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ЕВФЕМІЗМИ І ДИСФЕМІЗМИ ЯК ЗАСІБ МАНІПУЛЯЦІЇ У ВОЄННИХ НОВИНАХ Дарнопук В.	455
ЛІТЕРАТУРА ЦИФРОВОЇ ДОБИ: БЛОГ, ВЕБ-ОПОВІДАННЯ, ІНТЕРАКТИВНІ ТЕКСТИ Ашмарова С.О., Гонюк О.В.	457
МЕТОДОЛОГІЯ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ ВІЙСЬКОВО-ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ ДОКУМЕНТАЦІЇ Шастун М.О.	463
СУРЖИК: ПРИЧИНИ ВИНИКНЕННЯ ТА НАСЛІДОК ДЛЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ МОВИ Терещенко Л.В., Латоша Є.	468
ХУДОЖНЄ ВІДТВОРЕННЯ ПРОБЛЕМ УКРАЇНІЗАЦІЇ В КОМЕДІЇ МИКОЛИ КУЛІША «МИНА МАЗАЙЛО» Кирилова Д.Д., Гонюк О.В.	471
ХУДОЖНІ ФУНКЦІЇ ЕЛЕМЕНТІВ ГОТИКИ В РОМАНІ ТАМАРИ ГОРІХА ЗЕРНЯ «ШЕПТУХА» Федчун Т.О., Гонюк О.В.	479

СЕКЦІЯ XVI. ПЕДАГОГІКА ТА ОСВІТА

ENHANCING ESP WRITING SKILLS THROUGH GOOGLE DOCS COLLABORATION: PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION IN ENGLISH FOR ENGINEERING Feshchuk A., Halatsyn K.	485
ВІРТУАЛЬНІ ЛАБОРАТОРІЇ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ РЕАЛІЗАЦІЇ ПРАКТИЧНОЇ СКЛАДОВОЇ ПІД ЧАС ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО ТА ЗМІШАНОГО НАВЧАННЯ Бреднєва О.С.	490
ЕФЕКТИВНІСТЬ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ВІДЕОМАТЕРІАЛІВ ТЕХНІЧНОГО ЗМІСТУ У НАВЧАННІ АУДІЮВАННЯ Кочергіна С.С.	494
ЗМІСТ ПРАВОВОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ МАЙБУТНІХ ПЕДАГОГІВ КРІЗЬ ПРИЗМУ КОМПЕТЕНТІСНОГО ПІДХОДУ Вилков С.В.	497
МОДЕЛЬ ARCS ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ПІДВИЩЕННЯ МОТИВАЦІЇ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ У СТУДЕНТОЦЕНТРОВАНОМУ НАВЧАННІ Усик А.А.	500
ОРГАНІЗАЦІЯ ФІЗКУЛЬТУРНО-ОЗДОРОВЧИХ ЗАНЯТЬ З УЧНЯМИ В ЗАКЛАДІ ЗАГАЛЬНОЇ СЕРЕДНЬОЇ ОСВІТИ Габор С.В., Логвиненко О.Б.	502

СЕКЦІЯ XVI. ПЕДАГОГІКА ТА ОСВІТА

ENHANCING ESP WRITING SKILLS THROUGH GOOGLE DOCS COLLABORATION: PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION IN ENGLISH FOR ENGINEERING

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English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a critical role in preparing future engineers for participation in global professional contexts. Engineering graduates are expected to produce technical reports, project proposals, design briefs, manuals, and other written materials that demonstrate precision, clarity, and adherence to disciplinary conventions. However, many students struggle with the written component of ESP due to limited exposure to authentic engineering genres and insufficient opportunities for interactive writing practice.

The increasing availability of digital tools and cloud-based platforms offers new possibilities for transforming ESP writing pedagogy. One of the most widely accessible and user-friendly tools is Google Docs. It allows users to co-author, comment, and edit documents synchronously or asynchronously. For ESP teachers, Google Docs presents an opportunity to bring collaborative, process-oriented, and professionally authentic writing practices into the classroom.

ESP is defined by its focus on learners' specific professional needs and contexts. In English for Engineering, writing instruction must address genres

such as technical specifications, feasibility studies, design proposals, and lab reports. These documents follow strict conventions: logical organisation, impersonal tone, conciseness, and accuracy in terminology (Lubianova, 2016). Moreover, engineers often work collaboratively on written documentation – mirroring real-world professional communication, where multiple stakeholders contribute to a shared project file.

Teaching ESP writing thus requires methods that simulate professional collaboration and foster both linguistic and disciplinary competence. The process-writing approach, which emphasises drafting, feedback, and revision, is particularly compatible with ESP objectives because it mirrors the iterative nature of professional report preparation. When applied to writing, collaboration enables learners to negotiate meaning, share perspectives, and internalise linguistic structures more effectively than in solitary work. Lowry, Curtis, and Lowry (2004) describe collaborative writing as an activity involving joint ownership of the text and shared responsibility for its quality.

In ESP contexts, collaborative writing tasks can help learners practise communication strategies used in professional teamwork – planning, allocating roles, integrating feedback, and maintaining consistency of tone and terminology. The process of co-writing develops critical reading and editing skills alongside writing proficiency.

Google Docs facilitates all stages of collaborative writing: brainstorming, drafting, commenting, revising, and publishing. Its key features include:

- Real-time editing and co-authoring, allowing multiple users to contribute simultaneously.
- Comment and suggestion modes, supporting peer and teacher feedback.
- Version history, enabling transparency of contribution and revision tracking.
- Integration with Google Drive, supporting document organisation and access across devices.

Research on EFL/ESP writing demonstrates that these features can increase engagement, improve feedback quality, and enhance final writing outcomes (Fitriani & Irawati, 2023; Susilawati et al., 2022; Sembiring, Yuliaty, & Sakhiyya, 2025).

The integration of Google Docs in ESP writing aims to:

1. Develop discipline-specific writing competence through authentic tasks.
2. Encourage collaborative learning and peer feedback.

3. Promote digital literacy relevant to professional engineering communication.

4. Enhance learner autonomy and motivation through shared ownership of work.

Real-time collaboration transforms writing into an interactive social activity. Students experience immediate responses from peers and the teacher, making the process dynamic and motivating. Visibility of each member's contribution encourages accountability and a sense of shared ownership.

Unlike handwritten comments returned days later, Google Docs enables instant, contextual feedback. Comments appear next to specific sentences, and suggestion mode allows direct text improvement. Students can reply to comments, ask clarification questions, or justify their choices, thus turning feedback into dialogue rather than one-way correction. Providing feedback trains students to read critically and recognise genre conventions. The act of evaluating peers' work fosters analytical thinking and self-correction. Through the commenting feature, learners develop a professional tone for technical correspondence.

Google Docs facilitates the full writing cycle – planning, drafting, revising, and editing – without losing earlier versions. The version history provides evidence of progress and encourages multiple revisions, reinforcing the idea that writing is iterative.

Using Google Docs mirrors real workplace collaboration in engineering projects, where teams share technical documentation online. Students thus gain experience with cloud collaboration, document management, and digital communication etiquette – skills valued in modern engineering practice.

In a Google Docs-enhanced ESP course, the teacher's role shifts from evaluator to facilitator and coach. Key responsibilities include:

1. **Scaffolding tasks** – break down complex reports into smaller stages with clear deadlines.

2. **Monitoring progress** – use “comment” and “suggesting” features strategically rather than correcting every error.

3. **Mediating peer interaction** – encourage constructive, polite commenting and equitable turn-taking.

4. **Providing genre-specific support** – highlight technical vocabulary, common structures, and stylistic norms typical for engineering writing.

5. **Evaluating process as well as product** – assess not only the final text but also evidence of collaboration, revision, and reflection.

By maintaining an active presence in the shared workspace, the teacher demonstrates that feedback is ongoing, formative, and supportive, not punitive.

The introduction of collaborative writing using Google Docs has broader implications for ESP curriculum design:

- **Curricular integration:** collaboration should be embedded across multiple tasks, not confined to one project.
- **Assessment alignment:** rubrics must value teamwork, revision, and digital collaboration, not just language accuracy.
- **Teacher training:** ESP instructors need professional development on using cloud-based platforms effectively.
- **Institutional support:** reliable internet, devices, and institutional Google accounts are essential for sustainability.
- **Interdisciplinary cooperation:** language teachers can coordinate with engineering faculty to select authentic topics and datasets, making writing tasks relevant to technical courses.

Thus, collaborative writing through Google Docs represents a powerful innovation for teaching English for Engineering. It combines linguistic development with professional skill-building and aligns perfectly with ESP principles of authenticity, learner needs, and communication relevance. By engaging students in real-time co-authoring, peer review, and iterative revision, teachers transform writing from a solitary, product-based activity into a dynamic process of shared learning.

However, successful implementation depends on thoughtful pedagogy: scaffolding, equitable participation, and consistent guidance. When used strategically, Google Docs enhances not only writing proficiency but also digital literacy, teamwork, and communicative competence – skills that engineers need in the modern global workplace. Ultimately, the goal is not technology for its own sake, but technology for empowerment: equipping engineering students to communicate effectively, collaboratively, and professionally in English.

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