RESEARCH PAPER

Google Translate for Writing in an Online English Class: Vietnamese Learners' Perceptions and Performances

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explore learners' perceptions while using Google Translate (GT) during online English-Writing lessons and to evaluate its effectiveness on learners' English writing skills. Online questionnaires and individual interviews were used to collect self-reported opinions from 24 Vietnamese students. Learner writing samples from the 12-week online session were also collected in order to identify possible improvements in writing. The findings revealed that the learners generally reported a positive effect on their writing from using Google Translate. In contrast, textual analysis of learners' writing samples indicated that although there were slight improvements in their writing skills, problems still exist. According to an error analysis that was conducted, negative transfer of structures from the students' L1 (Vietnamese) accounted for most of the lexical and syntactic errors identified. The findings demonstrate that GT is a useful support tool for teaching English writing. The contrastive analysis in the present study contributes to language interference studies and discussions on bilingual and multilingual education in the Vietnamese context.

Keywords

Bilingual and multilingual education, Google Translate, ESL writing, negative transfer

1. Introduction

It has been suggested that only humans have the unique ability to reflect on their own thoughts and experiences through writing. As defined by Polio (2017), writing can be a means of exchanging information among people, a tool for people to accomplish their real-life goals or a modality for learners to learn language through pedagogical activities under the direction of teachers in language classrooms. Traditionally, writing is considered the most challenging skill for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to acquire. In fact, many native-English speakers are also struggle with writing English, in spite of the tuition they have received through schooling. Consequently, it is not surprising that mastering English writing is the most difficult skill for non-native learners to master (Richards, 2015).

For many non-native learners of English, writing is difficult for many different reasons and mistakes are manifested as errors in grammar and syntax. These errors often occur as the result of interlingual interference, whereby the learners transfer their L1 "habits" into their acquired English (Ellis, 1994). As noted by Wikins (1972), where the differences between the target language and the mother tongue (L1) are great, the difficulties facing learners are increased, whereas when the structures of the two languages are more similar, fewer difficulties are anticipated. Based on real-life classroom observations, the shortage of vocabulary and grammar resources is a constant obstacle for non-native learners of English.

In recent years, the issue of how to enhance English-writing skills has received special attention in second language acquisition research. Using digital tools in English-writing lessons is widely accepted as an effective solution. Among these digital tools, Google Translate (GT) is the most popular and useful tool for many learners of English (Kol et al, 2018). In most instances, GT enables EFL learners to immediately translate their thoughts and ideas into English (Tsai, 2019; Medvedev, 2016). In other words, non-native learners of English can use GT as a potential support tool in writing, to help them deal with any lack of access to vocabulary resources and to help them express themselves in idiomatic English. Furthermore, the utilisation of GT may be very effective in heterogeneous classrooms or in contexts where the teacher does not speak the learners' L1. Indeed, the effectiveness of GT in English writing classrooms has been widely presented in many scholarly publications in recent decades (Chompurach, 2021; Kol et al, 2018; Murtisari et al, 2019; Rowe, 2022; Stapleton & Ka Kin, 2019; Tsai, 2019). Thus, it is believed that utilising GT in online English-writing lessons will be beneficial, especially for Vietnamese learners. This study posed the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the perceptions of Vietnamese learners of English of using Google Translate in online English-writing lessons?

RQ2: Does the utilisation of Google Translate improve the writing performance of Vietnamese learners of English?

2. Literature review

2.1. Related theoretical framework to writing instructions

Historically, writing has often been viewed as a complex process executed in certain stages. As proposed by Flower and Hayes (1980), the process of writing involves three primary stages: planning, translating, and reviewing. In the planning stage, information is selected from the task environment (i.e., the writer's motivations, the topics and intended audiences), and the writer's long-term memory (i.e., his or her prior knowledge of the writing topics and plans), in order to set a writing goal and subsequently plan a text to meet this goal. Translating is the conversion of ideas or thoughts in the writer's mind into written texts and reviewing is the process of evaluating and revising written texts. Polio (2017) proposes three approaches to thinking about how to teach writing: (1) a writing-to-learn-language approach (i.e., writing can be used to help learners learn a language); (2) a learning-to-write approach (i.e., the focus of tuition is on having learners look at real-life examples, after which the teacher helps them through the process of

producing a target text); and (3) a writing-to-learn-content approach (i.e., writing prompts the learners to think about the problem-solving process).

The model of writing organization proposed by Flower and Hayes (1980) in the three different contexts of teaching is also worth noting: i.e., writing instructions to native-English learners, writing instructions to learners of English as a second language (ESL), and writing instructions to learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). For the writing instructions to native-English learners and ESL learners, the main focus of the translating process may simply relate to effectively converting their own thoughts or ideas into the target textual output. To explain this, native-English learners or ESL learners mostly have the necessary "linguistic materials" to produce writing, and writing forces these learners to reflect on the problem-solving process (Polio, 2017). For many EFL learners, however, the translating process probably involves the conversion of thoughts or ideas and the transformation of the L1 into English. In fact, many EFL learners often establish their thoughts or ideas in their L1 and subsequently translate them into English. Consequently, teaching writing in EFL classrooms should address both writing-to-learn-language activities (i.e., lexical and grammatical instructions) and learning-to-write activities (i.e., the writing process and the organization of target texts).

The concept of translation as a teaching device has been criticised historically. It is alleged that the translation process might hinder the development of the ability to think directly in the target language. However, the process of translation is useful for EFL learners at the beginner stage. For example, translating from the L1 to English can be useful "when a set of short sentences which focus on a particular grammatical feature is used as a stimulus for eliciting formulations in English" (Rivers & Temperley, 1978, p. 327).

Furthermore, Flavell's (1976) original concept of metacognition indicates that metacognition is "one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them" (p. 232). In spite of various related terms, as Flavell (1979) concluded, the concepts of metacognition focus mainly on an awareness and understanding of one's thoughts and cognitive processes, and the management of cognition based on multiple strategies (i.e., organizing, monitoring, and adapting). The important implication of metacognition is to establish effective modes of learning and teaching which activate learners' available understanding, reflect learners' prior knowledge and learning expectations, enable the teachers to conceptualize learner strategies, and encourage learners to set their learning goals with self-efficacy (Haukås, 2018). In terms of English-writing teaching, theories of metacognition should be applied to help learners build good habits in writing as "practice makes perfect". It is also important to raise awareness of the fact that writing is a process that requires a high level of effort from the learners. As noted by Hayes (2012), writing occasionally consists of a problem-solving task which requires metacognitive control during the process of outline setting, textual production, and reviewing.

2.2. Google Translate as a tool for teaching writing skills

In the context of language learning and teaching today, digital translation tools, including Google Translate (GT) or online bilingual dictionaries, are commonly available and easily accessible in classrooms with an internet connection. In comparison to printed or online dictionaries, GT enables learners to translate complete sentences from L1 to L2 with relative and acceptable accuracy. A considerable body of research indicates that GT is a useful tool for language teaching. A popular application of GT is as a tool for introducing new vocabulary. As noted by Medvedev (2016), GT makes introducing new vocabulary more convenient, learners can easily explore various aspects of a new L2 word, such as pronunciation, spelling, and meanings. In a recent study, Van Lieshout & Cardoso (2022) found that GT with text-to-speech synthesis and automatic speech recognition functions not only assisted learners in acquiring Dutch vocabulary and pronunciation but it also suited their needs, interests, and learning styles.

In terms of English-writing teaching, Rowe (2022) notes that GT is a supportive device for writing bilingually, which helps learners deal with uncertainty about spelling and vocabulary. This might enable learners to write significantly more words and complex

sentences in English when using GT. In other words, when using GT, it is unnecessary for the learners to think about how to express their thoughts in English. Instead, they can express their ideas for the target topics in their L1, and use GT to supply corresponding expressions in English. Therefore, they can search for words and expressions quickly, and have more time to write (Kol, Schcolnik, & Spector-Cohen, 2018).

Regarding learners' and teachers' perceptions of GT in language classrooms, scholarly research indicates that there have been various views of the usefulness and quality of target language texts when using GT (Bin Dahmash, 2020; Chompurach, 2021; Stapleton & Ka Kin, 2019; Murtisari et al, 2019). According to the findings of a study conducted by Stapleton & Ka Kin (2019), most teachers agree that GT can be a learning tool although there are different opinions about the quality of scripts produced by learners using GT (i.e., with regard to vocabulary, grammar, and comprehensibility). From the point of view of learners, GT can help them translate difficult parts in longer texts and also save them time (Murtisari et al, 2019). Furthermore, Bin Dahmash (2020) points out that learners prefer using GT in writing lessons because it is adaptable to different modes of text entry, namely, scanning with a phone camera or manual keyboard input. Chompurach (2021) noted the positive views of some Thai EFL learners on the use of GT in English writing, in that they believe their vocabulary, use of conjunctions, sentence structures, tenses, and word order are better than when using GT.

3. Methodology

### 3.1. Classroom contexts and participants

The target context was an intermediate English online class (Level B1), which is part of a general English course focusing on the four main English language skills. The online writing session was one of the main parts of the course. The focus of the online writing session was to help learners write a complete paragraph of at least 120 words, in line with to the four main paragraph types (i.e., descriptive, compare-contrast, cause-solution, and opinion). Various topics were covered (see Table 1). The online writing course lasted twelve weeks, with three sessions per week. In addition, the writing checklist, comprising task response, coherence & cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical range & accuracy was deployed to evaluate the learners' writing. The class took place at an English language centre three times a week, from the beginning of January to the end of March, 2022 (M = 3 months). The online lessons were delivered via Microsoft Teams. The learners joined the lessons via their personal choice of device, (tablet PCs, laptops, or smartphones).

The class (24 Vietnamese learners, 16–33 years old) had mixed English levels, ranked from A2 to B1, corresponding to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). All learners had accumulated from three to seven years of experience learning English as a foreign language (EFL). It should also be noted that most of the learners had difficulties in English writing skills. They were willing to participate in the study and actively submitted their writing samples.

3.2. Writing instructions with Google Translate

A model writing lesson was implemented in three main stages: (**a**) Pre-writing sessions, (**b**) Conducting writing practice, and (**c**) Writing output (Figure 1). The first stage included teachers instructing learners to utilise Google Translate for writing practice and the in the writing process, and informed learning outcomes (i.e., the writing sessions and checklist). In the writing practice, learners were required to seriously write complete paragraphs for intended topics. The writing process respectively comprised four subprocesses: (**1**) drafting, (**2**) comparing to prior knowledge, (**3**) writing adjustment, and (**4**) rewriting. The drafting process included the translation stage which "is to take materials from memory under the guidance of the writing plan and to transform it into acceptable English written sentences" (Flower & Hayes, 1980, p. 15). By doing so, the learners first generated self-written Vietnamese sentences and subsequently put them into GT to get corresponding translations in English. Next, they made some adjustments and rewrote their drafts. Eventually, they wrote a complete paragraph (Output).

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Figure 1 Writing instructions using Google Translate
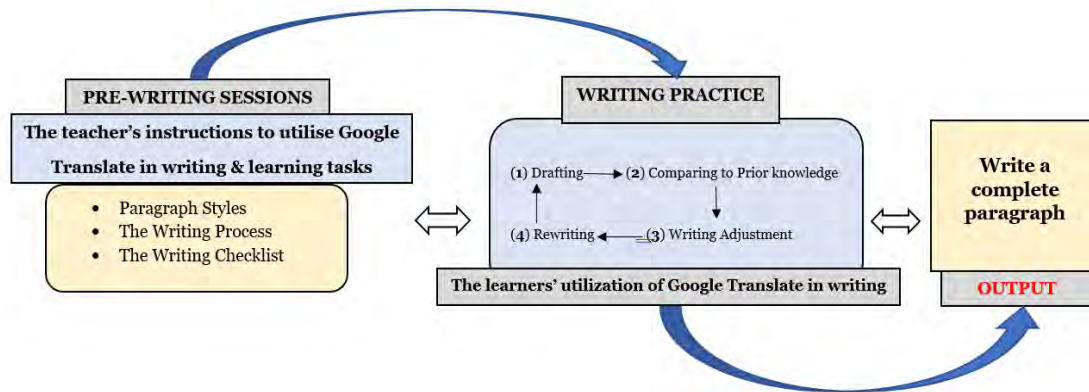
3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Questionnaires

The questionnaire included three sections: section 1 aimed to investigate the learners' opinions about English writing; section 2 aimed to collect the learners' perceptions of the utilisation of Google Translate; and section 3 aimed to investigate the learners' reflections on their English-writing performances. In each section, there were five objective questions, using five-point Likert scales: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Uncertain, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to 24 learners, who mainly participated in the online writing sessions. Prior to the online writing session, the learners were asked to only respond to the objective questions in section 1. 24 responses were collected. After the online writing session, the researcher distributed sections 2 & 3 of the online questionnaire to the learners. A total of 22 responses was returned.

3.3.2. Individual interviews

The researcher conducted online individual interviews via Microsoft Teams (approximately 150 minutes in length) to obtain further reflections on the learners' responses to the questionnaire and to capture their explanations for the performances or errors in their writing samples. The chosen sample included 07 males and 03 females from the online writing class. The interviews were administered in Vietnamese in line with the interviewees' preference, and the researcher translated and transcribed the data into English.

3.3.3. Writing sample collection

To collect the linguistic evidence, the learners made portfolios of writing on Google Docs. In this study, the learners wrote short paragraphs of at least 120 words about the target topics (Table 1).
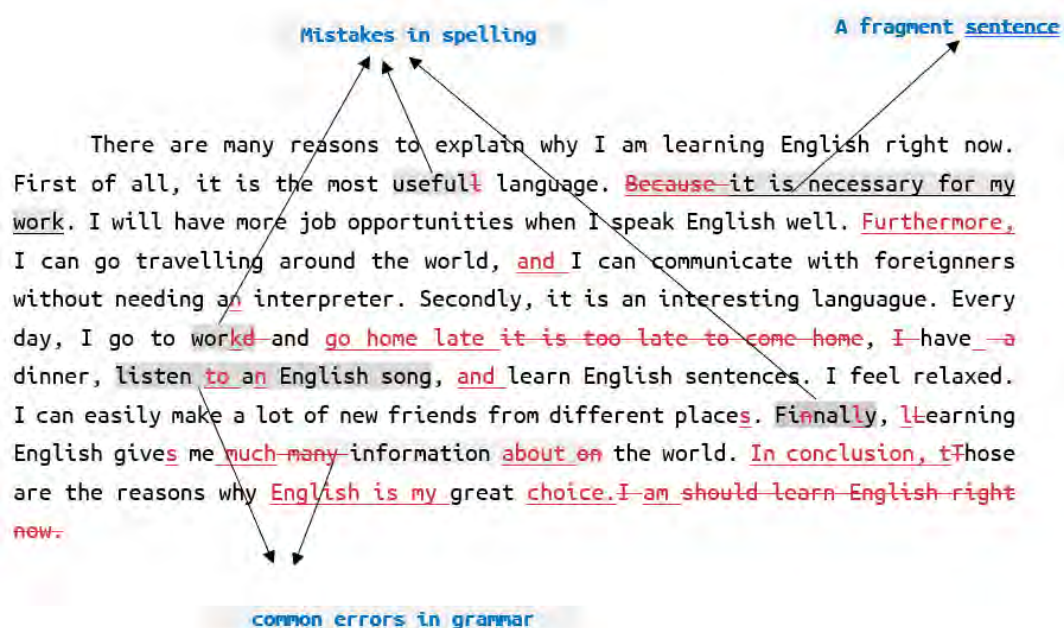
Table 1

The topics in the online writing session

Week	Types of Paragraphs	Topic	The number of collected paragraphs
1-3	Descriptive paragraph	Paragraph 1: *Write about the life in the countryside* Paragraph 2: *Write about the life in the big city*	48
4-6	Compare-Contrast paragraph	Paragraph 3: *Write about the similarities between the two places* Paragraph 4: *Write about the differences and similarities between the two cities*	65
7-9	Cause–Solution paragraph	Paragraph 5: *Write about the causes of the air pollution in the big cities and suggested solutions to this problem* Paragraph 6: *Write about the cause of global warming and suggested solutions to this problem*	62
10-12	Opinion paragraph	Paragraph 7: *Write your own opinions about the statement that young people should learn a foreign language* Paragraph 8: *Write your own opinions about the statement that teenagers should be encouraged to participate in volunteering work*	35
Total:			**210**

3.4. Data analysis

For the data collected from the questionnaires, the researcher deployed a frequency distribution, in which data values were systematically rank-ordered and frequencies provided for each of these values. Accordingly, the investigated variables in the questionnaires were labelled in items and numbered from 1 to 15, and the percentages of the learners reflecting self-reported opinions (responding to the five-point Likert scale) were provided in Tables 2 & 3 for reference. For the data collected from the individual interviews, the researcher categorised the textual data into specific headings or subheadings according to the investigated variables (i.e., the learners' perceptions of utilising GT, or the learners' improvements in writing). For the writing samples, the researcher applied textual analysis – a method "which refers to the description and interpretation of the content, structure, purposes, and consequences of existing verbal or visual texts" (Tracy, 2020, p. 80). The interpretation of the content was mainly based on the categories in the writing checklist (Figure 2).

Figure 2 An example of the writing analysis

4. Findings

4.1. Learner perceptions of Google Translate for writing

4.1.1. Findings from the questionnaires

As shown in Table 2, 63% of the learners agreed that GT had been a useful tool for their writing. 81% of the learners responded that GT had helped them to write paragraphs more efficiently. In terms of the translation by GT, 54% of the learners were satisfied with the content of translated texts, whereas half of them needed to edit the translated texts. 61% of the learners admitted that there had been inappropriate or low-frequency words in the translated texts.

Table 2

Frequency distribution of learners' perceptions on Google Translate for writing

Items	Textual Output (SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; U: Uncertain; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree)	SA	A	U	D	SD
6	Google Translate was a useful tool for writing, especially in providing necessary vocabulary and sentence structures in English.	63%	10%	0%	20%	7%
7	Google Translate helped writing paragraphs become more convenient and efficient.	81%	9%	3%	7%	0%
8	I felt satisfied with the content of texts transtated from Vietnamese to English.	40%	14%	30%	16%	0%
9	I edited the texts translated from Vietnamese to English based on my prior knowledge.	43%	7%	5%	45%	0%
10	There were some problems when utilizing Google Translate in writing English.	56%	5%	34%	5%	0%

4.1.2. Findings from the individual interviews

Based on data analysis of the interviews, most of the interviewees (7/10) suggested that GT had facilitated their writing (Extract #1).

Extract #1:

"Google Translate was very useful for my writing. I could easily get English words translated from Vietnamese, even Google Translate also provided me with a list of synonyms ones to the word I was looking for."

(***Trung***, *male, a high school student, 16 years old*)

"Google Translate provided me with necessary words in English, so I could write a short paragraph quickly and submit it to the teacher on time."

(***Quynh***, *female, office worker, 24 years old*)

4.2. The improvements of learners in English writing performances

4.2.1. Findings from the questionnaires

Prior to the online writing session, 90% of the learners responded that writing had been the most difficult English skill to acquire. The percentage of the learners who had difficulties in brainstorming ideas or thoughts for the target topics, was 81%. 66% of the learners thought that generating thoughts or ideas in Vietnamese before translating them into English had been a common way of writing. After the online writing session, 81% of learners agreed that GT had improved their English-writing performances. Also, over 70% of the learners proposed that GT had helped them to more advantageously brainstorm ideas or thoughts in English for the target topics (Table 3).

Table 3

Frequency distribution of the learners' reflections on their English-writing performances

Items	Textual Output (SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; U: Uncertain; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree)	SA	A	U	D	SD
	{Prior to the online writing instructions}					
1	English writing is the most difficult skill to master.	87%	3%	2%	8%	0%
2	A lack of lexical resources and sentence structures to write is my prevalent problem.	54%	16%	21%	9%	0%
3	Brainstorming ideas or thoughts in English for the target topic is my prevalent problem.	71%	10%	9%	4%	6%
4	I think of ideas or thoughts in Vietnamese before writing in English.	46%	20%	4%	20%	10%
5	I can write a complete paragraph, responding to the writing checklist.	17%	2%	45%	11%	25%
	{After the online writing instructions}					
11	Utilizing Google Translate improved my writing skills.	43%	37%	2%	14%	4%
12	Utilizing Google Translate helped me to brainstorm ideas or thoughts in English for the target topic more conveniently.	57%	14%	23%	6%	0%
13	I can write a complete paragraph after participating in the online writing sessions.	76%	4%	6%	10%	4%
14	I need more practice to write a complete paragraph.	66%	10%	5%	4%	15%
15	I can quickly write a short paragraph when utilizing Google Translate.	87%	3%	0%	10%	0%

4.2.2. Findings from the individual interviews

Despite having some mistakes or errors in writing, all the interviewees suggested that GT had enabled them to produce acceptable paragraphs (Extract # 2).

Extract # 2:

"I could write an acceptable paragraph, responding to the writing checklist. And, I learned new words or grammatical structures through corresponding translations in English."

(***Nguyen***, *female, a second-year student, 20 years old*)

"Through using GT, I wrote better paragraphs. However, there were also some errors in my writing. For example, I thought that {A very important issue today which youngsters are facing} is a complete sentence, in which {A very important issue today which youngsters} is a subject and {are facing} is a verb."

(***Hao***, *male, a second-year student, 20 years old*)

4.2.3. Findings from the writing sample analysis

The findings of the writing sample analysis highlighted that there had been a slight improvement in the learners' English writing performances. Accordingly, the learners could write complete paragraphs on various topics. Unfortunately, there were some errors or mistakes due to interlingual interference. Some learners made errors related to lexical interference – Example (**1**). Alternatively, common errors concerning the syntactic interferences between Vietnamese and English frequently occur in the learners' writing, including the structure of complex sentences with adverbial clauses "although, though, even though, despite or in spite of, since", as observed in Examples (**2**), (**3**) & (**4**). Furthermore, learners made mistakes in the sentence structures with relative clauses, as noted in Examples (**5**) & (**6**) (Table 4).

Table 4

The common errors or mistakes in the learners' writing samples

#Example	{Error analysis}
(**1**) I often communicate with my {friends foreign} as a way to practice English.	There was a mistake in the sequence of words in the compound noun {friends foreign}. In a correct way, we put the adjectives as a modifier before the nouns in English {foreign friends}. In Example (**1**), the learners might translate the phrase "những người bạn nước ngoài" word for word into English. This mistake seems to be very common among Vietnamese learners of English.
(**2**) Although between Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi have some similarities in the cost of living, {but} these cities also contain some important differences.	The errors in Example (**2**) and Example (**3**) occurred when the Vietnamese students inappropriately applied the corresponding structure in the Vietnamese sentence – "Tuy (although) + an independent clause, nhưng {but} + an independent clause" into writing English.
(**3**) Despite some disadvantages, {but} we can	

not refuse the roles of the Internet in modern life.	
(**4**) {Since} youngsters want to focus on their careers, {so} they often get married late.	In English, we do not use *since/if* and *so* together in the same sentence as Example (**4**). A reasonable explanation for this error is that Vietnamese learners might have incorrectly applied the Vietnamese sentence structure – "*Vì* {since} + independent clause, *nên* {so} + independent clause" when describing "an adverbial clause of result" in English.
(**5**) {A very important issue today which youngsters are facing.}	Example (**5**) is a relative subordinate clause, but some learners thought of it as a complete sentence. To explain this, the Vietnamese don't often use relative subordinate clauses, which refer to "the result of contact between Vietnamese and European languages" (Ngo, 2021, p. 211). As commented by Ngo (2021), the subordinating conjunction "mà" corresponds to the English relative pronouns *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, *that*, *where*, and *when*. In Example (**5**) – "Một vấn đề rất quan trọng ngày nay {mà} những người trẻ đang đối mặt.", {mà} is Vietnamese subordinating conjunction. Consequently, the errors in Example (**5**) occurred when Vietnamese learners incorrectly analysed as follows: "*A very important issue today which youngsters are facing.*" **Subject** **Verb**
(**6**) This {is a thing} makes Vietnamese students more confident in themselves.	There was a mistake in example (**6**), the learners may have incorrectly omitted a relative pronoun "that/which". In this case, the learner made mistakes in the translating process from Vietnamese into English, or the use of Google Translate was inappropriate. In a similar explanation to example (**5**), the rarity of relative clauses in Vietnamese common conversations means that the structural patterns Vietnamese – English are quite different.

5. Discussion

The first research question of this study sought to determine what Vietnamese learners thought about the utilisation of Google Translate in online English-writing lessons. Overall, there were positive responses from the learners in relation to the effectiveness of Google Translate (Table 2). This finding was consistent with that of Tsai (2019). In Extract #1, it reveals how learners were satisfied with using GT in their English writing. To illustrate this, most of the interviewees consider GT as "their hero" because it makes their writing process become more convenient and easier, especially for online learning. In this study, the learners used GT as a potential support tool for necessary vocabulary and sentence structures in English. They were also able to acquire new words or grammatical structures through corresponding translations in English back and forth.

Regarding the issue of whether or not the utilisation of GT improves learner's English writing performances, it is necessary to review the learners' perceptions and findings from their writing samples. In this study, a lack of lexical resources & sentence structures and

difficulties in brainstorming ideas for the target topics seem to be the big challenges for many Vietnamese learners of English when writing complete paragraphs. Thanks to the utilisation of GT, fortunately, 80% of the learners could write complete paragraphs on various kinds of target topics that acceptably responded to the writing checklist (Table 3). In addition, the learners' improvement in writing was reflected through the textual analysis of completed texts. Compared to the first drafts, their completed paragraphs contained more complex sentences and fewer spelling mistakes. These findings corroborated those of Chompurach (2021), which revealed that the learners' sentence structures were better than their own writing without GT. On the contrary, the learners still made common mistakes or errors in their writing (Table 4). Based on the contrastive analysis method, the transfer of the L1 – Vietnamese is responsible for the lexical and syntactic errors. The differences between Vietnamese and English seem to be an obstacle for Vietnamese learners when trying to master English writing skills, especially for learners at the lower level of English (see related theories: Ellis, 1994; Wikins, 1972).

It is possible to state that the ability to use the mother tongue remarkably contributes to the success of writing with GT. Based on the analysis of the learners' first drafts in Vietnamese and online individual interviews, the learners who have the ability to coherently express their thoughts or ideas in Vietnamese often generate better paragraphs in English. This might be relatively explained that they write a coherent paragraph in Vietnamese, which facilitates the translation by GT because there are certain similarities in linguistic structures between English and Vietnamese. Similarly, Vietnamese learners of English can appropriately apply the similarities between Vietnamese and English when writing English (positive transfer). In a nutshell, the "input linguistic thinking" of the L2 learners, which refers to one's ability to coherently express one's thoughts or ideas in L2, might derive from their mother language (L1).

6. Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore Vietnamese learners' perceptions of utilising Google Translate in online English-Writing lessons and to evaluate the effect of this popular tool on their English writing skills. Generally, the learners reported positive perceptions of the utilisation of GT in writing. The findings also reveal that there were improvements in the learners' writing skills in spite of some unavoidable errors. Furthermore, the error analysis suggests that the transfer from their mother tongue, i.e., Vietnamese, results in lexical and syntactic errors in their L2 writing. This study also provides more linguistic evidence for language interference studies. Compared to previous studies, this study might not provide outstanding differences, however, it indicates that mastering writing not only requires the learners to acquire adequate knowledge of the language (i.e., lexical and grammatical structure) but that it also relies on related variables such as learners' motivation to write and the main factors that directly impact the learners' writing performance (i.e., language transfer, brainstorming ideas, or difficulties in L2 writing). Consequently, it is necessary to create convenient conditions for learners to practice their writing skills. The use of technology, such as Google Translate seems to be an effective intervention. Once again, the mother language still plays an important role in L2 acquisition, especially in multicultural contexts. As noted by Li (2017), "the actual purpose of learning a new language is to become bilingual and multilingual, rather than to replace the learner's L1 to become another monolingual" (p. 16).

Based on the findings, teachers should effectively utilise Google Translate as a potential support tool in writing lessons. To enhance its effectiveness, teachers should encourage learners to critically evaluate and regularly edit translated versions of texts. This might help them develop both writing and self-correction skills. For example, these findings enable teachers to predict possible errors in writing and have explicit instructions for Vietnamese learners to overcome the difficulties in writing English. As analysed previously, Vietnamese was considered the "input linguistic thinking" for writing English. To enhance writing skills, therefore, teachers should motivate students to regularly practice writing more coherent paragraphs in both Vietnamese and English. At the same time, translating tasks between Vietnamese and English should be integrated into writing lessons, which enables learners to drill English structures based on the similarities with Vietnamese.

In spite of having provided relevant and important insights, the present study still contains some inevitable limitations. Firstly, the study was conducted with a relatively small sample size. To generate more persuasive findings, future studies may implement the same intervention in multiple contexts using a larger sample size. Furthermore, it is difficult to avoid subjectivity when the analysis of the learners' writing samples was only implemented by the researcher. Consequently, future studies need more experts in the field of writing instruction participating in the textual analysis.

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