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Learning Translation in the AI Era: Indonesian Students' Perspective on Tool Integration in a Higher Education Institution

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Abstract—**This study explores the evolving role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in translation learning among Indonesian higher education institution students. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected from ten English education department students through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis revealed six interrelated themes: enhanced efficiency, hybrid human-machine practices, increased learner autonomy, critical awareness of AI limitations, emotional engagement, and equity challenges. While students recognized AI as a valuable tool for streamlining translation tasks and fostering self-directed learning, they also demonstrated caution regarding overreliance and contextual inaccuracies. Most adopted a balanced approach, integrating AI outputs with manual verification and teacher feedback. Emotional comfort and confidence were developed, yet unequal access to premium tools and infrastructure posed barriers. These findings highlight the need for ethically grounded, learner-centered AI integration strategies that promote critical literacy and equitable access across diverse educational contexts in Indonesia. The study concludes by proposing a concept of AI-Integrated Translation that balances technological innovation into translation pedagogy in Indonesian higher education institutions.**

Index Terms—**artificial intelligence, learning translation, students' perception, learner autonomy, hybrid practices**

I. Introduction

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in higher education institutions (HEIs) have significantly transformed the pedagogical landscape of translation learning in Indonesia (Budiharjo, 2024; Kheder, 2025; Shahmerdanova, 2025). Students across various English education programs have increasingly adopted AI-based applications not merely as auxiliary instruments, but as integral components of their translation process (Pondelíková & Luprichová, 2025; Ramadilla et al., 2025). Tools of AI have become commonplace, offering immediate lexical assistance, contextual suggestions, and enhanced grammatical accuracy. This technological shift is altering not only how translation is taught, but also how it is conceptualized, practiced, and evaluated in the classroom (Liu et al., 2025; Shahmerdanova, 2025).

Pedagogically, AI integration has prompted a move away from traditionally teacher-centered approaches towards more learner-driven, autonomous models of instruction (Jose et al., 2025; Zou et al., 2025). Students report feeling more empowered and confident when using AI to complete translation tasks, noting that these tools facilitate real-time learning, adapt to individual needs, and promote self-directed exploration. In many cases, learners have begun initiating their translation workflows with AI-generated drafts, followed by manual refinement using dictionaries or instructor feedback, a process that illustrates a hybrid pedagogy combining automation with human criticality (Yüksel et al., 2025).

II. Literature Review

A. The Rise of AI in English Language Education

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The transformation of AI, however, is not without its tensions. Some previous researchers acknowledge that while AI increases efficiency and comprehension, it also introduces concerns related to overreliance, contextual misinterpretation, and potential erosion of core translation competencies (Shahmerdanova, 2025; Anik et al., 2025; Jiménez-Crespo, 2025). Several respondents noted that tools sometimes produce grammatically correct but semantically flawed outputs, especially when dealing with culturally nuanced or idiomatic expressions (Kheder, 2025; Li et al., 2025). As a result, students emphasized the continued importance of traditional methods for cross-checking, editing, and maintaining meaning fidelity.

Furthermore, the classroom dynamic is evolving. Rather than being the sole authority, lecturers now serve as facilitators who guide learners in critically navigating AI outputs, prompting reflection, and fostering analytical skills (Isnata, 2025; Sellnow, 2025; Zhou & Peng, 2025; Znamenskiy et al., 2025). Instructors are also responding to AI's rise with varied policies—some fully endorse its use, others impose limitations, and a few resist its inclusion altogether. This diversity in instructional response highlights the ongoing negotiation between technological potential and pedagogical values (An et al., 2025; Delello et al., 2025; Giray et al., 2024; Jiao et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2025).

In sum, the integration of AI tools in translation learning signals a paradigm shift in an Indonesian higher education institution (HEI). It challenges educators to rethink curricula, assessment standards, and learning outcomes, while urging students to balance innovation with responsibility. As this digital transformation continues, the pedagogical imperative is clear: leverage AI not as a crutch, but as a catalyst for deeper linguistic competence and critical engagement (Chetry, 2024; Guo et al., 2025; Sellnow, 2025; Xia et al., 2024).

B. Challenges in Indonesian Higher Education Institution

Incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into translation instruction in Indonesian HEI present both profound challenges and transformative opportunities (Budi et al., 2024; Budiharjo, 2024; Sarwanti et al., 2024; Shahmerdanova, 2025; Zahirah et al., 2025). Students' testimonies reveal a complex intersection between technological accessibility, pedagogical relevance, and institutional readiness (Karoso, 2024; Zahirah et al., 2025). While AI has been widely recognized by students as a time-saving and efficiency-enhancing tool—particularly through platforms like ChatGPT, DeepL, Gemini, and Google Translate—its integration is uneven and often dependent on institutional policy, lecturer discretion, and individual resource availability.

One major challenge lies in the inconsistency of access to premium AI tools. As noted by several students, free versions of applications often impose restrictive word limits, making comprehensive translation tasks difficult unless students can afford premium subscriptions (Chen et al., 2023; Lee & Zhao, 2022). Furthermore, some lecturers prohibit the use of AI tools entirely, while others allow limited or full integration, leading to a fragmented instructional experience (Mustafa & Rahman, 2023). This lack of standardized policy results in confusion and disparity in pedagogical outcomes (Tran et al., 2024).

Another issue pertains to the risk of overreliance. Many students acknowledge the temptation to depend entirely on AI-generated translations—especially under deadline pressure which potentially erodes critical thinking, language awareness, and contextual sensitivity. As several students noted, AI tools often fail to fully grasp cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and specific disciplinary registers unless prompted with high precision (Bowker, 2020; Lee, 2021). Thus, the human element in translation remains indispensable, particularly in interpreting context and refining diction.

As Indonesian higher education navigates these tensions, the imperative is clear: institutions must craft coherent, forward-looking policies that encourage the responsible use of AI. Rather than perceiving AI as a threat, it should be positioned as a pedagogical partner—amplifying human instruction while preserving academic rigor and integrity.

C. Tool Integration and Pedagogical Shifts in Translation Learning

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into translation learning has triggered a fundamental pedagogical shift in HEI, particularly in Indonesian English education study program. Traditionally reliant on manual translation methods and dictionary-based practices, translation pedagogy is increasingly embracing a hybrid approach where human reasoning coexists with machine assistance. AI tools are now common in students' academic routines, offering speed, efficiency, and contextual suggestions that were once time-consuming or inaccessible.

From the students' perspective, the adoption of AI-based tools transforms not only how translation is performed but also how learning itself is conceptualized. Learners are no longer passive recipients of knowledge; rather, they become autonomous agents who interact with intelligent systems to explore, correct, and refine their outputs. Many students noted that AI accelerates their workflow, enables more independent learning, and fosters engagement through features like voice-based feedback, cultural idiom recognition, and interactive practice. This indicates a clear movement toward learner-centered and technology-enhanced instruction (Shahmerdanova, 2025).

Nonetheless, these shifts are not without challenges. Students remain cautious about over-reliance on AI, recognizing the limitations in nuance, contextual comprehension, and the risk of diminished critical thinking if AI is used uncritically. Most reported combining AI-generated translations with manual reviews, dictionary cross-checks, and classroom feedback. In this sense, the pedagogical shift is not a replacement of traditional methods, but rather a reconceptualization—where technology complements rather than displaces human cognition and teacher roles (Garcia & Pena, 2011; Lee, 2023).

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This evolving landscape requires educators to redefine instructional strategies, balancing technological integration with ethical awareness and metacognitive skills. As AI becomes more embedded in educational practices, the role of instructors shifts from information providers to facilitators of critical engagement with technology. In sum, the Indonesian experience illustrates how translation learning is being reimagined—blending digital fluency with pedagogical depth to prepare learners for a world where human-AI collaboration is the norm rather than the exception.

III. Methodology

A. Design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design in descriptive category to investigate how AI tools shape translation learning experiences in an Indonesian HEI. It focused on English education students from selected university who had engaged with AI-driven translation platforms. Using purposive sampling, participants were recruited for semi-structured interviews that explored their perceptions, challenges, and cognitive engagement with these tools. Interview data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to uncover patterns related to pedagogical adaptation and tool integration. Methodological rigor was ensured through triangulation and member checking. This case study approach enabled an in-depth, context-specific understanding of the transformative role AI technologies play in translation pedagogy, highlighting both the affordances and tensions experienced by learners in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

B. Participants of the Study

This qualitative study involved ten undergraduate students enrolled in English Education Study Program at the Indonesian higher education institution. Participants were purposefully selected based on their active engagement in translation-related courses and demonstrated experience using AI tools in their academic tasks, particularly in translation practice. The selection aimed to capture diverse perspectives across various academic levels, technology access, and usage frequency.

To ensure rich, contextual insights, participants were chosen from different regions, representing urban and semi-urban regions. They were interviewed individually using semi-structured interview protocols, enabling them to reflect on their perceptions, experiences, and challenges when integrating AI tools into translation learning. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed; all participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used in all reporting to protect their identities.

The table below summarizes the participants' background information:

Table 1
Participants' Profile

Participant ID	Gender	Academic Level	Institution Type
P1	Female	Undergraduate	Public University
P2	Female	Undergraduate	Public University
P3	Female	Undergraduate	Public University
P4	Female	Undergraduate	Public University
P5	Female	Undergraduate	Public University
P6	Female	Undergraduate	Public University
P7	Male	Undergraduate	Public University
P8	Female	Undergraduate	Public University
P9	Male	Undergraduate	Public University
P10	Female	Undergraduate	Public University

This qualitative study involved ten undergraduate students enrolled in English Education Study program at an Indonesian HEI. Participants were purposively selected based on their active involvement in translation-related courses and prior experience using AI tools in academic settings. The sample reflected diversity in institutional background, access to technology, and AI usage frequency, with representation from a public university.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews that encouraged participants to share their perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to AI integration in translation teaching and learning. Ethical research standards were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality assurance, and the use of pseudonyms. Their responses ranged from enthusiastic adoption to critical, reflective engagement—highlighting diverse approaches to navigating AI in translation pedagogy.

C. Procedures of Collecting Data

This qualitative study employed a semi-structured interview method to explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding the integration of AI tools in translation learning within Indonesian HEI. The data collection process was carefully designed to ensure depth, reliability, and contextual relevance. The research involved ten participants from a

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public university, selected through purposive sampling to ensure that all individuals had experience using AI in translation-related coursework (Kruk & Kałużna, 2024; Zhang & Suraratdecha, 2025).

Interviews were conducted over a period of six weeks in March-April 2025. Considering the participants' schedules, interviews were conducted either face-to-face, or through voice calls. Each interview lasted between 40 minutes to one hour, depending on the depth of the participant's responses. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express their thoughts more naturally and comprehensively.

The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions focusing on students' understanding of AI, frequency and purpose of AI tool usage, perceived benefits and challenges, and the perceived impact of AI on their translation competence. Follow-up and probing questions were used to clarify points and encourage elaboration. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

To ensure the validity of the data, member checking was employed by returning key interpretations to the participants for confirmation. Additionally, field notes were taken during and immediately after the interviews to capture non-verbal cues and contextual factors that could enrich the data. The transcripts were then thematically coded, focusing on recurring themes related to pedagogical changes, learner autonomy, technological affordances, and cognitive engagement. This rigorous and ethically grounded data collection process aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of how AI integration is reshaping translation education from the students' perspective in the Indonesian context.

D. Data Analysis

This study employs Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model of qualitative data analysis, which consists of three concurrent flows: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Data condensation began during data collection and continued throughout the research process. Interview transcripts were repeatedly read to identify significant units of meaning, particularly related to students' perceptions, experiences, and emotional responses towards the integration of AI tools in translation courses. Irrelevant data were reduced, and codes were generated to reflect emerging themes such as perceived usefulness, critical engagement, dependency concerns, and pedagogical conflicts. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and read multiple times to ensure deep immersion in the data (Ahmed et al., 2025; Mwita & Mwilongo, 2025). The initial phase of coding was carried out manually through an inductive method, enabling thematic categories to organically arise from the participants' accounts. These codes were subsequently consolidated into overarching themes that captured consistent patterns, conceptual insights, and perceptions concerning the integration of AI in translation learning. To strengthen the study's credibility, the processes of peer debriefing and investigator triangulation were employed, with two independent scholars critically examining the coding framework and thematic construction. Data display involved the systematic organization of coded data into thematic matrices and visual representations that allowed for comparative analysis across student' responses. This facilitated the identification of patterns, tensions, and divergent attitudes among participants regarding AI-assisted translation learning. Conclusion drawing and verification were conducted iteratively. Initial interpretations were triangulated with researcher memos and member-checking procedures to ensure analytical trustworthiness. Emerging findings were refined and tested against the raw data to avoid researcher bias and to enhance credibility. This rigorous analytical approach ensured that the voices of the participants were meaningfully interpreted within the context of Indonesian higher education institution and the evolving role of AI in language pedagogy.

IV. Results

The analysis of students' perspectives on the use of AI tools in translation learning revealed several key dimensions: AI as a Functional Tool for Translation Efficiency, Hybrid Practices: AI Complemented by Manual Verification, Pedagogical Flexibility and Learner Autonomy, Critical Awareness of AI Limitations, Emotional and Motivational Impact, and Equity and Access Challenges.

A. AI as a Functional Tool for Translation Efficiency

Students consistently reported that AI tools such as Google Translate, ChatGPT, and DeepL significantly enhanced the speed and practicality of translation tasks. They appreciated the ability to handle urgent deadlines and process large volumes of text in a short time, which traditional methods could not support efficiently.

One of the most salient findings from this study is that students consistently view AI as a highly functional tool for enhancing translation efficiency. Across multiple interviews, participants emphasized the time-saving benefits of using AI in translation-related tasks. As student P1 remarked, "AI helps save time, especially in the translation process, so I can complete other tasks more quickly." Similarly, student P2 acknowledged, *"*AI helps me translate and understand cultural context and idioms that would take much longer using traditional methods".

Efficiency was not only related to speed but also to accessibility and ease of comprehension. Student P3 highlighted how AI tools such as Google Translate and DeepL helped her quickly grasp the meaning of complex texts, stating, *"*Using AI, the text is directly translated from a foreign language to our own, making it easier and faster to understand."

Students also noted that AI improved workflow during time constraints, especially near assignment deadlines. However, most still cross-checked AI-generated translations with dictionaries or manual corrections to ensure accuracy, signaling a blend of technological reliance and critical reflection in their learning practices.

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B. Hybrid Practices: AI Complemented by Manual Verification

Despite the widespread use of AI tools, most students described a balanced approach. They typically used AI to generate initial translations and then cross-checked the output using dictionaries, grammar tools like Grammarly, and their own linguistic judgment to ensure accuracy and appropriateness in context.

One of the most prominent patterns observed in this study is the hybrid use of AI tools alongside traditional verification methods. While students widely acknowledge the efficiency of AI in accelerating translation tasks, they consistently emphasized the need for manual cross-checking to ensure accuracy, contextual meaning, and appropriate diction. AI was perceived as a preliminary aid—particularly for speed and structural formulation—while human verification remained essential for quality assurance.

For instance, one student stated, "AI is helpful for saving time in translation, but I always check the result using a dictionary or Grammarly to make sure the meaning and grammar are correct" (student P4). Similarly, another remarked, "We can use AI, but not take it raw. We have to adjust based on our own understanding and learning" (student P5). This hybrid approach reflects a balanced pedagogical shift—embracing technological assistance without undermining critical language competencies and human judgment.

C. Pedagogical Flexibility and Learner Autonomy

AI integration was seen as empowering. Students expressed greater independence in learning and increased confidence, especially in out-of-class activities. They valued tools that enabled personalized learning experiences, such as using voice-enabled platforms like Gemini for speaking practice and grammar-checking apps for writing tasks.

Findings revealed that AI integration in translation learning has fostered pedagogical flexibility and significantly enhanced learner autonomy. Many students expressed appreciation for the ability to access translation tools anytime and anywhere, allowing them to learn at their own pace and based on personal needs. One student stated, *"*By using AI, we can learn anytime and anywhere without needing friends or teachers. We can engage in self-directed learning through AI.*"* (student P5).

Another participant emphasized that AI helped boost confidence and reduced dependency on others: *"*AI helps facilitate independent learning without having to rely on friends or lecturers, which makes me feel more confident.*"* (Interview with student P6). Students leveraged various platforms such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google Translate not only for translation but also to enhance vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural understanding. Overall, the integration of AI tools allowed students to shift from passive recipients of instruction to active, self-regulated learners capable of adapting learning strategies autonomously.

D. Critical Awareness of AI Limitations

Many participants were aware of the limitations of AI-generated translations, particularly with cultural nuances, idioms, and complex syntax. Several students highlighted the need to write precise prompts and to be cautious of potential dependency, indicating emerging digital literacy and critical thinking.

While students acknowledged the benefits of AI in enhancing translation learning, they also demonstrated critical awareness of its limitations. Several participants noted that AI-generated translations often lacked contextual accuracy and required manual revision. As student P6 remarked, "We cannot take AI outputs at face value; we need to improvise based on our knowledge and learning experience." Similarly, student P7 observed that "AI sometimes misses the meaning unless the prompt is clear; otherwise, the tool can misinterpret our intent".

Concerns about overreliance were also evident. "If we depend too much on AI, it can weaken our translation competence," student P7 warned. Many students reported combining AI assistance with traditional dictionaries and instructor feedback to ensure accuracy. These insights reveal a balanced perspective among learners—appreciating AI as a tool for efficiency, yet recognizing the indispensable role of human judgment in translation processes, especially when dealing with cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and stylistic fidelity.

E. Emotional and Motivational Impact

AI made the translation learning process more enjoyable and less intimidating. Students reported feeling more motivated, less anxious, and more confident when interacting with AI, especially when practicing speaking or completing assignments independently at home.

The integration of AI tools into translation learning generated significant emotional and motivational responses among students. Most participants described their experience as enjoyable, efficient, and empowering. One student stated, "I feel happy and truly helped by AI*"* (student P8), while another expressed increased confidence, saying, *"*AI helps me feel more confident when completing translation tasks" (student P9).

AI tools were also perceived to make learning more flexible and less intimidating. For example, one participant shared, "I can study without feeling shy or embarrassed because I can do it alone" (student P2). Platforms like Gemini and Free4Talk were praised for turning monotonous learning into engaging, interactive experiences. However, concerns about over-dependence were raised, particularly when access to AI tools was disrupted, causing stress during critical academic tasks (student P6). Overall, AI enhanced learners' emotional engagement by reducing anxiety, increasing autonomy, and supporting intrinsic motivation in the learning process.

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F. Equity and Access Challenges

Some participants noted that free versions of AI tools had limitations (e.g., word count caps or reduced features), and premium access was often financially inaccessible. This issue reflects broader concerns about digital equity in AI-based education.

While AI integration in translation learning has shown significant pedagogical benefits, student responses revealed persistent challenges related to equity and access. Several participants highlighted the limitations of free AI tools, particularly regarding word limits and restricted features in applications such as QuillBot, DeepL, and Grammarly. These restrictions often hinder optimal use, especially for students who cannot afford premium subscriptions. As one respondent noted, "To fully benefit from AI, sometimes I need access to the paid versions, but that's not always financially possible" (student P10).

Additionally, disparities in internet connectivity and device availability were mentioned as obstacles to consistent AI use. Students in rural or semi-urban areas expressed frustration with unreliable access, which affected their ability to engage with AI tools as effectively as their peers in urban centers. These findings underscore a digital divide that influences the degree to which AI-enhanced learning can be equitably experienced. Addressing these access barriers is essential to ensure that AI does not inadvertently widen educational inequalities, but instead supports inclusive and fair learning environments across diverse student populations.

The study revealed six key findings on AI integration in translation learning. First, students consistently viewed AI tools such as ChatGPT, Google Translate, and DeepL as highly functional for improving translation efficiency, particularly under time constraints. Second, a hybrid approach emerged, with students using AI for initial drafts and verifying results manually for accuracy. Third, AI tools fostered pedagogical flexibility and learner autonomy, empowering students to study independently and at their own pace. Fourth, participants demonstrated critical awareness of AI's limitations, particularly in handling idioms, syntax, and cultural nuances, prompting careful prompt design and human oversight. Fifth, AI positively impacted learners' motivation and emotional engagement, making translation tasks feel less intimidating and more enjoyable. Lastly, the study highlighted persistent equity and access challenges, including financial barriers to premium AI tools and unequal access to stable internet. Collectively, these findings underscore the nuanced role of AI as both an enabler and a challenge in shaping translation pedagogy in the Indonesian higher education institution.

V. Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on how students in Indonesian higher education institution are experiencing the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in translation learning. Six major themes emerged from the data: AI as a functional tool for translation efficiency, hybrid practices combining AI and manual verification, pedagogical flexibility and learner autonomy, critical awareness of AI limitations, emotional and motivational impact, and equity and access challenges. These interconnected themes reflect the evolving pedagogical landscape, shaped by both the promises and pitfalls of AI-enhanced translation instruction.

A. AI as a Functional Tool for Translation Efficiency

One of the most consistent findings across participant narratives was the perception of AI as a pragmatic tool that significantly enhances translation efficiency. Students overwhelmingly reported that tools like Google Translate, ChatGPT, and DeepL expedited their translation processes, allowing them to meet tight deadlines and handle larger text volumes than traditional methods would permit (Garcia & Pena, 2011; Bowker, 2020; O'Brien, 2022). In alignment with existing studies on AI-mediated learning participants viewed AI as a productivity enhancer that reduces cognitive load during time-sensitive tasks (Budiharjo, 2024; Pondelíková & Luprichová, 2025; Shahmerdanova, 2025).

However, efficiency was not merely about speed. Students also appreciated how AI simplified complex texts, improved comprehension, and provided an immediate starting point for deeper analysis. These observations suggest that AI tools are not just passive aids, but active scaffolds that help learners process linguistic information more efficiently—especially useful in non-native contexts where learners struggle with idioms, cultural references, or dense academic language (Lu & Xu, 2023; Lee, 2022; Godwin-Jones, 2021).

B. Hybrid Practices: AI Complemented by Manual Verification

Despite students' enthusiasm for AI tools, there was a consistent emphasis on hybrid practices. Most participants described a workflow that began with AI-generated translation, followed by manual verification through dictionaries, grammar checkers, or teacher input. This balance underscores an emerging literacy among students—a recognition that while AI tools are powerful, they are fallible and contextually limited.

Such practices align with the concept of "augmented translation literacy," where learners are not merely consumers of machine output, but active agents who critically evaluate and refine AI-generated content (Anik et al., 2025; Ramadilla et al., 2025; Tzirides et al., 2024). Rather than fostering dependency, this hybrid approach cultivates critical language awareness and reinforces foundational translation skills.

Interestingly, students did not view this dual strategy as burdensome. Instead, they saw it as an intelligent adaptation—leveraging the best of both worlds: the speed and convenience of AI with the nuance and depth of human

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cognition (Klar, 2025; Lin & Qiu, 2024). This pedagogical hybridity indicates a maturing digital competence, one that moves beyond tool usage into reflective learning design.

C. Pedagogical Flexibility and Learner Autonomy

AI tool integration has also contributed to a shift in pedagogical dynamics, empowering learners to take charge of their own learning journeys. Many students expressed greater autonomy, confidence, and initiative when engaging with translation tasks. They appreciated the ability to access AI platforms at any time, enabling personalized and self-paced learning outside the formal classroom setting (Budiharjo, 2024; Chetry, 2024; Isnata, 2025; Resnick, 2024).

This flexibility is particularly valuable in translation studies, where mastery depends not only on rote learning but on practice, contextual adaptation, and exposure to authentic language use. Platforms like Gemini, which offer voice features, were instrumental for students in improving speaking skills alongside translation accuracy—indicating that AI's pedagogical role extends beyond text-based tasks.

The rise of learner autonomy also suggests a decentralization of traditional teacher-student hierarchies. In this model, the instructor's role shifts from knowledge transmitter to learning facilitator or AI literacy coach—guiding students not just in linguistic skills, but also in the ethical, strategic, and critical use of digital tools. As students become more self-directed, instructional models must adapt to support differentiated learning paths and digital agency.

D. Critical Awareness of AI Limitations

Importantly, students were not uncritically accepting of AI tools. Many demonstrated a keen awareness of the limitations of current AI technologies—particularly in handling idiomatic expressions, cultural subtleties, and complex syntax. The need to write clear, accurate prompts was frequently mentioned as a prerequisite for reliable AI output, highlighting the growing importance of prompt engineering as a literacy skill in itself.

This awareness reflects a high level of metacognitive engagement (Zahirah et al., 2025). Learners were not only using AI but thinking about how and when to use it effectively. They understood that AI is a double-edged sword: while it facilitates learning, uncritical use can erode essential skills. Some students explicitly warned against over-reliance, noting that habitual dependence on AI tools could undermine their long-term competence as translators (Bowker, 2020; Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2021; García & Pena, 2011).

Such caution is crucial, especially as educational institutions increasingly incorporate AI into curricula. Without fostering critical digital literacy, there is a risk that students may become passive consumers rather than active meaning-makers. The findings advocate for instructional frameworks that foreground reflective practice and ethical AI usage, ensuring that students learn to question, adapt, and ultimately transcend the limitations of machine translation.

E. Emotional and Motivational Impact

A noteworthy yet often underexplored dimension of AI integration is its emotional and motivational influence. Students reported that AI tools made learning more enjoyable, less stressful, and more engaging. For learners who previously felt anxious or unmotivated, especially in speaking or writing tasks, AI served as a low-stakes, judgment-free partner for practice and experimentation. (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2021).

This psychological comfort is not trivial. Confidence and emotional safety are essential for language acquisition, particularly in translation, where fear of error can inhibit risk-taking and creativity (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). AI tools—particularly those offering feedback or real-time interaction—created a sense of control and reassurance, which in turn boosted motivation and persistence (Chou, 2018; Wang & Vasquez, 2012).

Nonetheless, emotional dependency on AI was also noted as a potential risk. A few students expressed anxiety when access to AI tools was disrupted, indicating that reliance could become counterproductive under certain conditions. These findings reinforce the need to design learning environments that use AI as a supplement, not a crutch—supporting emotional resilience alongside digital fluency.

F. Equity and Access Challenges

Despite the pedagogical benefits of AI, several students raised concerns about equitable access. Many AI tools, especially in their free versions, come with limitations such as word-count caps, restricted features, or advertisement interruptions (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2022). For students unable to afford premium subscriptions, these constraints created a digital divide that impeded their learning experience (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Warschauer, 2003).

Infrastructural disparities also played a role. Students in semi-urban or rural areas reported challenges related to internet connectivity or outdated devices, which limited their ability to engage fully with AI-enhanced tasks. These findings echo broader concerns in the literature about digital inclusion and educational equity in technology-driven learning (van Dijk, 2020; Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010).

Addressing these issues requires institutional commitment—both in terms of policy and practice. Providing institutional licenses, offering AI training workshops, and ensuring robust digital infrastructure are essential to making AI integration inclusive rather than exclusive. Without deliberate intervention, the risk is that AI will reinforce existing inequalities rather than resolve them (Luckin et al., 2022; Selwyn, 2023).

AI tool integration into translation education is not a mere technological adoption but a complex pedagogical transformation (Bowker & Marshman, 2020; O'Hagan, 2022). Students value AI for its efficiency, flexibility, and

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motivational support but also recognize its limitations and potential pitfalls (Fernández-Parra, 2021). Their hybrid practices reflect an emerging digital literacy that blends machine assistance with human judgment, critical awareness, and learner autonomy.

This study offers a novel contribution by exploring the nuanced experiences of Indonesian higher education students navigating AI integration in translation learning—a context that remains underrepresented in current scholarship. Unlike prior research that often treats AI tools as monolithic solutions, this study reveals how learners engage in hybrid, reflective practices that blend machine assistance with human judgment. The identification of six interrelated themes—including emotional impact, equity challenges, and pedagogical decentralization—provides a comprehensive framework for understanding AI-enhanced translation instruction. By centering student agency and critical awareness, this study advances the discourse from tool adoption toward ethical and pedagogical transformation, positioning AI not as a replacement for instruction but as a catalyst for inclusive, learner-driven innovation.

Furthermore, based on the evidences presented in the findings, this study concludes by proposing a concept of AI-Integrated Translation which balances technological innovation with translation in the Indonesian higher education context.

VI. Conclusion and Implications

This study illuminates the evolving experiences of Indonesian students' perspective as they engage with AI-integrated translation learning in a higher education institution. Six key themes emerged: efficiency through AI, hybrid human-machine practices, increased learner autonomy, critical awareness of AI limitations, emotional engagement, and equity challenges. Students overwhelmingly viewed AI tools as accelerators of productivity, enhancing comprehension and streamlining translation workflows. However, their practices reflect a mature, hybrid approach—AI outputs were routinely verified through dictionaries or human judgment, revealing an emerging augmented translation literacy.

Moreover, AI fostered greater learner autonomy, enabling self-paced learning and personalized engagement beyond the classroom. Students assumed more control of their learning trajectories, while instructors' roles evolved toward facilitation and digital guidance. At the same time, participants demonstrated a critical stance toward AI's limitations, particularly in handling context, idioms, and syntax, emphasizing the need for prompt engineering skills.

AI also positively impacted motivation and emotional comfort, reducing anxiety and creating safer spaces for linguistic experimentation. Nevertheless, issues of equitable access, such as limited functionality in free tools and infrastructure gaps, were significant barriers. These findings suggest that for AI to meaningfully enhance translation pedagogy, integration must be ethically designed, learner-centered, and supported by inclusive institutional strategies.

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