


Chapter 10

Assessment of Digital Technologies in ESP University Writing

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ABSTRACT

The use of digital technologies in teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) has become increasingly common and valuable recently. Thus, this study aims to provide examples of effective digital tools (DT) that can improve writing skills and to evaluate their usability and usefulness through a questionnaire. From the teachers' point of view, it focuses on DTs that facilitate the development of updated teaching resources adapted to the students' needs. From the students' angle, it emphasizes the practical application of DTs that enhance writing skills during the course and beyond, fostering autonomous improvement. The findings indicate that DTs can improve learners' writing by aiding with grammar and domain-specific terminology, as well as by effectively conveying complex ideas. Moreover, the use of writing DTs offers long-term benefits, promoting learner autonomy and improving digital literacy through exposure to various DTs.

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of digital technologies in language learning and teaching has brought new possibilities for pedagogical innovation, becoming a topic of interest for researchers and lecturers. Their benefits are various. They are used to overcome the physical constraints of traditional classroom settings through online learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and language exchange applications, to name but a few. They facilitate collaborative learning by creating spaces where learners can interact with native speakers and other language learners, promoting a more dynamic learning experience. Additionally, they provide a variety of learning materials and tools which are instrumental in improving language skills, as they offer features such as real-time translation, interactive exercises, and rewriting tools, among others, enabling learners to actively improve their language skills. This research aims to describe and assess Digital Tools (DTs) that can be integrated into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching, particularly in relation to writing skills. It presents examples of their use within the ESP context, contributing to the body of knowledge and providing insights for educators, researchers, and practitioners from both teaching and learning viewpoints. From the teaching perspective, the study describes DTs that help to create updated and customized teaching resources that meet students' needs. Since these resources are particularly limited in fields like telecommunication engineering or art history, DTs are essential in addressing this resource gap. In parallel, the study examines the students' experiences with DTs and their practical application in writing instruction to improve learners' skills during and beyond the course, promoting independent learning. ESP learners assess the DT usefulness and usability through a Google Forms questionnaire.

Three main categories of DTs for ESP writing are identified by Skorczynska et al. (2016), based on Bostock's (1996, 2007) work: firstly, information resources including corpora and AI that offer linguistic data or models for writing; secondly, information processing tools such as corpus tools that enable the analysis of corpus data to understand language patterns; and thirdly, technology-aided instruction tools like AI.

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) teaching, including ESP, is based on the linguistic principles that describe specialized languages. These languages are defined by three elements: user, topic, and communicative situation (Cabr , 1993/1999). Their combination results in varying degrees of specialization along a continuum, from general to specialized language, as highlighted by Sager, et al. (1980, p. 17), who stated that "the difference between general and special languages is a difference of degree rather than kind: the degree to which the fundamental characteristics of language are maximized or minimized in special languages." According to Cabr  (1993/1999, p. 47), specialized communication is different from general communica-

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