learning. The scope of this work is to make evident the digital translation tools used during English language teaching and analyse their impact among students. In order to achieve this objective, a questionnaire is prepared and filled by 105 students. Questionnaire data shall be analysed in this work, where will be included also the respective recommendations. Translation tools have transformed foreign language education by providing immediate linguistic support and promoting learner autonomy. While these technologies can enhance comprehension and writing performance, excessive reliance may hinder the development of independent language skills. Therefore, effective pedagogical integration is essential to ensure that translation tools serve as learning aids rather than substitutes for language acquisition.

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INTRODUCTION

Translation in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Albania is updated constantly through the incorporation of new technology, from paper-based and electronic handheld resources and specialized software to online platforms and virtual forums, all of which can be used to facilitate the act of translating in the teaching/ learning process. With the use of 21st Century technology, old-fashioned methods can be adapted so that students can prepare to read both ancient and contemporary texts.

This study addresses two critical domains shaping Albania's future: education and technological innovation. It examines the necessary transformation of the national education system to foster inclusion and innovation through the strategic integration of artificial intelligence and digital tools, a field commonly referred to as educational technology.

Technological advancements have significantly mitigated language barriers. Progress in this field has introduced various digital tools into the translation process, which are now widely utilized by both professionals and students. These users increasingly employ diverse programs to acquire knowledge and complete academic assignments more efficiently. As the market for machine translation technology evolves rapidly, the quality of these solutions varies considerably. Common machine translation tools include Google Translate, Claude, DeepL, Microsoft Translator, Gemini, SDL Trados, and MemoQ. However, a significant challenge in contemporary education is the rising student dependence on these tools (Polakova & Klimova, 2023).

The aim of this study is to analyze university students' approaches to the use of translation tools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, as well as the impact of these tools on their motivation and performance.

The high frequency of technology use suggests that digital tools are increasingly embedded in students' learning routines. Therefore, English language educators should integrate technology strategically into their instruction, promote digital literacy, and encourage students to utilize technological resources critically and responsibly. Furthermore, these findings support the development of technology-enhanced learning environments that foster learner autonomy, engagement, and language proficiency.

The integration of technology in education has significantly transformed teaching and learning processes across all educational levels. Digital technologies provide learners with greater access to information, interactive learning opportunities, and personalized educational experiences. Within language education, technological tools—such as online learning platforms, mobile applications, digital dictionaries, artificial intelligence applications, and translation tools—have become essential resources for supporting language acquisition and communication skills (Limaj, 2021).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to:

1. Investigate the purposes for which students utilize digital translation tools in English language learning;

2. Examine students' perceptions regarding the benefits and challenges associated with the use of these technologies;
3. Analyze the impact of digital translation tools on students' language learning outcomes; and
4. Explore pedagogical strategies for integrating digital technologies into English language teaching.

The increasing integration of technology into education has fundamentally transformed foreign language acquisition. Among the available resources, digital translation tools have become prevalent in supporting vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, writing, and communication. Given their widespread adoption, it is essential to evaluate how these tools influence students' learning experiences and language development. Therefore, this study investigates the patterns of digital translation tool usage among English language learners and examines their perceived impact on the overall learning process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital technologies are a key element of technological progress that significantly impacts various fields, including education (Ducar & Schocket, 2018). Their impact on neurological processes is creating new paradigms in how information is processed and stored.

As McEnery and Brookes (2024) observe in "Curricula with a focus on technology and foreign languages," the increasing use of technology is transforming pedagogical practices, often triggering mixed opinions from assessors regarding students' written work (Clifford, 2013). This challenge is particularly relevant for international students who must function in a global, English-speaking environment. In this context, relying on such software is often regarded as potentially compromising the authenticity of authorship (Mundt & Groves, 2016).

Research suggests that students utilize these tools not merely to alleviate language-learning fatigue but as constructive aids for promoting the communicative competence required for global participation (Hyland, 2014). Translation and language-checking tools, such as Google Translate and Grammarly, provide increasing accuracy, enabling students to correct or translate texts with generally comprehensible results.

Historically, translation in foreign language classrooms transitioned from medieval Scholasticism and 19th-century grammar-translation methodologies to being recently conceptualized as a cognitive paradigm—the "act of translating" (D'Amore, 2015). Modern language teaching now favors oral communication and naturalistic acquisition methods, supported by digital platforms that simplify assignment management and communication.

While students enthusiastically adopt machine translation, educators often express skepticism, even when studies indicate improvements in reading, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. Translation technology is now an inescapable reality. Recent studies on ChatGPT have highlighted that these AI tools can effectively support second-language writing instruction (Abimbola, 2023), although they present risks regarding independent critical thinking and the preservation of personal voice.

The integration of technology in education has become a defining characteristic of contemporary pedagogy, expanding access to resources and facilitating student-centered learning. Digital tools now facilitate communication, collaboration, and immediate feedback. Consequently, technology has become an essential component of English language instruction; however, educators must ensure it serves as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, meaningful language learning activities (Klimova, 2025).

METHODS AND DATA

The aim of this study is to examine the use of digital translation tools in the English language learning process and analyze their impact on students. To achieve this objective, a questionnaire was administered to 105 students; 99 valid responses were included in the analysis, resulting in a response rate of approximately 94.3%. Incomplete or invalid submissions (n=6) were excluded. The sample comprised Bachelor and Master students from four universities (two public and two private), predominantly located in Tirana, Albania, due to the concentration of technological development in this region. To ensure validity, the questionnaire employed various question formats.

This study employed a quantitative survey research design. Data were collected via a structured online questionnaire created through Google Forms, focusing on the frequency of tool usage, the types of tools utilized, the purposes for their use, and students' perceptions regarding the associated benefits and challenges. The items were measured using multiple-choice questions and five-point Likert scales.

All participants were informed that the survey was anonymous and voluntary, and that the data would be used exclusively for research purposes. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, ensuring participant confidentiality and data protection in accordance with university protocols.

The research hypotheses are as follows:

- **H1:** There is a significant difference in language learning outcomes between frequent and infrequent users of translation tools.
- **H2:** Translation technology has a significant influence on student learning.
- **H3:** Teachers are actively integrating translation tools into classroom instruction.

Finally, inferential statistical techniques were employed to analyze the correlation between tool usage frequency and students' proficiency in foreign language learning (Council of Europe, 2024).

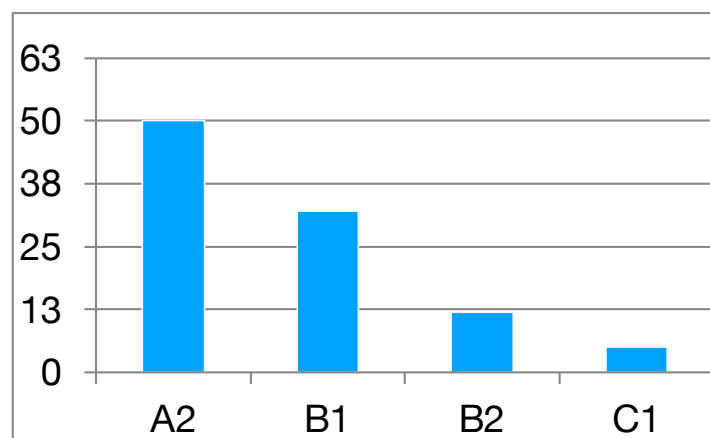
ANALYSIS

The study primarily analyzes the use of translation and language-correcting software. The initial questions focused on demographic data, e.g., level of study, gender, and English language proficiency. The data analysis showed that the majority of respondents were Bachelor students (62%). The majority of students who participated in the questionnaire were female and mainly

resided in Tirana, the capital city of Albania.

The largest share of respondents had an intermediate level (B2) of English language proficiency, according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2024). The results indicated that *Google Translate* is the most popular translation tool, followed by *ChatGPT*, *Claude*, and *Gemini*. Regarding the frequency of use, only C1-level learners stated that they never use translation tools, whereas A2-level learners reported a significantly higher frequency of use.

Figure 1



Analysis of Language Proficiency Distribution

The data obtained from the questionnaire indicate that the majority of participants possess lower to intermediate levels of language proficiency. The largest group is at A2 level, comprising 50 participants (50.5%), suggesting that approximately half of the sample demonstrates basic communicative competence and may still experience difficulties with complex texts and specialized vocabulary.

Participants at B1 level account for 32 individuals (32.3%), representing nearly one-third of the sample. These learners are generally able to manage everyday communication and understand straightforward texts, although they may still require support when dealing with more advanced language tasks.

Only a small proportion of participants demonstrate upper-intermediate or advanced proficiency. Twelve participants (12.1%) are classified at B2 level, while five participants (5.1%) are at C1 level. Together, these higher-proficiency groups constitute just 17.2% of the total sample.

Interpretation in Relation to Translation Tool Usage

The predominance of A2 and B1 learners (82.8% of the participants) suggests a substantial reliance on translation tools to facilitate comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and communication. Individuals at lower proficiency levels often utilize translation technologies to compensate for linguistic limitations, particularly when engaging with academic, professional, or complex written materials.

Conversely, participants at B2 and C1 levels likely utilize translation tools more selectively. Their usage may focus on verifying terminology, translating specialized content, or improving accuracy,

rather than supporting basic comprehension.

Overall, this proficiency distribution indicates that translation tools serve as a primary supportive resource for the majority of participants—particularly those at elementary and intermediate levels—while functioning as supplementary tools for more advanced users.

Suggested Academic Reporting Statement

The analysis of language proficiency levels revealed that the majority of participants demonstrated elementary to intermediate competence, with 50.5% at A2 level and 32.3% at B1 level. Higher proficiency levels were less common, with 12.1% at B2 and only 5.1% at C1. This distribution suggests that translation tools are likely to be particularly valuable for the majority of participants, who may rely on such technologies to support comprehension and communication in a second language. In contrast, advanced users may employ these tools primarily for refinement and terminology verification rather than basic language support.

Table 1 illustrates the purposes for which respondents use translation tools. According to the responses, these tools were primarily utilized for reading comprehension, grammar checking, and writing tasks. Furthermore, we conducted a descriptive association analysis to examine how students utilize translation tools across different academic tasks.

The findings indicate that translation tools were used primarily for reading-related activities (38%), followed by grammar-related tasks (31%). Together, these two categories accounted for 69% of all reported uses, suggesting that students relied on translation tools mainly for language comprehension and grammatical support. Usage was considerably lower for completing assignments (12%) and writing tasks (11%), while only a small proportion of students reported using translation tools for other purposes (9%).

Table 1

Descriptive Distribution of Translation Tool Usage (N = 99)

Purpose of Use	Percentage (%)	Approximate Number of Students
Reading tasks	38%	38
Grammar tasks	31%	31
Completing assignments	12%	12
Writing tasks	11%	11
Other tasks	9%	

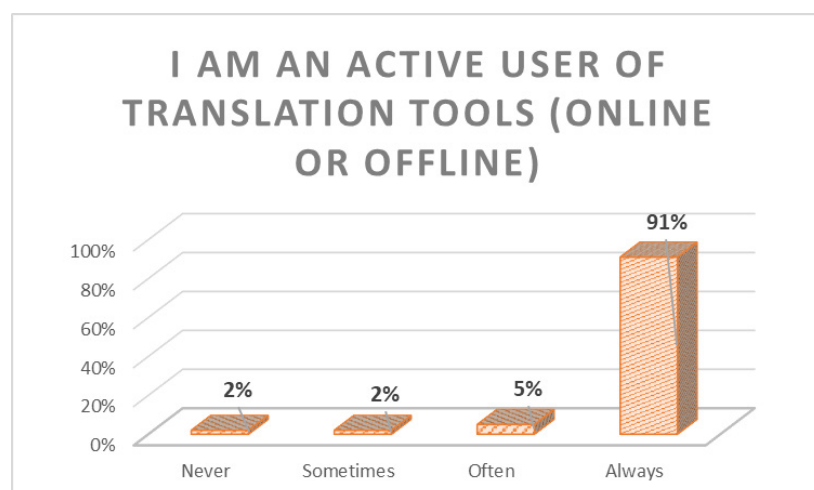
In the framework of an inferential statistics for the same questions, following Chi-square goodness-of-fit test, where we the observed frequencies (38, 31, 12, 11, 9) and an expected equal distribution (19.8 per category): $\chi^2 = 35.13$, $\text{df} = 4$, $p < .001$.

The obtained results can be interpreted as the distribution of translation tool use across task types differed significantly from an equal distribution, indicating that students preferentially used translation tools for reading and grammar tasks rather than for writing, assignments, or other

purposes.

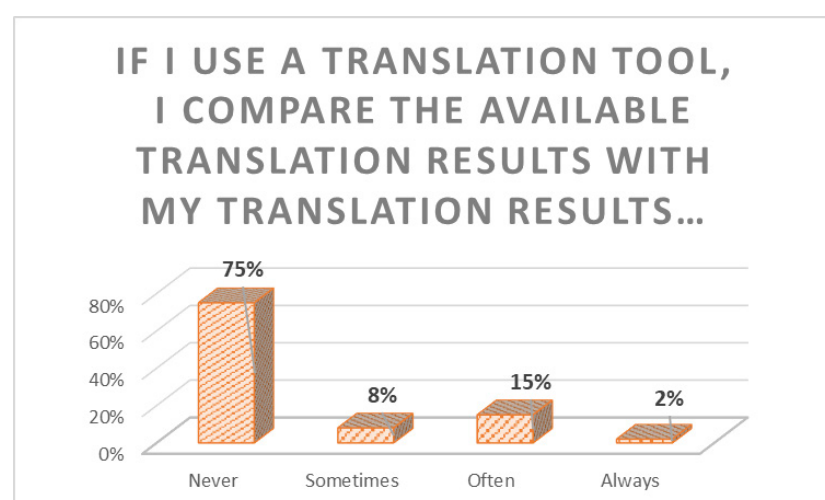
A chi-square goodness-of-fit test showed that the distribution of translation tool use across academic tasks was significantly different from an equal distribution, $\chi^2(4, N = 99) = 35.13, p < .001$. Reading tasks (38%) and grammar tasks (31%) were the most common purposes for using translation tools, whereas completing assignments (12%), writing tasks (11%), and other purposes (9%) were reported less frequently.

Figure 2



In case of a correlation analysis, if we compare frequency of translation tools usage by students, a Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' frequency of translation tool usage and their writing performance. The results indicated a significant positive correlation ($\rho = .42, p < .01$), suggesting that students who used translation tools more frequently tended to achieve higher writing scores.

Figure 3



The results indicate that translation tool usage was extremely common among the participants. Of the 99 students surveyed, approximately 90 (91%) reported always using translation tools, 5 (5%) reported often using them, 2 (2%) reported sometimes using them, and 2 (2%) reported never

using them. These findings suggest a very high level of reliance on translation tools among the students.

The data analysis shows that majority of the interviewed students said they “always use the translator tool to translate single words”, thus becoming over-reliant on translation technology, because it is harder and longer to translate texts manually using a printed dictionary. Instead of remembering vocabulary, students prefer using translation tools, i.e. words and sentences are not stored in their brain memory. While, teachers aim to stimulate the brain by watching it over in order to memorise.

Results show that technology increases students confidence, in particular during use of translation tools, because a considerable number of the interviewed students underlined that it “feels like, without a translation tool, I cannot understand English texts”. While there is an overwhelming majority of students stating they “memorise English vocabulary, after obtaining answers from translation tools”, teachers must advice students to avoid becoming over-reliant on these tools.

Figure 4

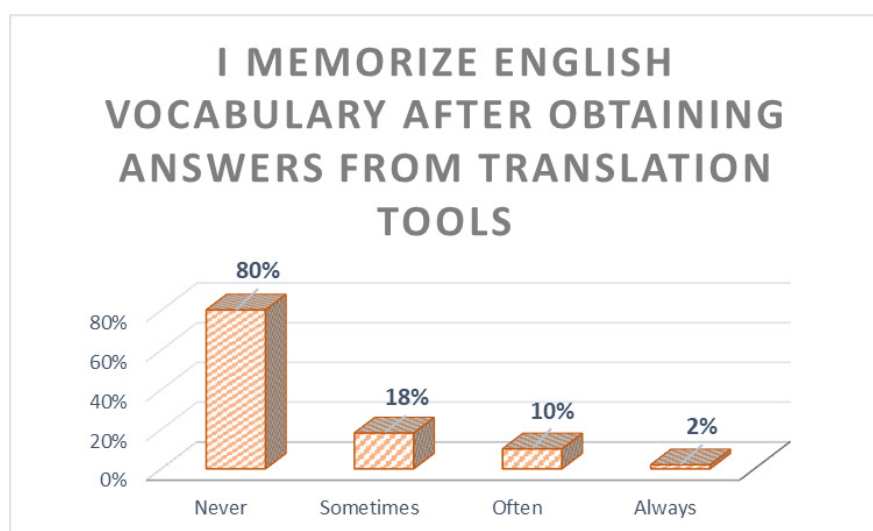


Table 2

We have categorized users into two groups and completed a Chi-square Goodness-of-fit Test.

Group	Frequency
High Users (Always + Often)	95
Low Users (Sometimes + Never)	4
Total	99

Null hypothesis (H_0): High and low users are equally distributed (49.5 expected in each category).

Observed frequencies:

- High Users = 95
- Low Users = 4

Expected frequencies:

- High Users = 49.5
- Low Users = 49.5

Using the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Calculation:

- High Users: $(95 - 49.5)^2 / 49.5 = 41.83$
- Low Users: $(4 - 49.5)^2 / 49.5 = 41.83$

$$\chi^2 = 83.66$$

Degrees of freedom:

$$df = 2 - 1 = 1$$

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test indicated that the distribution of translation-tool usage differed significantly from an equal distribution, $\chi^2(1, N = 99) = 83.66, p < .001$.

For a 2-category chi-square, the effect size can be expressed using Phi (ϕ):

$$\phi = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N}}$$

$$\phi = \sqrt{(83.66 / 99)} = 0.92$$

According to conventional benchmarks:

- 0.10 = small
- 0.30 = medium
- 0.50 = large

A ϕ of 0.92 represents a very large effect size.

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to examine students' use of translation tools. Participants were classified as either high users (always or often using translation tools) or low users (sometimes or never using translation tools). Results revealed a highly significant difference in the distribution of usage patterns, $\chi^2(1, N = 99) = 83.66, p < .001$. The vast majority of students (96.0%) were classified as high users, whereas only 4.0% were classified as low users. The effect

size was very large ($\phi = .92$), indicating a strong tendency among students to rely on translation tools.

It should be noted that this test only demonstrates that usage frequencies across different academic tasks are not equally distributed. It does not establish a causal link or provide evidence regarding whether translation tool usage directly affects language proficiency. These broader implications remain beyond the scope of this descriptive analysis and warrant further inferential investigation.

Even though translation technology has significantly affected language learning, there is an ongoing debate about the use of technology and its impact on the foreign language teaching and learning process. There is no doubt that students admit that using a translation tool to complete English assignments is faster and easier than doing it manually.

The majority of them answered that they “use translation tools for all language purposes,” even though translation tools cannot accurately provide answers to all the required assignments. The results of the questionnaire clearly indicated that students use translation tools during their learning process to better understand texts, and to translate words and sentences.

Based on the obtained answers, it is obvious that there is a common opinion that translation tools provide excellent results; therefore, the majority of the participants stated that they do not use a printed dictionary to check the accuracy of the material.

Findings demonstrate that respondents use machine translation in foreign language learning for specific tasks such as reading or understanding a text, writing essays, searching for alternatives, and completing various assignments.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Based on these results, this work can define the following positive and negative impacts that use of technologic tools has on foreign language teaching and learning process.

Positive Impacts

1. Enhanced Comprehension: Translation tools help learners understand unfamiliar vocabulary, grammar structures, and complex texts more quickly. This can reduce frustration and increase confidence, particularly for beginner and intermediate learners. This is also noticed in one of the questions in the questionnaire regarding

2. Increased Learning Efficiency: Students can access immediate translations, allowing them to focus on understanding content rather than spending excessive time searching for meanings. This can support reading, writing, and listening activities.

3. Support for Independent Learning: Translation tools enable learners to study autonomously outside the classroom. They can check meanings, verify their understanding, and receive instant feedback on written work. In this case, the results showed that majority of students participating in the questionnaire did not check the meanings in the dictionary, i.e. they are fully dependant on these tools.

4. Improved Writing Assistance: Many translation tools provide suggestions for vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar. These features can help learners produce more accurate written texts and expand their linguistic repertoire.

5. Greater Accessibility: Translation technologies make foreign language learning more accessible for students with varying proficiency levels and learning needs.

Negative Impacts

1. Overreliance on Technology: Excessive dependence on translation tools may reduce learners' motivation to develop independent language skills such as vocabulary recall and grammatical reasoning.

2. Reduced Language Production: Students who rely heavily on automatic translation may engage less in active language construction, limiting opportunities to practice speaking and writing.

3. Translation Errors: Machine translation is not always accurate, particularly with idioms, cultural expressions, and context-dependent language. Learners may internalize incorrect forms if they accept translations without critical evaluation.

4. Limited Critical Thinking: Constant access to ready-made translations can discourage learners from using contextual clues, inference skills, and problem-solving strategies that are important for language acquisition.

5. Academic Integrity Concerns: The use of translation tools for assignments may raise concerns regarding plagiarism, authorship, and the assessment of genuine language proficiency.

Likewise, regarding pedagogical implications in this respect, we can highlight that language educators increasingly view translation tools as resources that should be integrated thoughtfully rather than prohibited. Effective practices used by teachers include:

- Teaching students how to evaluate translation accuracy.
- Using translation tools as a scaffold rather than a replacement for learning.
- Encouraging comparison between machine-generated and human-generated translations.
- Developing digital literacy skills related to language technologies.
- Designing tasks that require critical reflection on translated texts.

Potential Recommendations

1. Integration Rather Than Prohibition:

- Since translation tools are already widely used by students, teachers may benefit from integrating them into language learning activities rather than attempting to ban them.
- Instruction can focus on using these tools critically and effectively, helping students evaluate the accuracy and appropriateness of translations.

2. Development of Digital Literacy:

- Students should be trained to recognize the strengths and limitations of translation technologies
- Teachers can incorporate activities that require learners to compare machine-generated translations with human translations and identify errors or nuances.

3. Support for Autonomous Learning:

- Translation tools can facilitate independent learning by providing immediate access to vocabulary, grammar explanations, and text comprehension support.
- Teachers can encourage students to use technology as a supplementary resource while maintaining active engagement with the target language.

4. Focus on Higher-Order Language Skills:

- As technology increasingly assists with basic translation tasks, classroom instruction can emphasize critical thinking, intercultural competence, communication strategies, creativity, and authentic language use.
- Activities such as discussions, presentations, and collaborative projects can help students develop skills that technology cannot fully replace.

5. Need for Assessment Adaptation:

- Traditional assignments may need redesigning to account for the widespread availability of translation tools.
- Assessments can focus more on language production in authentic contexts, oral communication, and students' ability to justify linguistic choices.

6. Teacher Professional Development:

- Language teachers may require training on emerging translation and AI technologies to effectively guide students in their use.
- Professional development programs can help educators design technology-enhanced learning environments.

The findings reveal a very high frequency of translation tool use among students, with 91% reporting that they always use such technologies. This suggests that translation tools have become an integral part of contemporary language learning and this finding provides empirical support for the H1 hypothesis. Consequently, foreign language pedagogy should move beyond restrictive approaches and focus on developing students' digital literacy, critical evaluation skills, and strategic use of translation technologies. Furthermore, teachers should design learning activities and assessments that promote communicative competence and higher-order language skills while leveraging the benefits of technological support.

CONCLUSION

Innovation in other disciplines contributes to our understanding of the affect that translation has on our teaching practice. Behavioural data have demonstrated that native-language activation is an unconscious correlate of second-language comprehension and, therefore, that translation is an unconscious and inevitable element in foreign-language comprehension.

Preventing students from using translation-related technology is almost impossible, but we can consider these translation apps as means to perfecting reading skills in a foreign language and furthermore as an aid for consolidating writing and communication skills in the student's first language, which is also expressed in the research objectives of this work.

Nonetheless, translation used as a resource designed to assist the student in improving his or her knowledge of the foreign language through reading comprehension exercises, contrastive analysis, and reflection on written texts continues to be practiced.

As artificial intelligence-driven translation technologies advance, teachers are starting to warm up to using translation tools in reading tasks, during grammar-translation method or course works, as well as for translation of professional terminology.

The aim of this study was to explore the attitude of university students toward the use of machine translation tools in foreign language learning, as well as the impact of these tools on their motivation and performance. Taking into account the results of discussions on this topic, it is highlighted that translation apps can make classes more engaging and inclusive, in full compliance with topics included in the teaching program.

Classical language teaching in Albania placed translation on the centre of all the teaching/learning methods of a foreign language, but based on the results on this work, even nowadays, students make use of translation tools to complete their assignments. (Musai, 2016) Machine translation, specifically Google Translate is freely available on a number of devices and is improving in its ability to provide grammatically accurate translations. This development has the potential to provoke a major transformation in the internationalisation process of universities, since students in the future may be able to use technology to transform traditional language learning processes. While this is a potentially empowering move that may facilitate academic exchange and the diversification of the learner and researcher community at an international level, it is also a potentially problematic issue in two main respects.

Firstly, the technology is at present unable to align to the socio-linguistic aspects of university level writing and may be misunderstood as a remedy for deficiencies in the writer's language proficiency— a role it is not able to fulfil.

Secondly, it introduces a new dimension to the production of academic work that may clash with Higher Education policy and, thus, requires legislation, in particular in light issues such as plagiarism and academic misconduct.

Translation tools seem to be immensely beneficial for English-language learners (ELL) among students as they promote interaction across cultures and nationalities. The increased engagement is a strong response that students are more likely to engage actively in classroom activities.

These tools allow ELL them to participate in class discussions, ask questions and express their thoughts confidently, therefore fostering a more inclusive and interactive learning environment. Among other advantages of machine translation are multilingual communication, globalisation and elimination of language barriers.

Translation tools can significantly support foreign language teaching and learning by improving accessibility, comprehension, and learner autonomy. However, their benefits are maximized when used strategically and critically. Educators should guide students in using these tools responsibly to enhance language development while minimizing overdependence and potential learning limitations.

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