Chapter 8
Web Based CALL: A Tool to Develop Writing Strategies among Tertiary Level Students

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ABSTRACT
Strategy training forms part of skills training and in the ESL context such training has to be given considerable importance due to individual differences in students’ learning styles. In the case of teaching writing skills to students, teachers can create awareness of various strategies among students by imparting training in various strategies. The tertiary level teachers of engineering colleges in India often prepare their students for industries, which includes training them in writing skills. Most of the universities which offer professional education have now integrated technological tools with teaching and that has facilitated the teaching and learning process. In this chapter the author would discuss her action research in which she offered strategy training related to writing skills to her students with the help of Wiki.

INTRODUCTION
Second language teachers consider various factors such as a suitable approach for conducting a training program, learners’ individual differences in learning styles, the opportunity created for using appropriate strategies while doing language tasks; and the consistent exposure given to a particular skill with the help of Web 2.0 technology in order to develop students’ proficiency in language skills. It is worthwhile to understand the significance of each factor mentioned above in the teaching and learning process. To begin with, for developing writing skills in students, teachers could either follow an ‘implicit approach’ or ‘explicit approach’ to offer training in strategies. The former approach advocates the integration of strategies in various tasks and training students in language skills without focusing mainly on their use of strategies. In the case of latter approach, students would be trained in language skills with specific reference to related strategies. Considering the features of these approaches, implicit approach does not aim at creating awareness of strategies to students. As a result, they are not exposed to varied real life contexts in which they would possibly use the strategies. On the other hand, while using the explicit approach, teachers would provide lots of...
real life situations for students to practice the use of various strategies. The most unique feature of this approach is that it provides a collaborative spirit between learners and the teacher, which motivates the learner to learn and practice strategies for developing self-reliance (Oxford, 1990). Teachers can assess the feasibility of delivering strategy training in their classrooms and accordingly follow a suitable approach.

With regard to the second factor, it must be stated that teachers have to be aware of the learners’ individual differences in learning style in order to create learning opportunities. According to Clark (2014) ‘Learning Style’ is referred to as “a student’s consistent way of responding to and using stimuli in the context of learning” (n.p). Clark further quotes Stewart and Felicetti (1992) to mention that learning styles are “educational conditions under which a student is most likely to learn” (n.p). This reiterates the need for knowing how students learn and the extent to which they retain knowledge. Teachers of this era are aware that students construct meaning while learning, form a concept, explore the way things work, and discover through self-enquiry. It is further evident that while some believe in doing group activities, a few are comfortable with working individually on a given task. Woolfolk (2004) defines learning preferences as “preferred ways of studying or learning, such as using pictures instead of text, working with other people versus alone, learning in structured and unstructured situation” (p. 603) and cognitive style of students as “different ways of perceiving and organizing information” (p. 603).

Haynes (n.d) specifies the importance of teaching to learners’ learning styles. She points out that some students participate effectively in oral discussions, a few enjoy graphical representations and a few others enjoy working in group activities.

Kilpatrick (2012) while presenting his research study relating to learning styles, sense of efficacy and self-theories of intelligence, quotes Pashler et al (2009) to discuss learning styles theories. It must be stated that these theories support the point that “students learn more efficiently when material is presented in a manner that is consistent with their learning styles as identified by various learning styles assessment instruments.” (p.9). It indicates the possibility of offering a curriculum that allows students to get individualized instruction that suits their individual abilities and learning styles and learn at their own pace. Diaz (1999) believed that students have learning preferences and that aids teachers in the planning of small-group and individualized instruction (Kemp, Morrison & Ross, 1998).

This reiterates the fact that instructors have to give lots of importance to designing tasks, which would be handled in different ways by students with individual abilities. In other words, the tasks that are designed create opportunities for students to use different strategies (third factor mentioned above) to enhance their learning abilities.

Learning strategies refer to ways of learning and a good language learner makes use of various strategies to facilitate his or her learning process. According to Skehan (1989), good learners exhibit the “capacity to use appropriate strategies and to select the most effective strategy for a particular learning problem” (n.p). It is believed that learners’ internal characteristics and learning conditions (Stern, 1983) influence their learning process. Research studies have proved that strategy training prepare learners to self-direct themselves in their learning process. Wenden (1983) specifies the use of three self-directing strategies including (1) the knowledge of a language and the aspects that go with language learning, (2) deciding on what to learn and how to learn, and (3) self-evaluating one’s own progress in learning. Rubin (1987) classifies strategies into three types such as ‘Learning Strategies’, ‘Communication Strategies’ and ‘Social Strategies’ (Hismanoglu, 2000).

It must be reiterated that for learning any particular skill, students have to make use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies to enhance learning. Cook (2008) quotes O’Malley and Chamot (1990), who have defined metacognitive
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