FROM BASICS TO EXPERTISE: LEVERAGING GOOGLE TRANSLATE AND CHATGPT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING ACROSS ACADEMIC JOURNEYS

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Abstract: This study explores the use Google Translate (GT) and ChatGPT among first-year and final-year students at a private higher education institution in Kebumen. The study aims to identify differences and similarities in the use of these tools, focusing on how their usage varies based on academic stage and language-related needs. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with 121 students participating through fully completed online questionnaires. The study utilizes both closed- and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data on AI usage patterns, which were analyzed through descriptive and thematic analysis methods. The results indicate that GT is more frequently used across both groups due to its ease of use, offering quick and direct translations, while ChatGPT is preferred for tasks requiring deeper understanding and more natural, context-sensitive translations. First-year students primarily use AI tools to translate unknown words and assist with basic comprehension of foreign language materials. In contrast, final-year students demonstrate a more diverse usage pattern, employing AI for tasks such as translating academic texts, understanding journal articles, and preparing for foreign language proficiency tests. Furthermore, the academic needs of the two groups differ significantly, with first-year students focusing on writing and grammar tasks, while final-year students rely more heavily for research and advanced academic activities. The significant differences in language technology and AI tools usage between first-year and final-year students highlight the need for tailored support from educators and institutions. The study contributes to the understanding of how language technology and AI tools impact academic life and offers insights into how these tools can be integrated into the educational process to meet the varying needs of students at different levels of study.
Keywords: *AI tools; final-year students; first-year students; language technology.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed various sectors, with education and higher education experiencing significant changes. Recent studies have documented these shifts, noting that innovations in AI are reshaping pedagogical practices and learning environments (Alhusaiyan, 2024; Bin-Hady et al., 2024; Asad & Ajaz, 2024; Gonzalez-Vidal & Moore, 2024; Javed, 2024; Lenkaitis et al., 2020). These technological advancements challenge traditional educational models and create new opportunities for enhancing learning outcomes and accessibility in academic settings.

One of the most widely adopted manifestations of AI in education is the use of language applications such as Google Translate (GT) and ChatGPT. These tools provide a range of functions—from direct translation to generating context-aware text—thereby helping students overcome language barriers (Lin & Yu, 2024; Lytras, 2024; Moni, 2020; Wang, 2022; Zeb et al., 2024; Urlaub & Dessein, 2022). Their integration into academic life is increasingly common in environments where course materials and scholarly sources are predominantly in foreign languages.

A substantial body of research has examined the role of Google Translate in language learning, highlighting its utility as a tool for vocabulary acquisition and quick translations. Empirical studies have reported high usage rates among learners who rely on GT for understanding unfamiliar words and basic sentence structures

(Murtisari et al., 2019; Organ, 2023; Tsai, 2019; Abdel-Reheem Amin, 2020; Jolley & Maimone, 2022). Such findings indicate that GT serves as an essential resource for students, particularly those new to higher education.

Parallel research has focused on ChatGPT, revealing that its ability to generate natural, context-sensitive text makes it valuable for more complex language tasks. Scholars have noted that ChatGPT offers enhanced capabilities for academic writing, nuanced translation, and interactive language practice (Asad et al., 2024; Bin-Hady et al., 2023; Al-Sofi, 2024; Xu & Thien, 2024; Komba, 2024; Al-Mamary et al., 2024). This technology is increasingly being seen as a complementary tool to traditional translation services.

Differences in academic stage significantly influence the way students use language technologies. First-year students often employ GT and ChatGPT to bridge gaps in language proficiency, relying on these tools for basic comprehension of course materials and textbooks (Pratiwi et al., 2023; Lee, 2023; Paterson, 2023; Zhou et al., 2022; Tsai, 2019; Murtisari et al., 2019). Conversely, final-year students tend to use these applications more strategically for tasks that demand deeper analytical skills, such as translating scholarly articles and preparing academic research.

Despite the increasing adoption of AI tools in language learning, there remains a research gap in understanding how usage patterns vary between students at different academic stages. Prior studies have primarily focused on teachers' perspectives, usage intentions, or the overall impact of AI on academic performance (Asad & Ajaz, 2024; Bateman, 2024; Bhaskar & Gupta, 2024; Bowker, 2020; Ironsi & Ironsi, 2024). This leaves a need for detailed investigations that map the specific domains and contexts of GT and ChatGPT usage among students.

To address this gap, the present study explores the distinct usage patterns of GT and ChatGPT among first-year and final-year students. The research questions guiding this investigation are: (1) How do first-year and final-year students differ in their usage of Google Translate and ChatGPT for academic purposes? (2) What differences exist in the frequency and manner of GT and ChatGPT usage between these two groups? (3) Which categories of linguistic units (e.g., words, phrases, clauses) are predominantly targeted by students using these tools? (4) What specific academic activities and needs do these AI tools support for students at different stages?

This study is novel in its comprehensive approach to mapping language technology usage across distinct academic stages within a single higher education institution. By employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the research offers both quantitative insights and thematic depth regarding students' interactions with GT and ChatGPT (Javed, 2024; Bin-Hady et al., 2023; Al-Mamary et al., 2024; Lytras, 2024; Asad et al., 2024). Such an approach not only fills the existing research gap but also provides a foundation for developing tailored support strategies for diverse student needs.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform educators and policymakers about the varied roles that language AI tools play in academic settings. Insights gained from this research can guide the design of training programs and institutional policies that better support students' language development and academic success (Bond et al., 2020; Escueta et al., 2020; Suharmawan, 2023; Elbanna & Armstrong, 2024; Hannan & Liu, 2023; Hojeij et al., 2024). Tailored interventions can enhance both foundational language skills and advanced research capabilities among students.

By mapping the usage patterns of Google Translate and ChatGPT among first-year and final-year students, this study not only addresses a critical research gap but also highlights the evolving impact of AI on academic language practices. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights into how these tools can be integrated into the educational process to meet the differentiated needs of students at various stages of their academic journey.

METHOD

This study employs a pure descriptive qualitative approach to explore the use of GT and ChatGPT in the academic lifes of first-year students (Semester II – Group 1) and final-year students (Semester VIII – Group 2) of a private higher education institution in Kebumen. The primary focus is to reveal the patterns of GT and ChatGPT usage among students at these two different stages of study, aiming to uncover variations in their use of these technologies.

The participants were recruited via email invitations. A total of 150 survey invitations were distributed to students. Of these, 121 students participated and returned fully completed questionnaires, consisting of 75 respondents from Group 1 and 46 respondents from Group 2. Convenience sampling was employed to recruit

participants relevant to the study topic, specifically those in two distinct phases of their academic journey. This sampling scenario of students at a private higher education institution in Kebumen could limit the generalizability of the findings to students in other regions, institutions, or educational systems with differing demographics and technological access. Besides, data collected through online questionnaires may be subject to inaccuracies, as students might overestimate or underestimate their use of tools like GT and ChatGPT due to memory recall issues, social desirability bias, or misunderstanding of the questions.

Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were designed to gather quantitative data on the use of GT and ChatGPT, while the open-ended questions aimed to provide deeper insights into the reasons behind the responses given in the closed-ended section.

Only fully completed questionnaires were included in the analysis. Data from the closed-ended questions were processed using Microsoft Excel and converted into percentages to facilitate descriptive analysis. These percentages were used to present an overview of language technology and AI tools usage levels, differences in usage patterns between the two groups, and the impact of the tools on academic activities.

Data from the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis. Two researchers worked independently to identify common themes from the responses provided by participants. Once themes were identified, their frequency of occurrence was calculated and converted into percentages to complement the qualitative analysis.

To ensure the validity of the research findings, triangulation was conducted by comparing the quantitative analysis results from the closed-ended questions with the qualitative findings from the open-ended responses. Additionally, the thematic analysis process was carried out independently by two researchers to enhance the reliability of the qualitative analysis. Any discrepancies in theme categorization were discussed until consensus was reached, ensuring the final results accurately reflected the data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illuminate how technological innovations are reshaping education, particularly through the integration of AI tools that support personalized learning and enhance student engagement. In line with the United Nations' Agenda 2030—which emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning—digital technologies have transformed educational landscapes by enabling diverse instructional methods and multimedia-enhanced experiences (Burbules et al., 2020; Suharmawan, 2023; Elbanna & Armstrong, 2024; Bond et al., 2020). These advancements serve as a backdrop to our investigation into the role of language technology in higher education.

Focusing specifically on the use of Google Translate (GT) and ChatGPT, the study reveals distinct usage patterns among first-year and final-year students. The results demonstrate that first-year students primarily rely on these tools for basic translation tasks and comprehension support, while final-year students utilize them more strategically for advanced academic activities such as research, thesis preparation, and critical analysis of scholarly texts (Javed, 2024; Bin-Hady et al., 2023; Tsai, 2019). The subsequent sections detail these trends, providing both quantitative metrics and qualitative insights that underscore the evolving impact of AI on English language learning across different stages of the academic journey.

Table 1. *GT and ChatGPT Usage*

Do you use Google Translate and ChatGPT in your academic life?			
Group 1 – 75 Respondents			
GT		ChatGPT	
Yes	No	Yes	No
100%	0	73%	27%
75	0	55	20
Group 2 – 46 Respondents			
GT		ChatGPT	
Yes	No	Yes	No
100%	0	94%	6%
46	0	43	3

All respondents in Group 1 reported using GT for academic purposes. Klimova et al. (2023) assert that GT, as a NMT-based tool, holds valuable implications for second and foreign language pedagogy, functioning as a highly effective online reference tool for language learners. This underscores the critical role of GT for first-year students, who are likely to encounter challenges in comprehending academic materials written in foreign languages, particularly English. The findings of this extensive use of GT align with those of Organ (2023), who noted that GT usage for assignments has become widely accepted among high school students in England over the past decade.

Comparative usage of GT and ChatGPT

The popularity of GT among all respondents can be attributed to several factors: 1) first-year students are in the adaptation phase of meeting academic demands, and their English language proficiency may still require development; 2) GT offers a quick and accessible solution for translating texts and completing assignments that necessitate foreign language skills; and 3) GT usage reflects the pragmatic approach of first-year students in completing tasks efficiently, often without critically considering textual nuances or language intricacies.

These findings align with Tsai (2019), who reported that EFL learners are generally satisfied with GT when writing in English, particularly for vocabulary assistance and improving task completion efficiency. However, Group 1 respondents should reflect on potential challenges in using language technology and AI tools, such as ensuring contextual appropriateness. GT has also been reported as one of the most widely used and popular online machine translation tools (Abdel-Reheem Amin, 2020; Jolley & Maimone, 2022; Rivera-Trigueros, 2022). The role of GT is particularly prominent, significantly influencing how students and educators engage with language and academic content. This is especially relevant in foreign language learning (Lee, 2023; Paterson, 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2023; Tsai, 2019; Zhou et al., 2022).

Similarly, all Group 2 respondents reported using GT for academic purposes. The difference lies in their more specific and strategic usage, such as verifying technical translations or terminology in their research. These respondents are assumed to have greater familiarity with foreign languages in academic contexts yet continue to rely on GT to expedite tasks, especially in comprehending complex scholarly literature. While GT enhances efficiency, respondents may still need to ensure translation accuracy to maintain contextual and academic precision, particularly for scientific articles or theses.

In this study, ChatGPT usage is relatively lower compared to GT across both groups. Seventy-three percent of Group 1 respondents reported using ChatGPT for academic purposes, while 27% did not; meanwhile 94% of Group 2 respondents reported using ChatGPT, with only 6% opting not to use it. Respondents who did not use ChatGPT highlighted their preference for GT, citing its simplicity and universal accessibility.

Although ChatGPT is not specifically designed as a translation tool, it is capable of providing text translations with considerable accuracy. Its strength lies in its ability to comprehend more complex contexts, supported by its design to interact across a variety of topics and deliver more natural and contextually relevant responses. ChatGPT can be utilized to translate sentences and paragraphs, as well as to simplify or restructure translations to better meet user needs. The proliferation of ChatGPT, like many other digital technologies and social media platforms, has increasingly influenced various aspects of modern life, including second and foreign language education (Bin-Hady et al., 2023). With its ability to generate natural and interactive language, ChatGPT offers new methods to support language learning. This tool enables learners to practice languages through realistic conversations, receive instant feedback, and access complex explanations with greater ease. As a language model designed to produce human-like text, ChatGPT has demonstrated significant potential in language learning applications, particularly in the context of translation.

Regarding its use in language education, findings by Xu and Thien (2024) indicate that effort expectancy, performance expectancy, social influence, and perceived enjoyment positively correlate with the intention of undergraduate EFL students in China to use ChatGPT for English language learning. In other words, if students perceive ChatGPT as easy to use, capable of enhancing their performance, providing social support, and offering an enjoyable experience, their intention to use ChatGPT for English learning is likely to increase. This aligns with findings by Komba (2024), which suggest that ChatGPT is widely used in educational contexts and has a positive impact on students' study habits, academic performance, and comprehension of lecture

materials. Additionally, Leelavathi and Surendhranatha (2024) have reported that ChatGPT effectively enhances learner engagement in education and fosters critical thinking development. Nevertheless, ethical considerations and issues related to authenticity and potential biases in its use warrant further attention.

However, the high adoption rate of ChatGPT in both groups is influenced by its unique capabilities beyond translation, such as interactive engagement. Bin-Hady et al. (2024) emphasized the positive perceptions of EFL learners regarding ChatGPT, particularly for its role in developing socio-emotional skills. ChatGPT allows learners to practice conversational skills, manage emotional intelligence, receive feedback, and reduce learning anxiety. Among Group 2 respondents, the higher usage rate of ChatGPT is attributed to its ability to paraphrase—a critical skill for senior students who require alternative textual expressions for academic purposes. Finding of this research is consistent with Al-Sofi (2024), who stated that students were generally pleased with how effectively ChatGPT enhanced their academic writing skills. In the same tone, Al-Mamary, et al. (2024) suggest that students are likely to utilize ChatGPT efficiently and demonstrate improved academic performance when they believe that the technology is a good fit for their tasks. The overall observation related to the open-ended responses reveal a clear distinction between the two tools: 1) GT excels in popularity and accessibility, particularly for quick and direct translations that do not require further interaction, and 2) ChatGPT stands out in understanding context, providing smarter and more natural translations, and enabling deeper interaction in language discussions.

For users seeking translations for more complex or specific academic contexts, respondents noted higher satisfaction with ChatGPT. However, for general ease of use, GT remains a practical and widely preferred choice.

Category of linguistic units in the use of language technology and AI in academic life

The following results highlight the use of language technology and AI tools by Group 1 and Group 2 across various linguistic categories, including checking word meanings, synonyms, and translating different language units (phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and entire texts). An explanation and interpretation of the results follow the table.

Table 2. *Linguistic units in the use of GT and ChatGPT*

	Word	Synonym	Phrase	Clause	Sentence	1 Paragraph	2 Paragraphs	Whole
Group 1	100%	40.00%	44.00%	53.33%	80.00%	77.33%	74.67%	89.33%
Total	75	30	33	40	60	58	56	67
Group 2	100%	80.43%	86.96%	73.91%	84.78%	76.09%	76.09%	80.43%
Total	46	37	40	34	39	35	35	37

All respondents from both groups used GT and ChatGPT tools to check the meanings of unfamiliar words. This indicates that the basic need to understand new vocabulary remains crucial at all levels, both for students who are new to the academic world and those in their final years. Searching for word meanings became the most fundamental and frequently used feature of the tools at all levels. This finding aligns with Murtisari et al. (2019), whose research showed the highest percentage of GT use for checking unfamiliar word meanings, at 98%. Urlaub & Dessein (2022) suggest the same finding that many of the participating students report using GT in a similar way to an online dictionary by entering individual words into the system.

Forty percent of respondents from Group 1 and 80.43% of respondents from Group 2 use the tools to search for synonyms. The significant difference in these percentages reflects a greater awareness and use of technology among senior students. This can be interpreted as indicating that students who have spent more time in the academic environment are more open to using modern tools in their learning process. Senior students more frequently use the tools to enrich their language and improve vocabulary variety compared to first-year students. Based on responses to open-ended questions, this is related to the need for senior students to focus more on academic writing, which requires vocabulary variation, such as in thesis or scholarly article writing. Senior students are faced with the need to present more complex and varied writing. The use of synonyms and vocabulary variation is crucial in academic writing because it can improve clarity, accuracy, and depth. By utilizing GT and ChatGPT to search for synonyms, they can enrich their linguistic expressions and avoid excessive word repetition, which could lower the quality of their writing.

Forty-four percent of respondents from Group 1 and 86.96% of respondents from Group 2 use the tools to translate phrases. This significant difference shows that senior students rely more heavily on the tools to support their translation needs. It reflects the complexity of the texts they encounter in their studies. Senior students are often engaged in writing and analyzing more intricate academic texts, which may include technical terminology and phrases specific to their field of study. Therefore, respondents from Group 2 require translations of phrases that are not only accurate but also consider context and broader meaning. The use of the tools in this context is seen as significantly helping to understand and translate technical terms they may not fully master. In contrast, respondents from Group 1 are more focused on individual words that do not involve specific technical phrases.

Fifty-three point thirty-three percent of respondents from Group 1 and 73.91% of respondents from Group 2 use GT and ChatGPT to translate clauses. The higher percentage among senior students indicates that they engage more with complex texts that require a deeper understanding of clause structures. Based on responses to open-ended questions, respondents from Group 2 are intensively involved in writing their theses or research projects, often dealing with the analysis and interpretation of intricate academic texts. In this context, respondents from Group 2 face sentences with complex clause structures, including subordination and more technical linguistic correspondence. Exposure to such academic literature makes respondents from Group 2 more reliant on the tools to help translate and understand long, detailed clauses. In contrast, first-year students are more focused on translating basic words as they are still in the early stages of learning and developing academic skills. Respondents from Group 1 have not yet been exposed to complex academic texts and are still focused on mastering basic vocabulary and understanding simple sentence structures. Thus, the need to translate clauses is generally lower than that of senior students.

Eighty percent of respondents from Group 1 and 84.78% of respondents from Group 2 use GT and ChatGPT to translate sentences. Both groups exhibit a high level of usage for sentence translation, indicating that complete sentence translation is a commonly used function by students at all academic levels.

Seventy-seven point thirty-three percent of respondents from Group 1 and 76.09% from Group 2 use the tools to translate a one-paragraph text, while 74.67% of respondents from Group 1 and 76.09% from Group 2 them for translating texts longer than two paragraphs. The similarity in paragraph-level translation use across both groups suggests that both first-year and senior students frequently deal with academic texts of sufficient length. Senior students may more often use GT and ChatGPT to translate more specific or in-depth academic texts, while first-year students might use paragraph-level translation to understand course materials or assignments.

In terms of full document translation, 89.33% of respondents from Group 1 and 80.48% from Group 2 use GT and ChatGPT to translate entire essays or articles. Interestingly, first-year students are more likely to use the tools to translate whole documents compared to senior students. This phenomenon may be attributed to the differing reading strategies employed by students at various academic levels. First-year students rely more on the tools to comprehend the entire text they are reading, while senior students are more selective and tend to translate only specific sections which requires deeper understanding.

These findings regarding linguistic units reflect the fact that respondents in Group 1 depend more on the tools for simpler translation tasks and often use language GT and ChatGPT for translating entire texts. In contrast, Group 2 tends to use the tools more frequently for more complex tasks, such as finding synonyms and translating phrases or clauses. Group 2 is more selective in its use of AI, focusing on aspects that require deeper, more detailed understanding, in line with the higher academic demands at the senior level.

Another notable aspect of these statistics is that respondents from Group 1 demonstrate significant variation in their use of GT and ChatGPT across different linguistic units. Specifically, the use of the tools among Group 1 respondents is quite high for unfamiliar words, sentences, paragraphs, and entire texts, but relatively low for synonyms, phrases, and clauses. The high usage of the tools at the sentence, paragraph, and full-text levels indicates that first-year students tend to seek general understanding by translating entire documents. They benefit from the tools, which is seen as providing a clear structure and context, thus making it easier to grasp the overall meaning without getting bogged down by smaller details. In contrast, the lower use of the tools for synonyms, phrases, and clauses suggests that Group 1 respondents do not feel the need to invest time and effort into understanding these smaller linguistic

components. The low need for synonym and phrase translation may reflect that first-year students are more focused on basic understanding than mastering the nuances of language and technical terms. This may also indicate that first-year students have not yet fully recognized the importance of vocabulary variation and more complex structures in language development. This is supported by responses to open-ended questions, where Group 1 respondents emphasized a focus on general understanding rather than on smaller linguistic units.

This finding significantly contrasts with Group 2, where the distribution of the tools usage is more balanced across different linguistic units. Specifically, the percentage distribution of the tools usage at the word, synonym, phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, and whole text levels shows a relatively even pattern, reflecting the more complex and varied needs of senior students.

Academic activities and needs supported by GT and ChatGPT

AI plays a crucial role in significantly enhancing students' learning experiences (Hannan & Liu, 2021; Hidayat-ur-Rehman, 2024; Schönberger, 2024). The integration of AI technologies in education provides students with personalized learning opportunities, immediate feedback, and access to vast resources, all of which contribute to a more engaging and effective educational environment. By leveraging AI, students can overcome challenges such as language barriers, limited access to resources, and difficulties in mastering complex subjects, thus fostering a more inclusive and tailored learning experience (Hojeij, et al., 2024; Isiaku, et al., 2024).

The table below provides a detailed overview of the academic activities and needs supported by the tools among first-year students and final-year students. It highlights the varying usage patterns of these tools across different academic contexts, such as grammar-related assignments, reading comprehension tasks, and advanced academic requirements. The percentages and respondent totals illustrate the extent to which each group relies on the tools to address their specific academic challenges and objectives. This comparison underscores the evolving role of language technology in supporting students at different stages of their academic journey.

Table 3. *Academic activities and needs supported by GT and ChatGPT*

Academic Output	Group 1	Total	Group 2	Total
Translating course assignment responses related to foreign language grammar and writing in a foreign language	74.67%	56	8.70%	4
Translating course assignment responses related to reading texts in a foreign language	68.00%	51	19.57%	9
Translating course instructions and materials	65.33%	49	76.09%	35
Translating scientific articles from journals	45.33%	34	86.96%	40
Translating sections of thesis and final assignments	0%	0	76.09%	35
Foreign language proficiency test preparation	0%	0	73.91%	34

A total of 74.67% of respondents in Group 1 use the tools to translate answers to course assignments related to writing and foreign language grammar, while 8.70% of respondents in Group 2 do the same. Additionally, 68% of Group 1 respondents use GT and ChatGPT to translate answers related to reading foreign language texts, compared to 19.57% in Group 2. There is a significant difference showing that Group 1 uses the tools more frequently for tasks related to grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement in writing, and understanding foreign language texts than Group 2. This suggests that respondents in Group 1 tend to rely more on the tools for improving their grammar and vocabulary in writing, as well as for comprehending foreign language texts. Another dominant factor contributing to this pattern is the influence of the courses taken during that semester (specifically English language courses), which makes students focus their needs according to the course content. This finding is supported by open-ended responses from Group 1, indicating that the presence of English language courses as part of their curriculum makes the use of the tools more prevalent. The need to complete tasks quickly and efficiently leads students to prefer the tools as a more promising alternative compared to manually working through the tasks without language technology and AI tools.

In contrast, 76.09% of Group 2 respondents use the tools for translating course instructions and materials, while 65.33% of Group 1 respondents do so. This difference can be attributed to the increased complexity of academic texts faced at the advanced level, which tend to be more specific and technical. At the later stages of their academic

studies, students encounter texts that are more specialized and require a deeper understanding of terminology and complex concepts. Senior students who are involved in research are often exposed to more complex scholarly sources, which demand a greater comprehension of specific terminology. As a result, they frequently rely on tools to assist in translating and understanding increasingly complicated instructions and materials. This contrasts with first-year students, who are presumed to encounter simpler materials and therefore do not depend as much on tools for understanding instructions and materials.

A total of 45.33% of Group 1 respondents use the tools to translate scientific articles from journals, while 86.96% of Group 2 respondents do so. The significant difference here indicates that Group 2 is more reliant on tools for translating scientific journal articles. This is in line with the fact that senior students often need to read and comprehend scholarly literature as part of their research for theses, final projects, and academic publications. Responses to open-ended questions significantly support this finding. The need to access scholarly articles for research has become a dominant driver for the tools usage among Group 2 respondents, while Group 1 tends to use them for accessing articles related to course requirements, such as summarizing scientific articles for class assignments.

Zero percent of respondents from Group 1 used tools to translate parts of their thesis or final projects. This reflects the fact that these respondents have not yet reached the stage of working on such projects, which accounts for the null percentage. In contrast, respondents from Group 2 actively use the tools to assist with their thesis and final project writing process, particularly for translating certain sections of documents that may be written in foreign languages, or for translating academic references they are using.

Group 1 respondents did not use tools for foreign language proficiency test preparation. The absence of a need to face or take language proficiency tests is the main factor influencing this finding. First-year students are still in the early stages of their academic journey, where their focus is on the basics of coursework, adjusting to the academic environment, and developing general language skills. At this stage, proficiency tests like TOEFL, IELTS, or similar assessments are not yet a primary concern, as most first-year students have not yet encountered academic demands requiring foreign language certification. On the other hand, a different pattern emerges from the data of Group 2. A significant portion (73.91%) of Group 2 respondents, who are preparing for graduation and may require foreign language proficiency certification, use GT and ChatGPT more frequently as tools for practicing and preparing for these tests. As they approach the final stages of their studies, many students begin to prepare for graduation requirements, including language proficiency certifications, which are often mandatory for graduation or preparation for further study.

From these findings, it can be concluded that as students progress through their academic journey, the use of GT and ChatGPT becomes increasingly complex and specific to their academic needs, especially in relation to scholarly literature and thesis writing. First-year students tend to use them more for understanding assignments and instructions, whereas final-year students rely on GT and ChatGPT as a tool for completing their final projects and preparing for graduation.

However, this study does not address the academic ethics of language technology and AI tools use. GT and ChatGPT is freely accessible and has shown improvement in generating answers and grammatically accurate translations. This advancement has the potential to bring significant changes to the internationalization process within higher education. Scholars are of the opinion that students are likely to increasingly rely on technology to overcome or even replace traditional language learning methods. Careful consideration should be given to the ethical impacts of AI-generated content and the potential reduction of human interaction in language learning contexts, with more findings state the same tone about AI ethical guidance (Bin-Hady, et al., 2023; Cain, et al, 2023; Javed, 2024; Kumar, et al., 2024; Pereira et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the integration of Google Translate (GT) and ChatGPT significantly shapes English language learning across academic journeys, with distinct usage patterns emerging between first-year and final-year students. Overall, GT is widely favored for its ease of use and quick, direct translations, making it an essential tool for first-year students who rely on it to bridge gaps in vocabulary and basic comprehension. In contrast, final-year students employ both GT and ChatGPT more strategically to support advanced academic tasks, such as translating scholarly articles,

understanding complex texts, and preparing for language proficiency assessments.

The findings underscore the need for tailored educational support that aligns with students' evolving language learning needs. For first-year students, targeted training on leveraging GT for foundational language skills can facilitate smoother transitions into higher education. Meanwhile, final-year students may benefit from guidance on using ChatGPT to enhance critical analysis and academic research. These differentiated interventions can optimize the use of AI tools in fostering both basic language acquisition and advanced academic competencies.

Ultimately, by mapping the specific domains and contexts of GT and ChatGPT usage, this study contributes valuable insights into the evolving impact of AI on English language learning. The results not only address a critical research gap but also provide a foundation for developing more effective, stage-specific pedagogical strategies in higher education.

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