اختبار الوعي السياقي في الترجمة بمساعدة الذكاء الاصطناعي لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية: رؤى من طلبة الترجمة في جامعة نوروز

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Testing Contextual Awareness in AI-Assisted Translation of EFL Learners: Insights from Translation Students at Nawroz University

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Abstract:
This study investigates the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) translation tasks and explores its ability of contextual awareness in translation. Currently AI tools are widely used in education, this study seeks to understand how it influence student's translation and overall language development. An experimental design was adopted, involving 100 undergraduate students from

translation department at the college of languages, Nawroz University in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The students were randomly divided into two groups of 50 students in each group. The experimental group learners used AI-powered translation tools while completing three phases of translation assignments, each phase included beginning, middle and end of the phase. In contrast, the control group learners worked on pretest and posttest tasks without any AI assistance. To evaluate learning outcomes, both groups were using validated assessment tools that measured learner's skills in translation. The collected data were analyzed statistically using a t-test to determine whether the performance differences between both groups were significant. In addition to the quantitative results, qualitative observations were made to explore how students interacted with the AI tools during the translation process. The findings revealed that the final mean score of the experimental group is 17.50 and for the control group is 16.90 which demonstrates a nonspecific fluctuation that is statistically not remarkable. These results suggest that AI can serve as a valuable aid in translation training by offering EFL learners real-time support. The study highlights AI's growing potential in modern language education.

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقصّي توظيف أدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي في مهام الترجمة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وتحليل مدى قدرتها على تحقيق الوعي السياقي في عملية الترجمة. ونظرًا للانتشار المتزايد لاستخدام تقنيات الذكاء الاصطناعي في المجال التعليمي في الوقت الحاضر، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى فهم تأثير هذه الأدوات في أداء الطلبة في الترجمة وفي تطورهم اللغوي بصورة عامة. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج التجريبي، وشملت عينة مكوّنة من مئة طالب وطالبة من مرحلة البكالوريوس في قسم الترجمة بكلية اللغات في جامعة نوروز بإقليم كردستان العراق. وتم توزيع الطلبة عشوائيًا على مجموعتين متكافئتين، ضمّت كل منهما خمسين طالبًا. استخدم طلبة المجموعة التجريبية أدوات ترجمة قائمة على الذكاء الاصطناعي أثناء تنفيذ ثلاث مراحل من مهام الترجمة، حيث تضمنت كل مرحلة بداية ووسطًا ونهاية. في المقابل، أنجز طلبة المجموعة الضابطة اختبارات قبلية وبعدية دون الاستعانة بأي أدوات ذكاء اصطناعي. ولغرض تقييم نواتج التعلّم، استُخدمت في كلتا المجموعتين أدوات تقييم مُقنّنة لقياس مهارات الطلبة في الترجمة. كما خضعت البيانات التي تم جمعها للتحليل الإحصائي باستخدام الاختبار الإحصائي المناسب للتحقق من دلالة الفروق في الأداء بين المجموعتين. وإلى جانب النتائج الكمية، أُجريت ملاحظات نوعية للكشف عن كيفية تفاعل الطلبة مع أدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي أثناء عملية الترجمة. وأظهرت النتائج أن المتوسط الحسابي النهائي لأداء المجموعة التجريبية (١٧,٥٠) ، في حين بلغ (١٦.٩٠) لدى المجموعة الضابطة، مما يشير إلى وجود تباين طفيف غير ذي دلالة إحصائية ملحوظة. وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أن الذكاء الاصطناعي يمكن أن يشكّل أداة مساعدة فاعلة في تدريب للترجمة من خلال توفير دعم فوري لمتعلمي اللغة

الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. كما تؤكد الدراسة الإمكانات المتنامية للذكاء الاصطناعي في تطوير التعليم اللغوي المعاصر.

Introduction

In today's world connected digitally, it is crucial for English as a Foreign language (EFL) learners get a contextual awareness in translating texts via Artificial Intelligence (AI). According to Richards and Schmidt (2010) EFL learners' purpose of studying English is for career, education or international communication. Moreover, it is spread out in different settings, such as: schools, universities, language centers, and online platforms. Nevertheless, a language is regarded foreign when it is predominantly used in classrooms while not spoken publicly (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). Recently, there are some transformations in the approach of teaching English language. To illustrate, many teachers and instructors who are teaching English as a foreign language usually use it in their daily lives. In addition, younger generations disclosed to English since early age (Zein et al., 2017).

Jung and Norton (2002) stated that teaching English at the primary level is an optional in more than 50 countries. However, 25 of which have made it a compulsory subject such as Thailand starts English from grade 1, France from grade 2, Norway from grade 3 and China from grade 4, etc. As far as Iraq and Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI) are concerned, Alrickaby (2020) stated that a merely subject that is mandatory as a foreign language to be taught in Iraqi's schools is English, which is introduced as a compulsory subject from 1st to 12th grade. In relation to the (KRI) it is indistinguishable to Iraq and apply a similar concept (Zeebaree et al.,2025). Regarding the curricula in Iraqi universities English is taught as a foreign language and considered essential for academic and professional success (Al-Khayyat, 2021). As far as (KRI) involved, Qadir and Omar (2023) stated that the ministry of higher Education and Scientific Studies in Kurdistan Region of Iraq utilized English as a foreign language to be a mandatory subject taught in its institutions and universities.

As far as EFL learners from translation department at Nawroz university are concerned, translation is explained as the process of replacing a message and /or statement from one language into another (Newmark,1995). As Kaussmaul (1995) stated that by doing translation, the translator has to consider the target language reader/ listener within a

specific culture. Nico (2023) outlined that EFL learners usually struggle with hardship of entanglement in rendering meaning from one language into another, as well as, being accurate to the target language. English texts have to be properly comprehended, so, it is corresponding to the intended meaning, otherwise it will pose struggle for the readers and listeners. In order to obtain equivalence between source language and target language knowing about the contextual situation is crucial, since target language may contain realities that does not exist in the source language. Johns (1995) illustrated that translation is of distinct strategies; the former strategy is dynamic translation, it requires contextual competencies to reveal implicit or integrated meaning. However, the latter strategy is literal translation which demands direct transformation in translation. Brown (2002) illustrated that translation helps learners refrain from misuse of terms and structures connected with habits, as well as obtaining awareness about different languages. Moreover, translation strengthens students to elaborate their explicit skills in language. As well as, it examines learner's language strengths and weaknesses.

In order to make learning experiences authentic and functional, recently, the use of technology, specifically artificial intelligence (AI), has emerged in EFL classrooms. AI- powered applications have the ability to develop the process of teaching and learning since it increases EFL learner's comprehension and interest for learning. Research approved that AI-technology provide learners with productive feedback and information that help them improve their language learning efficiency (Jiang 2022; Lee et al. 2023). There are various applications that are related to translation and used by EFL learners in classrooms, namely: Google translate and Chat GPT are widely used by EFL learners. Despite the fact that AI translation applications integrated into Language learning rapidly, there is a lack of research corresponding to EFL learners' perception and experiences with these tools, typically concerned with language acquisition and practical application. Even though many studies concentrated on the technological efficiency of these applications, however, they are missing its pedagogical efficiency for learners (Kumar, 2023). Mostly the context of the situation is not taken into consideration when doing translation via AI- applications (Jin et. al.,2023).

Pragmatics as a science study the context of situation that is displayed in cross-cultural settings (Mohibonu, 2025). General views stated that in the process of translation context is active throughout two stages: the first

stage is the conversion of the source text (message), and the second one is the rephrasing and conceptualization of the target text (message). In both phases contextually significant distinctions are required, in order to achieve a productive translation that can address its communicative role in the target language and culture (Kahdistani, 2022). According to Searle (1975) the context is originated from the contextual factors. The contextual factors distinguish between the literal meaning and the utterance meaning. As well as giving different meaning to a single sentence in various conversations. Moreover, it is contextual factors that gives a linguistic unit have multiple meanings and functions in distinct circumstances.

The EFL learners are missing contextual awareness when doing translation by using AI- applications. The contextual awareness is taken into consideration to identify how students are attentive about the context of situation in their translation while using AI- applications. Many researchers examined the uses of AI-applications in translation for different languages such as Turkic languages (Mirzakhalov, et. al., 2021), English into Arabic language (Mohsen, 2024), English into Chinees (Yuxiu, 2024), Kurdish language, Sorani dialect (Rasouli, et. al., 2024). Investigation by Kurdish Badini researchers concerning the contextual awareness in translation while using AI-applications by EFL learners has not been conducted yet. This is one of the reasons behind investigating the uses of AI-applications in EFL learners' translation and the contextual awareness. That is why this study investigates:

1. To what extend EFL Learners uses AI- applications in their translation;
2. What are the problems of EFL learners' awareness regarding the contextual gap between both languages;
3. EFL learners will be able to determine accurate words, phrases, and sentences when doing translation while using AI applications.
4. In addition to that which group will be more accurate in the their translation , those who are using AI-applications or those doing translation without any technological assistant.

This study concentrates on assessing EFL learner's translation from Nawroz University and to what extent EFL learners are using AI-applications in their translation. On the bases of learners' feedbacks, this article mainly examines the key issues related to the usage of AI-applications confronted by learners in the translation department.

Translation is mainly the process of dealing with two different languages that requires equivalence in its rendering. Research in domains like the usage of AI-application in translation by the university learners specifically on Kurdish learners at translation department are unexplored yet. Therefore, it is significant to investigate how much learners have the contextual awareness in their translation. As well as to identify the challenges relate to translation while doing translation, as this will assist university teachers in recognizing the learners' awareness. Overall, this understanding will support in perceiving the prose and cones of the uses of AI- applications in EFL learners' translation and its impact on learners' knowledge.

Literature Review

AI has been a significant subject for scholarly research and inquiry. As a subject it has attracted many linguists to reach some solutions regarding the gap between human translation and AI- applications used for translation. In the last decennial period, there were some studies focused on the potential of using translation tools to facilitate learning process.

> *"The origin of translation tools can be traced back to the mid-20th century when the first rule-based machine translation (MT) systems were developed, as discussed in Gaspari's historical overview. These early systems faced challenges with output quality, leading to the evolution of data-driven approaches in the mid-1990s and eventually transitioning to neural systems to improve translation quality and popularity among users and professional translators... Furthermore, translator tools have significantly impacted education by bridging language barriers and enhancing writing skills, with advanced features powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms such as Google Translate and Microsoft Translator (Gaspari, 2024)."*

In January 2024, an academic journal known as *The Journal of Specialised Translation* published a special issue that includes a collection of articles concentrated on a theme called "**Translation Automation and Sustainability**". Gaspari worked as a co-guest editor in this issue to organize and supervise it. This issue is concerned with automation in translation precisely machine translation and AI-application are linked to the notion of sustainability. In this aria sustainability refers to the impact of technology on human, society and environment. The outcomes of Gaspari's 2024 special issue reveal that a

sustainable translation technology have to be oriented by ethical frameworks, critical awareness, and a clear focus on human-centered translation. According to Ruoqi et al. the review and edition of human is necessary when using AI applications, occasionally AI struggles in the translation and recognition of the meaning of idioms, culture specific, style, texts that need deep understanding of context and professional translation (2023).

Several advantages revealed in the educational environment under investigation regarding EFL learners applying AI translation applications in their study. These encompasses higher level of precision in terminology, fewer inaccuracies, and improved communication efficacy. Moreover, according to researches the usage of AI tools by students can be supportive if it is adjusted to each user's need. The potential impact of emerging technologies increases along with confidence in them (Jaruwatsawat et al., 2024). In the context of global digital translation, google translate is recognized as the widely used translation platform. These technologies contribute across multiple languages and minimize cultural communication barriers. Although there is a continues doubt regarding the effectiveness of such technologies, but to some extend they are good supportive in the field of education specifically to EFL learners (Shen & Bai, 2022).

An illustrative case is by Ghassemiazghandi (2024) who did a research using the Bilingual Evaluation understudy (BLEU) score for the evaluations of the data regarding translation. The outcomes of the study revealed that when it comes to translation duties AI applications are more advantageous. Furthermore, Sahari et. al. (2023) stated that in the Arab world, AI- based tools are effective in translation by providing learners with a version that can be evaluated and improved by humans. Salloum et. al., (2024) showed that language pair acceptance of AI- tools in translation requires an assessment based on particular languages and contexts. Despite the fact that learners are using AI- applications to reflect, revise and learn from it, the acceptance differ from one learner to another. In a similar vein, Van Horn (2024) did a research on the feeling of Korean university student when using AI- tools in their study. In his study he found that student had positive opinions. Particularly, AI- tools helped learners to learn on their own and improve their language accuracy. No matter which platform was used. The results of the study assist us to perceive how EFL learners show AI-tools in translation classes especially its benefit in supporting learners' independence.

Research Method

Design

This study employees a mixed method to investigate the gap of EFL learners' contextual awareness while using AI- applications in their translation. The aim of this study is to identify the degree of benefit of using AI-applications in EFL learners' translation.

Participants and setting

The current study aims to gather information from EFL learners from Nawroz university, college of Languages, translation department. It is conducted during the Autumn semester. The participants were university students divided into experimental group and control group of mixed genders. A total of 100 learners divided equally between both groups. All participants were native speakers of Kurdish Badini in their undergraduate studies. The participants in this study are referred to as learners to intensify the role of learning.

Data Collection Strategy

To evaluate learning outcomes, both groups took tests. In experimental group the data has been collected through three phases and each phase was divided into (beginning, middle and end) of the phase. For the control group pretest and posttest were used for the data collection. The participants of both groups in each test received a text to be translated from English as a source language into their native mother tongue language that is Kurdish Badini via papers in their classroom settings. Each participant provided with a text as a test. Moreover, in each test one hour has given as a time set for its translation. However, the number of tests differ from one group to another, with the experimental group the learners were given nine texts over the period of doing all three phases. Whereas for the control group learners did only two tests one in pretest and the other in posttest. For a uniform comprehension by the learner, the instructions were given clearly beforehand. The participants were voluntarily participating in this test to maintain confidentiality and encourage honest responses.

Data Analysis procedures

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, t-test and p-value were calculated for both groups. As far as experimental group is included, the three phases were analyzed separately. Then there was a comparison between the beginning and the end stage of each phase. Furthermore, there was a comparison between pretest and posttest in the control group. To have more accurate results, there was a comparison between the outcome of the end of the third phase with post test of the control group. In addition to the observational analysis across three phases in the experimental group.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Comparison / Phase 1	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Beginning	50	7.45	2.51	—	—	Baseline performance
Middle	50	11.69	2.49	−8.06	< .001	Significant improvement from Beginning
End	50	13.55	3.45	−3.57	.001	Significant improvement from Middle
Beginning vs End	50	—	—	−9.63	< .001	Very strong overall improvement

In the above table students across phase 1. Paired-samples t-test are showing a significant increase and improvement from the beginning until the end of the phase.

Comparison / Phase 2	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Beginning	50	8.60	2.64	—	—	Baseline performance
Middle	50	13.16	2.77	−16.63	< .001	Highly significant improvement from Beginning
End	50	16.72	3.77	−10.31	< .001	Significant improvement from Middle

Comparison / Phase 2	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Beginning vs End	50	—	—	−25.35	< .001	Very strong overall improvement

The above table shows a visible and significant progress in the results of phase 2. Paired-samples t-test. There is a strong improvement from the beginning to the middle of the phase 2. as well as, a significant improvement from middle to the end of the phase 2. The comparison is indicated between the beginning with the end of the phase 2.

Descriptive Statistics and Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Phase 3

Comparison / Phase 3	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Beginning	50	15.68	4.18	—	—	Baseline performance
Middle	50	16.90	3.97	−5.21	< .001	Significant improvement from Beginning
End	50	17.50	5.46	−0.90	.373	No significant improvement from Middle
Beginning vs End	50	—	—	−2.66	.011	Significant overall improvement

In the above table there is a slow improvement in the phase 3. Paired-samples t-test results show a significant increase between the beginning to the middle phase; though, no notable difference was found between the middle and end phases. Towards the final stage the rate of improvement decreased when the beginning and end phases compared together.

Test / Comparison	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation

Test / Comparison	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Pre-test	50	15.40	4.72	—	—	Baseline performance
Post-test	50	16.90	4.83	−2.69	.010	Small but significant improvement
Pre-test vs Post-test	50	—	—	−2.69	.010	Statistically significant difference

The above table shows a minor enhancement in the control groups' outcomes from pretest to posttest. The results of Paired-sample t-test show that this increase is statistically significant. Although, there is a small improvement, that recommend the outcomes are from the natural learning progress, test familiarity, or steady classroom instructions rather than an experimental intervention.

Descriptive Statistics and Independent-Samples t-Test Results for Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Experimental Group (end phase 3)	50	17.50	5.46	—	—	Final performance after intervention
Control Group (Post-test)	50	16.90	4.83	0.58	.562	No statistically significant difference

NOTE: Experimental group scores were taken from the **end of Phase 3**, while control group scores were taken from the **post-test**.

Short Explanation

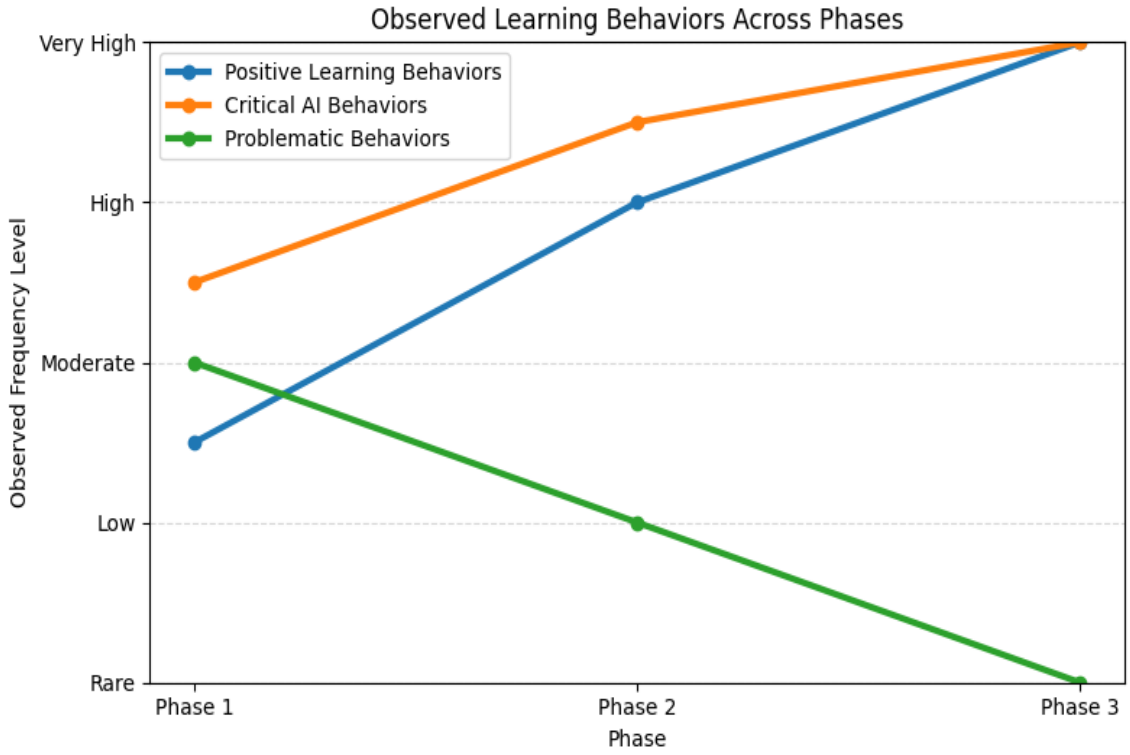
There is a marginally greater mean score in the table for the experimental group than that of the control group at the end phase 3 with the posttest. However, the results of the independence sample t-test demonstrate that difference between both groups is just a random fluctuation that means it is not statistically significant. This suggests that by the end of the study both groups have reached to a parallel standard of effectiveness.

Summary of Quantitative Results (Experimental & Control Groups)

Overall Performance Comparison (Scores /25)

Group / Phase	N	Mean (M)	SD	Key Statistical Finding
Experimental – Phase 1 (End)	50	13.55	3.45	Significant improvement from Phase 1 beginning
Experimental – Phase 2 (End)	50	16.72	3.77	Strong, highly significant improvement
Experimental – Phase 3 (End)	50	17.50	5.46	Improvement slowed (partial plateau)
Control Group – Pre-test	50	15.40	4.72	Baseline performance
Control Group – Post-test	50	16.90	4.83	Small but significant natural improvement
EG vs CG (Post-test)	100	17.50		Difference

Group / Phase	N	Mean (M)	SD	Key Statistical Finding
		vs 16.90		not statistically significant



Observed Learning Behaviors Across Phases

Summary of Observed Learning Behaviors Across Phases

The observational analysis across three phases indicates a clear improvement in learner's behavior. In Phase 1, learning is typically associated with a noticeable behavior that may disrupt learning such as copy- paste and language errors. Accompanied by positive behaviors that consists of basic AI verification, limited peer collaboration, and initial grammatical accuracy. Learners in this phase illustrates a shift from the normal and surface use of AI into a more complex level of engagement.

There is a significant improvement in phase 2, Learning oriented a constructive behavior namely, culturally and contextually appropriate language use, peer collaboration, and correct application of grammar and vocabulary occur with greater regularity. At the same time, there is critical increase in AI use such as, verifying and modifying AI output. This leads to decline in problematic behavior, which represent learners managing their own learning and application of effective strategies when using AI- applications.

In the last phase that is phase 3, there is a high level of learning behavior. In the one hand problematic learning behavior decreased, on the other hand there is a high frequency in positive learning behavior and AI-application practices. This phase represents an improvement in their engagement of AI- applications and strong qualification in linguistics. As well as, performing autonomous, collaborative, and contextually aware behavior.

Broadly, the improvement in the phases represent a transition from surface-level strategies toward strategic, reflective, and context-sensitive learning, encouraged by advancing collaboration and critical use of AI.

Discussion

The quantitative results represent a step by step improvement in three phases of experimental group. There is a gradual increase in mean scores from phase 1 to phase 3 in learning gains. The most significant development revealed in phase 2, that contradicted a slower rate of improvement in phase 3, indicating a prospective plateau effect. In addition to that the control group indicates a moderate but statistically remarkable progress from pretest to posttest, showing ordinary learning advancement. In analyzing the differences between posttest of control group and phase 3 of experimental group no remarkable variation appeared in mean scores between both groups. The experimental group showed a modestly higher mean score than of the control group.

Broadly speaking, the results of the present study emphasize that EFL learners tend to rely on AI- tools that provide them with literal translation techniques may hinder contextual meaning appropriateness in English discourse. This orientation implies that EFL learners tend to link lexical meaning with communicative accuracy, which has been widely observed in translation pedagogy. Such strategy is suitable for EFL learners at a

lower level of learning the language but limit learners' ability to adapt meaning across cultural and situational frames (Mekheimer, 2026).

The findings we had resonate with those of Abdallah (2025), who proved that contextualized instruction with Reverso Context and other tools significantly improved the translation skills of EFL learners by making them more aware of pragmatic cues. correspondingly, Zhao, Li, & Liao (2025) determined that the use of translation tools was most effective among university EFL students when they were able to comprehend the contextual aspects of communication, rather than focusing on word-for-word translation. Both studies support the argument that awareness of context is not a marginal but a central aspect of translation competence.

The implications of this for EFL teaching are significant. Translation exercises, which have been widely criticized for promoting a dependence on the source text, can instead be conceptualized as providing opportunities for the development of context awareness. As Teaching English (British Council, 2024) suggests, translation exercises can be used to promote an awareness of cultural differences if they are designed to draw attention to contextual differences. Teachers should therefore include context-based translation exercises—such as role-play, idiom adaptation, and situational paraphrasing—to motivate learners to prioritize communicative appropriateness over lexical reliability.

This study has a number of limitations. Starting with the number of participants that was limited to only one hundred learners. This study encompasses only Kurdish Badini learners from Duhok governorate. For the setting only one typical university involved in the study. To add more, participants were taken from only fourth stage, which might affect the generalizability of the results. As well as the translation was from mother tongue Kurdish Badini to the foreign language English. Additionally, the study was carried out on written translation, while oral translation and interpretation were not investigated. Future studies might investigate the issue of developing context awareness in multilingual classrooms where learners are simultaneously exposed to different cultural reference points.

In conclusion, this study implies that the significant of translation strategies are not only linguistic choices but also manifestations of the learners' context awareness. By positioning the outcomes of this study within the context of Abdallah (2025), Zhao et al. (2025), and British

Council (2024), It is suggested that EFL teaching practice needs to go beyond the boundaries of lexical correspondence and comprise context.

Conclusions

The main conclusions drawn from the analysis and results are outlined as follows:

1. As it is revealed in the results of the data analyzed for this research EFL learners are widely using AI- applications in their translations no matter which platform they use, it will not be a substitute of human translation rather than an aid to them.
2. Since the majority of EFL learners are missing contextual awareness in their translation such as culture, idioms, language specific terms, etc. It is significant that teachers and instructors lead learners to know how to get benefit from those tools when doing translation from source language into the target language.
3. It is crucial that EFL learners know when and how to use AI- tools for their translation not as a substitute to their skills of translation. However, as a tool that strengthens their skills of translation.
4. As a matter of fact, there was a slight difference between the translation of experimental group and control group. The former has the Mean score of 17.50 while the latter has the Mean score of 16.90. This outcome reveals that using AI- tools by EFL learners could be a support to their translation not to rely on 100 %. Since their translation will lack many language specific terms and structures that AI- tools cannot control.

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