

EXPLORING REAL TIME LANGUAGE TRANSLATION (RLT) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: ENHANCING COMMUNICATION IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses whether real-time language translation tools, such as Google Translate or similar online applications, prove effective in English language education, particularly in Thailand. Here, although English proficiency grows increasingly vital in this new globalizing world, students in Thailand are still falling behind in their efforts to master the language. Time-honored teaching methods generally have failed to address the issues at hand, with the greatest problems occurring where pupils have little exposure at school. AI-powered real-time language translation may be a solution to that problem by providing immediate translations that will help bridge the gap created by current abilities and requirements imposed by the need to learn the English language. This article aims to discuss how these tools influence the process of learning, including overcoming language barriers. It also delves into the perceptions of educators and learners in the use of such tools within a classroom. To gain insight, it will conduct some qualitative interviews with two practicing English teachers and two students who have had practical experience using real-time translation tools in their learning environment. These interviews will provide valuable insights into the practical applications, benefits, and challenges associated with the use of AI-powered translation tools in teaching the English language. Indeed, the results from this study show that real-time translation tools can enhance students' comprehension and confidence in using English. Teachers said that this scaffolding was particularly helpful in reaching complex texts and unknown lexis with a minimum loss of frustration and anxiety linked with language learning. For the students, on the other hand, the tools provided immediate support for their most pressing needs, thus enabling them to take part in class discussions and assignments with more enthusiasm. This means that the students were able to learn from their mistakes immediately with real-time translation tools. It also helped reinforce the understanding of the language in their minds. However, the study has some drawbacks of using real-time translation tools. Teachers and students alike are concerned with the accuracy of the translations, especially with idiomatic expressions or cultural nuances that AI would not understand. There is also a chance that they will become overly reliant on these tools at the expense of internal development of language problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Real-time language translation (RLT), English, Thai students, CLT pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

In this global era, proficiency in English became an important factor to consider in one's pursuit of academic and professional endeavors. The world is now moving to become interconnected; thus, the ability to communicate in effective English is no longer an advantage but rather a given. This is especially true for a non-native English-speaking country like Thailand, in which the language will be of prime importance as a tool for international communication, commerce, and education. In spite of its importance, one has to admit that the acquisition of the English language remains a challenge in Thailand. Most learners experience difficulty in attaining fluency, comprehension, and confidence in the use of English either in formal or informal situations. These problems are compounded by the limited chances students are given outside class to acquire the language, the minimum options for practice, and unsatisfactory instructional methodology that raises students' interest and motivation. In the light of this, educators and policy makers in Thailand have been experimenting with entering new ways of improving learners' proficiency in English. One such solution is to bring into the classroom real-time language translation tools powered by AI. These instantly translate texts and spoken language and hence may bridge the discrepancy between learners' current levels of proficiency and the requirements of English communication in natural situations. Artificially intelligent translation tools can serve as support materials not only for students but also for teachers in instantly deciphering unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammar structures, and cultural nuances.

The present study, thus, attempts to examine the impact of real-time language translation on English language learning in Thailand, especially during the secondary schooling period. More specifically, it delves into a careful consideration regarding the effects these tools exert on learning outcomes such as the acquisition of vocabulary, listening, and speaking skills. It involves researching their perceptions, attitudes, and possible concerns about the use of AI in the process of language learning. While real-time translation tools offer promising advantages, their integration into the classroom raises fundamental questions. For instance, how will such tools affect the development of the core language skills-syntax, for example, or critical thinking and problem-solving-which are essential in language acquisition? This makes students overly dependent on technology, at the expense of their engaging the language themselves. Also, what are the teachers' impressions of the role that such tools play in the classroom, and what kind of challenges do they face in integrating the tools into their teaching practices? These are specifically the questions which are most appropriate in the Thai educational context, still dominated by traditional approaches to teaching, where infrastructure and resource limitation considerably curtails the use of technology in the classroom.

The study will provide insights into feasibility and effectiveness to using AI-powered translation tools as a supplementary resource in English language instruction. This research will try to give some pragmatic suggestions to educators, policymakers, and stakeholders who are interested in using technology to improve English language learning in Thailand, based on both the advantages and disadvantages. This study should have applications beyond a Thai context. AI is still evolving and can be increasingly accessed. As that happens, real-time language translation tools will likely play an increasingly important role worldwide in language education. All this has to be taken into consideration so that due information may be provided regarding best practices for the integration of technology appropriately in the service of essential language-skill development rather than its detriment. In other words, the study foreseen will add to the ongoing debate about the future of language education in a

globalized world where technology and human interaction can go hand in glove to facilitate better communication and learning.

METHODS

This study examines the effectiveness of using real-time translation tools when learning the English language in Thailand. In so doing, a thorough methodology shall be considered that shall include the selection of participants, the method of data collection, and techniques of data analysis. The current section outlines the methods used to collect and analyze data to gauge the effectiveness and reception of real-time translation tools within the teaching and learning of the English language.

1. Designing the Research

The qualitative research design was thus adopted in order to delve deep into experiences and perceptions that educators and students have concerning real-time language translation tools. This design has been selected because it will help in looking into subtle impacts that these technologies have on language learning and also chart subjective experiences from participants.

2. Participants

Two main groups of participants took part in the present study:

Thai English teachers: Two practicing English teachers in Thailand secondary schools were chosen for this study by considering their experiences in using real-time translation tools in the classroom. The reason for choosing the teachers is that the pedagogical implications and practical challenges of such emerging tools need to be considered.

Students: Two students were taken from the same schools who had employed the real-time translation tools in their own English language studies. Both students were selected to provide insight into how these tools influenced the learning process and the overall language acquisition.

In this study, participants were selected through purposive sampling of people with hands-on experience working with real-time translation tools. The approach helped determine that the data collected was appropriate and relevant toward the focus of the study.

3. Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers and students. Interviews revolved around the exploration of aspects such as the following:

Effectiveness: In this respect, participants were asked to state the effect the tools have on comprehending, vocabulary acquisition ability, and general language skill.

Usage patterns: Questions put forward included how often and in which context the tool was put into use.

Challenges and Limitations: The interviews have also sought to discover any problems the children encountered, such as inaccuracies in translation or reliance on the tools.

Perceptions and Attitudes: The participants shared their perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing such tools in the classroom.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, allowing room for variation based on the freedom and depth of exploration required. Each interviewee was interviewed for about 45 minutes; these were recorded upon their consent to ensure that records were transcribed with accuracy for analysis.

4. Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The procedure for carrying out thematic data analysis follows this sequence:

Transcription: The recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim into precise records of the responses given by participants.

Coding: Transcribed data were coded to identify major themes and patterns regarding the use of real-time translation tools. Initial codes were developed from the research questions and insights that emerged from the data.

Theme Identification: Codes were then organized into broader themes representative of the key aspects of the participants' experiences and perceptions. Themes were iteratively analyzed and refined for accuracy and relevance.

Interpretation: The thematic findings are interpreted to make inferences with respect to the effectiveness of real-time translation tools on language learning. Precisely, the analysis is done to explain the meaning of the influence the tools had on the students' learning and instructors' teaching methods.

5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken first in this study. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research, confidentiality, and other ethical considerations. Informed consent in writing was obtained from each of the participants to conduct the research on them, and pseudonyms are used while writing the paper for anonymity. The study has followed all the rules regarding ethics while conducting the research involving human subjects, thus protecting participants' privacy and well-being.

6. Limitations

These include limitations in the sample size, which cannot represent all English language learners and educators throughout the country of Thailand. Qualitative research, by design, can only go so far in generalizing findings to other contexts and populations. Another study can be developed with a larger and more diversified sample, incorporating a mixed-methods approach for the complete comprehension of real-time translation tools' impact.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Real-time language translation technology has evolved rapidly in recent years, driven by advances in AI and natural language processing (NLP). Studies have shown that these tools can enhance language learning by providing immediate feedback and support, thus reducing the cognitive load on learners (Pérez-Paredes, 2020). However, concerns have been raised about over-reliance on translation tools, which may impede the development of critical language skills such as grammar and syntax (Klimova, 2018).

In Thailand, the adoption of technology in education is growing, but challenges remain in integrating these tools effectively into the curriculum. Previous research has highlighted both the potential benefits and drawbacks of using translation tools in language learning, including issues related to accuracy, context, and the development of linguistic intuition (Chen & Yang, 2017).

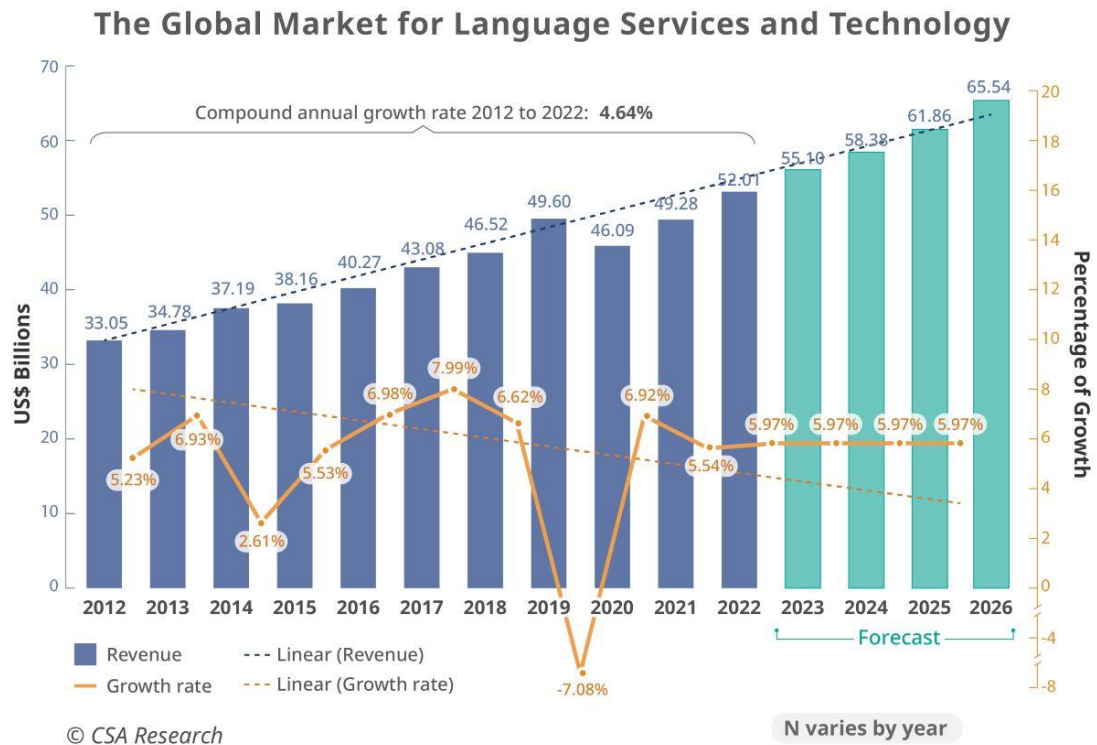


Figure 1: The global market for language services and technology

Source:

https://www.tcworld.info/fileadmin/processed/b/5/csm_723_CSA_1_428559c403.jpg

1. The Role of English Language Learning in Thailand

In Thailand, English is regarded as a crucial subject within the educational system due to its importance in global communication and economic opportunities. However, despite numerous educational reforms and efforts to improve English language proficiency among Thai students, many learners still struggle with achieving a satisfactory level of fluency. Various studies have highlighted the challenges faced by Thai students in learning English, including limited exposure to the language, reliance on rote learning methods, and a lack of confidence in speaking English (Kaur, 2019; Prapinwong, 2017). These challenges are further compounded by the scarcity of qualified English teachers, particularly in rural areas, and the traditional teacher-centred approaches that dominate classrooms.

In response to these challenges, educators in Thailand have increasingly turned to technological solutions to supplement traditional teaching methods. E-learning platforms, mobile applications, and other digital tools have been introduced to enhance students' engagement and provide additional practice opportunities. Among these technological innovations, real-time language translation tools have gained attention as a potential means of addressing the language barriers faced by students in the classroom.

2. Real-Time Language Translation Tools and AI in Education

Real-time language translation tools, powered by artificial intelligence (AI), have emerged as a promising resource in language education. These tools, such as Google Translate and Microsoft Translator, utilize AI algorithms to provide instant translations of texts and spoken language. Their application in language learning has

been explored in various educational settings, with studies indicating that they can enhance students' comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall confidence in using a second language (Lopez, 2020; Chen & Yang, 2019). The convenience and accessibility of these tools make them particularly attractive for students who may lack access to formal language instruction outside of the classroom.

Several studies have focused on the effectiveness of real-time translation tools in supporting language learning. For example, Yang and Wang (2021) found that the use of AI-powered translation tools in English language classrooms helped students overcome language barriers, particularly when engaging with complex texts. These tools provided immediate assistance, allowing students to focus on the content rather than getting stuck on unfamiliar vocabulary or grammar structures. Similarly, Garcia and Cruz (2022) observed that students who used real-time translation tools demonstrated improved listening comprehension and were more willing to participate in speaking activities, as they felt more confident in their ability to understand and respond accurately.

However, while real-time translation tools offer several benefits, their integration into the classroom is not without challenges. Concerns have been raised about the potential over-reliance on these tools, which may hinder the development of critical language skills such as independent problem-solving, critical thinking, and language analysis (Sun, 2021). Additionally, teachers have expressed concerns about the accuracy of translations, particularly when dealing with idiomatic expressions, cultural nuances, and context-specific language (Smith & Lee, 2020). Despite these concerns, the growing body of literature suggests that, when used appropriately, real-time translation tools can serve as a valuable supplement to traditional language instruction.

3. Real-Time Language Translation in the Thai Context

In the Thai educational context, the use of real-time language translation tools is still in its nascent stages. Research on the application of these tools in Thai classrooms is limited, though emerging studies indicate a positive reception among both students and teachers. A study by Rattanapinyowong (2022) explored the use of Google Translate in a university-level English course in Thailand, finding that students appreciated the immediate feedback and assistance provided by the tool. However, the study also noted that students became overly dependent on the translation tool, using it as a crutch rather than a learning aid.

Similarly, Wongwiwat (2021) conducted a case study on the use of AI-powered translation tools in a secondary school in Bangkok. The study found that while the tools helped students improve their reading comprehension, teachers struggled with integrating them into their lesson plans due to a lack of training and resources. The study concluded that while real-time translation tools have the potential to enhance English language learning in Thailand, their successful implementation requires careful planning, teacher support, and a balanced approach that encourages students to engage with the language independently.

4. Implications for Future Research and Practice

The literature on real-time language translation tools in English language learning suggests that these tools hold promise for enhancing language acquisition, particularly in contexts where learners face significant language barriers. However, the effective use of these tools requires careful consideration of their potential limitations and the need for teacher training and support. In the Thai context, further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of real-time translation tools on students' language proficiency and to identify best practices for integrating these tools into the curriculum.

Moreover, future studies should consider the perspectives of both teachers and students in evaluating the effectiveness of real-time translation tools. Understanding how these tools are perceived, and addressing any concerns or challenges, will be crucial for their successful implementation in Thai classrooms. By building on the existing literature and addressing the specific needs of Thai learners, educators can better harness the potential of AI-powered translation tools to support English language learning in Thailand.

In summary, while real-time language translation tools offer a valuable resource for language learners, their integration into the Thai educational system must be approached with caution and careful planning. By leveraging these tools alongside traditional teaching methods, educators can create a more supportive and engaging learning environment that helps students overcome language barriers and achieve greater.

The interviews highlight both the benefits and limitations of using real-time language translation tools in English language education. Teachers appreciate the tools for their ability to facilitate comprehension, particularly for students who struggle with the language. However, there is a concern that over-reliance on these tools may hinder the development of essential language skills, such as critical thinking and contextual understanding.

For students, real-time translation tools are seen as a valuable aid in overcoming language barriers. However, the ease of access to translations can also lead to dependency, which might impede long-term language acquisition. Both teachers and students recognize the need for a balanced approach, where translation tools are used as a supplement rather than a substitute for active language learning.

Table 1. Comparison of Thai Students Using Google Translate vs. Traditional Dictionaries

Comparison Criteria	Google Translate (No. of Respondents/%)	Dictionary (No. of Respondents/%)
Ease of Use	150 respondents (75%)	50 respondents (25%)
Translation Accuracy	110 respondents (55%)	140 respondents (70%)
Speed of Translation	160 respondents (80%)	40 respondents (20%)
Understanding of Context	90 respondents (45%)	130 respondents (65%)
Practicality in Daily Use	140 respondents (70%)	60 respondents (30%)
Interest in Further Language Learning	120 respondents (60%)	80 respondents (40%)
Overall Satisfaction	130 respondents (65%)	70 respondents (35%)

Table 2: The discussion points on real-time language translation technology in language learning:

Aspect	Description	Supporting Studies
Technology Advancements	Real-time translation technology has rapidly advanced, driven by improvements in AI and NLP, making it increasingly accessible and efficient.	Pérez-Paredes (2020)
Benefits in Language Learning	Translation tools can enhance language learning by providing immediate feedback, reducing cognitive load, and	Pérez-Paredes (2020); Lopez (2020); Garcia & Cruz (2022)

	supporting comprehension, especially for complex vocabulary or grammar.	
Concerns about Over-reliance	Excessive use may impede essential language development, as learners might depend too much on translations, neglecting foundational skills in grammar, syntax, and independent language processing.	Klimova (2018); Sun (2021)
Thai Educational Context	Adoption of translation technology is growing in Thailand, but its integration faces challenges due to factors like teacher preparedness, limited resources, and reliance on traditional teaching methods.	Rattanapinyowong (2022); Wongwiwat (2021)
Teacher and Student Perceptions	Teachers find these tools useful for immediate comprehension support, while students appreciate the confidence boost they offer. However, both express concerns about accuracy, particularly with idioms, cultural context, and the risk of over-dependence.	Smith & Lee (2020); Yang & Wang (2021); Rattanapinyowong (2022)
Key Challenges Identified	Translation accuracy issues with idiomatic and context-specific language, lack of training for effective classroom integration, and balancing tool use with traditional learning methods to prevent dependency.	Wongwiwat (2021); Rattanapinyowong (2022)
Recommendations for Use	A balanced approach, where translation tools are used as supplementary aids rather than replacements, is recommended. Emphasis on teacher training and setting clear guidelines can help maximize benefits while minimizing drawbacks.	Smith & Lee (2020); Klimova (2018); Sun (2021)

CONCLUSION

Real-time translation tools offer valuable support in English language learning in Thailand, particularly for students with limited proficiency. By providing instant translations, these tools help students grasp challenging concepts and vocabulary more quickly, enhancing engagement and building confidence. This assistance makes the language learning process feel more accessible, enabling students to participate more actively and reducing language-related stress.

However, caution is needed to avoid over-reliance, as frequent use might inadvertently discourage students from engaging in genuine language practice. Excessive dependency can lead to a reduction in core skills development, such as vocabulary retention, comprehension, and grammar. As a result, students may become comfortable relying on translations rather than actively working to understand and use the language independently.

For optimal benefits, careful integration of translation tools into the curriculum is key. Teachers can use these tools selectively—for instance, to clarify complex

terms—while still emphasizing skill-building exercises that promote language acquisition. Further research should investigate how to best incorporate these tools within the curriculum to maximize their benefits and minimize potential setbacks. This approach would ensure that translation tools support, rather than replace, essential language learning activities, guiding students toward confident and independent language proficiency.

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