Discipline-Specific Writing Strategies Used by TEFL Graduate Students

F. Dehghan
Ph.D. Student, TEFL
Shiraz University
email: s-fdehghan@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

S. A. Razmjoo*
Associate Professor, TEFL
Shiraz University
email: arazmjoo@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

Abstract

This study aims to examine the strategies utilized by eleven postgraduate students in an EFL university context in their attempts to acquire the textual practices of their discipline. First- and second-year MA students, one Ph.D. student as well as individuals who had completed their MA programs in TEFL took part in interviews in order to elicit the strategies they used when they endeavored to write their discipline-specific writings, such as articles, proposals and theses. The results revealed that the participants utilized socio-affective, communication and resourcing strategies more than cognitive strategies. However, they ignored metacognitive strategies, which might be due to a lack of conscious awareness of certain writing genres in the field. Social apprenticeship strategies were not considered to be of great importance by participants. Students were highly dependent on their instructors for feedback, though without bearing any sense of collaboration with them or their peers. The role of the explicit instruction of metacognitive genre awareness as well as the provision of an atmosphere of collaboration among students has been emphasized.

Keywords: disciplinary strategies, advanced academic writing, discipline-specific literacy, strategy, writing strategies

1. Introduction

Disciplinary or discipline-specific literacy, or as Prior (1998) states, disciplinarity, refers to advanced professional skills that students need to acquire regarding their particular community of practice. It involves skills, dispositions, language, and relationships students rarely experience outside their particular discourse communities (Lewis, 2007). But how do university students, especially postgraduate students, acquire the desired academic and disciplinary skills? It is an even more challenging endeavor when students have to develop these advanced academic and discipline-specific skills in a foreign language. Some universities may provide students with study skills courses designed to promote their students' attainment of academic literacy. "Advanced writing", "professional writing", "research methods" and other generic and study skills courses are designed to help the transition of novice students into threshold practitioners in disciplines (Woodward-Kron, 1999).

This transition involves the development of theoretical knowledge (content) and its applications, the acquisition of practical experience, and knowledge of and participation in the textual as well as oral practices of a discipline.

1.1 Objectives of the study and research question

As Ding (2008) states, there are two approaches to initiating novice postgraduate students into their related community of practice: cognitive apprenticeship, by which she means "modeling, scaffolding, coaching, and collaboration to enhance learning in formal settings," and social apprenticeship, which refers to "socialization, interaction, and collaboration with experts, colleagues, and peers in informal settings to acquire disciplinary knowledge and experiences" (p. 3). In other words, disciplinary literacy is not limited to the textual or writing practices of a discipline. It goes farther to include all types of interaction, collaborations and practices that novice students engage in to join their related disciplines. As such, this study aims to identify the different types of writing strategies utilized by postgraduate students in an EFL university context to promote their academic and discipline-specific literacy competences and skills and help them become professional

members of their particular discipline. Specifically, this study provides insight into the following question:

1. What particular strategies or textual practices are utilized by postgraduate TEFL students during the process of composing their discipline-specific professional writings?

In line with other research on language learning strategies which has tried to identify the features of 'good language learners' (Dornyei & Skehan, 2005), this study aims to investigate the issue of learning strategies from a different perspective. In particular, the purpose of this study is to explore those specific writing strategies that postgraduate students in the field of TEFL employ when producing particular discipline-specific compositions in an EFL university context. Many students encounter a lot of problems as they start their career in postgraduate studies as is evident from the increased cases of plagiarism worldwide (Abasi & Graves, 2008). If we can identify the various helpful strategies that are utilized by postgraduate student-writers, we can design lesson plans for courses like "Advanced Writing" or "Proposal Writing" to teach those strategies to postgraduate students.

2. Background

Tertiary or higher education involves adapting to "new ways of understanding, interpreting and organizing knowledge" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 158). There are two basic approaches towards teaching disciplinary skills (especially writing) to university students. On the one hand, a discipline-specific approach (Bazerman, 2005) emphasizes the socialization and enculturation of university students into the literacy practices of the related disciplinary, academic communities. In this approach novice students must emulate different types of practices utilized by experts in their discipline in order to transit from the novice level to the threshold level and become a member of their respective communities of practice. On the other hand, there is also a more social perspective in the form of the academic literacy approach (Lea & Street, 1998) which prioritizes "self-discovery, voice, and class, ethnic and personal identities" in academic writing (Goodfellow, 2005, p. 482). While the first group maintains that "only by learning disciplinary

practices can students remake those disciplines in more equitable and less narrow ways" (Bazerman, 2005, p. 89), the academic literacy approach emphasizes the need to provide students with a critical look at the materials and practices they encounter in academic contexts. Similarly, Beaufort (2004) believes that writing is not a one-size-fits-all skill.

Academic literacy plays an important role in constructing knowledge in university contexts. However, as Curnow and Liddicoat (2010, p. 1) state, this is an ignored area "in teaching and assessment approaches, in favor of a narrower focus on content". In other words, when talking about academic literacy, more attention is generally paid to the content being taught rather than the academic literacy skills and competencies students need to acquire in order to join the specific community of discourse they belong to. Gaining such status is a difficult task even in one's native language. Therefore, when it comes to a foreign language, complexities emerge as language proficiency is another area of difficulty which may create a difference between native and non-native speakers. Though research has shown that domestic (native) students have no particular priority over international (non-native) students regarding academic literacy skills (Erling & Richardson, 2010; Paton, 2007), this does not mean that EFL non-native students do not need support. Students majoring in the various branches of applied linguistics need EAP-type support like all other students (Johns & Swales, 2002). As Curry (2004) maintains,

> Learning academic literacy involves engaging in a range of academic social practices; this effort entails much more than learning to speak or write in a new language. Rather, learning academic literacy involves negotiating various academic discourses in multiple circumstances (p. 52).

When students enter a postgraduate university program, they gradually become familiar with the discipline's content and practices (Johns & Swales, 2002). Students in TEFL receive instructions in generic academic courses as well as specific content areas (like methodology, language testing, linguistics, etc.). In other words, they have to start

practicing specific academic literacy skills in their postgraduate programs. The idea of graduate attributes defines university education in terms of the development of certain transferable and generic skills (Moore & Hough, 2007).

Research on the enculturation of the novice writer into the academic discourse community underscores the need to initiate newcomers to academic cultures and genre conventions, to increase their exposure to disciplinary texts, and to enhance their interaction with experts (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988; Beaufort, 2005; Ding, 2008; Dysthe, 2002; Leki, 2003; Prior, 1998; Riazi, 1997). The point is that novice postgraduate students may turn to different strategies to commence practicing the social and textual practices of their particular discipline. In the following section, the literature pertaining to foreign language writing strategies will be reviewed.

2.1 Writing strategies

Research on writing strategies used by foreign language learners is ample. Different taxonomies have been proposed to explain the types of strategies that are used by L2 writers. As Manchón, Roca de Larios and Murphy (2007) state, these studies were cognitively-based in origin (see Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1981), but in the mid 1990s the trend shifted to a more socio-cognitive perspective "thus positing that writing is a socially situated, cognitive, communicative activity" (Manchón, Roca de Larios & Murphy, 2007, p. 229) (see Kent, 1999; Riazi, 1997). Having been referred to by different names (behavior, operations, techniques, procedures, composing or production processes, process- and language-related skills, or simply skills), writing strategies include both general macro-processes, i.e. planning, writing, and revising, and very specific processes like patchwriting, avoidance, backtracking, evaluation, rehearsing, reformulation, rhetorical refining and the use of models (Manchón, Roca de Larios & Murphy 2007, p. 231). Manchón (2001) has identified a *broad* and a *narrow* conceptualization of writing strategies. The broad characterization includes a learner-internal trend (any action or technique employed by

writers) and a socio-cognitive trend of research (assuming that writing is a socially constructed practice).

A narrow conceptualization, on the other hand, applies to "research that has investigated writing strategies from a purely cognitive, intra-learner angle" (Manchón, Roca de Larios & Murphy, 2007, p. 235) and defines strategies in terms of either control mechanisms (cognitive models of L1 writing) or problem-solving devices. Many studies have been conducted within these paradigms and trends. The point, however, is that most of the studies conducted on writing strategies examine general writing proficiency and are not related to the strategies utilized by L2 writers when they have to write compositions in their particular disciplines (such as papers, proposals and theses and dissertations) (for more information on the issue of writing in the disciplines, see Freedman, 1987, 1993; Herrington, 1985; Prior, 1991, Shaw, 1991). One exceptional study focusing on the issue of writing in the disciplines is Riazi's (1997) longitudinal study which maintains that developing disciplinary literacy (the demonstration of which is mostly through writing) is "an interactive social-cognitive process in that production of the texts required interaction between the individual's cognitive processes and social/contextual factors in different ways" (p. 105). The author proposes three sets of composing strategies, namely cognitive, meta-cognitive and social strategies, used by postgraduate students. The study, however, looks at disciplinary literacy from a general perspective. Studies focusing on a particular discipline are rare (Beaufort, 2004). In the same line of research, the present study, which follows a socio-cognitive orientation regarding writing as a practice that is constructed in the particular social context or community in which it is used, aims to investigate the specific strategies used by postgraduate students while they are engaged in producing particular discipline-specific compositions in an EFL university context.

3. Method

Context: The study was conducted at Shiraz University, one of the top universities in Iran, where TEFL courses are offered at both PhD and MA levels. These students have to write all their textual assignments as well

as proposals, theses and dissertations in English. As a result, they have to maintain high levels of proficiency and advanced academic literacy in English. The university offers courses on advanced writing and research which are designed to acquaint MA students with the writing and research practices of the discipline.

3.1 Participants

The nature of the study is qualitative, which justifies using small samples (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorenson, 2010). The participants of this study were eleven MA and PhD students as well as individuals who had completed their MA programs in TEFL at Shiraz University (4 males and 7 females). Three were in their first year of study, 4 were in their second year and 3 were graduated individuals. One PhD student of TEFL also took part in this study. As this study is based on a grounded theory design, more participants were interviewed until no new theme was gained (data saturation) and as such the number was limited to the figure mentioned above.

The postgraduate group was chosen as they had enough experience with advanced academic literacy in English as a foreign language. This purposive sampling was used because these students were from different skill levels and, therefore, could be representatives of postgraduate students at different levels.

3.2 Instrument

Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010) maintain that the primary method of data collection in the grounded theory is interview. A semi-structured interview was used to gather the participants' opinions. The questions examined participants' viewpoints regarding what exactly they were doing or had done when they started to write their first paper assignments, their proposals and their theses and dissertations. Meanwhile, the respondents were permitted to add any new points at the end of the interview.

3.3 Procedure

The interviewees were interviewed separately and the discussions were recorded for further transcription and analysis. They were free to answer the questions either in English or Persian. No time limit was set for the interviews, with the shortest lasting 48 minutes and the longest clocking in at 95 minutes. This was done in order to provide the participants with enough time to reflect on the questions.

The interviews were initiated with a brief introduction to the topic. The interviewees were then asked to concentrate on the process of writing and its different stages, from the very beginning of the process to the final drafting. Based on the literature, the questions focused on the role of professors and classmates and their feedback in the development of their professional writing skills, their confidence in writing in their own ways, their reliance on published works and their L1 (in all the stages of drafting), their feelings and concerns at different stages of drafting their professional writings, planning and managing the written drafts, the problems they encountered in this regard and how they dealt with them, and finally factors which they regarded as influential in the development of their writing abilities.

3.4 Data analysis

All these interviews were transcribed. In order to secure credibility (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010), the transcripts of the comments were given to the respondents in order for them to review their opinions and check the answers written in detail. After collecting the data, the transcripts were coded so as to identify the common themes and concepts (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). Certain categories emerged based on shared concepts obtained from the data.

4. Findings

Table 1 shows the frequencies with which each writing strategy was used:

Table 1: frequencies of strategies observed

No.	Writing strategies	Frequency
1	Modeling	14
2	Comparison	13
3	Seeking feedback	13
4	Controlling anxiety	11
5	Avoiding difficulties	10
6	Considering audience	9
7	Cognitive Strategies (the use of mother tongue)	8
8	Metacognitive strategies	4
9	socialization	3
10	interaction	3
11	Informal collaboration with experts, instructors, and peers	1

The analysis of data revealed emerging categories of discipline-specific writing strategies at the tertiary level. The most important academic writing strategy used by first year MA respondents was imitating or modeling, which, according to Ding (2008), is a subcategory of cognitive apprenticeship. These people imitate the practices of other writers to compose their own writings as a result of not being familiar with the dominant genres of the discipline. Modeling can be categorized as a rhetorical strategy utilized by these students (Mu, 2005). One MA student stated:

For the first time, I referred to published articles as well as theses and dissertations to see how they have constructed their texts. First it was so frightening to me and I thought I could never write like them. But after a while, I managed to understand their structures and tried to model them as I was writing…

Comparison was another rhetorical strategy used by postgraduate TEFL students. They refer to different papers in various journals to see how they have constructed the same concepts. A second year MA student emphasized how comparing different written material and writing genres in different professional journals has helped him to come to an understanding about different rhetorical and generic conventions:

I read many journal articles to compare their ways of stating the problem, background and methods.

Socio-affective strategies were the second most important category of strategies utilized by postgraduate students. Heavy reliance on their professors for feedback and textual sources is evident from their comments about their expectations:

University teachers have a very important role. They can guide their students towards becoming professional writers…When I started to write my first academic assignments, I used some paragraphs from published articles, but tried to change the structure and some words…

This is what has been referred to as patch-writing (Howard, 1993; Pecorari, 2003, 2008). The reason, as Howard (2001) states, can be attributed to the high dependence of non-native writers on the language and content of the original texts written by native writers. These people also expect to receive a lot of help and feedback from their professors:

The role of university professors is very important. They must provide us with practical models and needed support. Some instructors only teach theories. These courses are not very useful…

It seems that writing at this advanced level is an activity which creates a lot of anxiety for many postgraduate TEFL students. Most of them express their fear of writing high-level compositions requiring greater proficiency in English. One first year MA student stated:

I was afraid my writing might look ridiculous...

Or another second-year student commented:

At first, published articles frightened me very much. I thought with myself it isn'tpossible to write an article like them. They were like monsters to me.

As such, it is evident that many of these students turn to some strategies to reduce their anxiety. Some even admitted that at times they copied sentences from other texts in order to ensure that their writings were appropriate and resembled original texts:

By using some sentences from the published articles, I want to assure myself that my writing is acceptable.

Communication strategies were the third category of strategies utilized by postgraduate students in developing professional literacy skills in English. Communication strategies include avoiding difficulties and problems and paying attention to who the audience of their writing will be. If they were to submit their writings only as assignments, the participants would not consider them very important and, consequently, would not devote much time to the process of writing those assignments. On the other hand, if their aim was to have a paper published in a journal, or if they were working on their thesis, they would expend more time and energy as such compositions are often read by more than one person. They would also be more concerned with the content, language and principles of academic writing. In such cases, they expressed concern about plagiarism and copying:

I was thinking about publishing my papers and I was always concerned about plagiarism. I was afraid that even if I change words and structures, this may be regarded as a case of plagiarism by professional journals.... If you don't learn the principles of writing at advanced level from the very beginning and turn to other strategies like copying, it will be difficult for you to learn them later...

In other words, if postgraduate students considered publishing their articles in journals for instrumental reasons, such as admission to PhD programs or job applications, and anticipated that their writings would be read and refereed by experts, this would become an important source of motivation for them to learn the principles of writing in disciplines.

Cognitive strategies were the next category of strategies derived from analyzing interviews, though this group of strategies was not used by learners as often. As Riazi (1997) maintains, cognitive strategies include interacting with the materials to be used in writing by manipulating them mentally or physically. Cognitive strategies like clarification, retrieval and self-questioning are not very much used by this group. The only exception relates to thinking in one's native language (Wenden, 1991), as one of the respondents mentioned:

First of all, I develop the idea in Persian and then try to elaborate the related concepts that come into my mind...

Finally, an important category of strategies which seems to be neglected by this group of respondents was metacognitive strategies. These strategies, as Riazi (1997) states, are executive processes which are used to plan, monitor and evaluate a writing task, or as Wenden (1991) believes, are mental operations or procedures that learners use to regulate their learning. For example, planning involves making and changing outlines, or the ways learners plan the ideas that come next and explicitly state their objectives for organization and procedures.

Monitoring refers to checking and verifying strategies and evaluating those strategies which writers use when "reconsidering the written text, previous goals, planned thoughts, as well as changes undertaken to the text" (Mu, 2005, p.4). However, the respondents did not mention these strategies frequently in their interviews (only four) and most of them considered writings as a one-shot process, as was evident from the comment of a second-year MA student:

I hate revising my papers. Once I have written a text, I cannot return and make any changes.

Only the PhD students and one MA student asserted that they would first write an outline and then develop their written drafts based on that outline:

I write an outline in terms of the headings of different parts and then fill different parts of my writing…

The importance of metacognitive strategies in learning in general (Goh, 2008) and in academic reading and writing in particular (Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011) has been emphasized in the literature. One explanation may be that metacognitive strategies in particular need to be taught and do not develop by themselves. In other words, learners need to receive explicit instruction about these strategies. As these students do not have any instruction in metacognitive genre awareness, they are not able to use them effectively.

All the strategies and methods mentioned up to this point can be regarded as categories of cognitive apprenticeship, which helps novice writers to "pick up relevant jargon, imitate expert behaviours, and gradually start to act in accordance with disciplinary norms" (Ding, 2008, p. 5). These strategies are mostly related to the writing practice itself. Cognitive apprenticeship, which is based primarily on collaboration between an expert and a novice, on the one hand, and between peers, on the other, was evident in the interaction between instructors and postgraduate students, though peer or student-student interaction was relatively absent in initiating postgraduate students into the disciplinary culture. In addition to collaboration, context and situation also play an important role in cognitive apprenticeship. Therefore, the explicit teaching of disciplinary knowledge as well as specific genres in the participants' "advanced writing" and "research methods" courses had had an important motivating effect on their enculturation process into the specific culture of their discipline.

However, as Ding (2008, p. 7) states, "because of the slowly evolving, complicated, and interactive features of discourse communities and the existence of numerous informal learning opportunities, relying on cognitive apprenticeship approaches in disciplinary writing classrooms is far from enough to help enculturate postgraduate students to the scientific and discourse communities they hope to enter". Instead, postgraduate students can benefit from informal learning opportunities, or what has been referred to as social apprenticeship (Beaufort, 2000, 2004), which

mostly consist of informal strategies. In other words, social apprenticeship emphasizes learning in informal settings rather than formal contexts like classrooms, aiming to help student's transition from the role of mere apprentices or observers to the roles of participants, collaborators and contributors to the community of discourse they intend to join. Social apprenticeship, as Ding (2008, p. 8) maintains, "is influenced by factors such as mentoring, coaching, observation of expert performance, workplace environments, peer relations, support networks, and progressive skill development".

However, the students participating in this study did not refer to social apprenticeship practices in any meaningful way during their interviews. Conspicuously absent were peer relations and support networks. Instead, there seemed to be an atmosphere of competition rather than collaboration among students, as is evident from some of their comments:

The atmosphere in this university encourages a kind of negative competition among students. They are in a hurry to write an article and present them in conferences or publish them in journals because they compete with each other for employment or PhD exam.

This atmosphere of competition stifles potential opportunities for constructive collaboration among postgraduate students or the formation of support groups or peer review groups. Even collaboration with experts was not very common among them. The initiation of novice writers into a discipline does not seem to be the concern of many instructors as stated by some students:

Our professors do not regard us as future colleagues. They are not of much help to us. We are just students and are supposed to do our work by ourselves...

Only a few respondents (three) stated that they were in contact with their professors via email constantly and frequently. Even fewer (only two) maintained that they had emailed famous figures in the field related to

their research topics and sought guidance from them. One MA student said:

I email my professor only when I want to submit an assignment.

Another MA student stated:

I don't think that being in contact with experts is helpful. I just once did so and received very general comments, not helpful details.

Overall, these findings have been summarized in Figure 1, showing the use of different strategies based on their frequencies:

Figure 1: Writing strategies used by postgraduate students
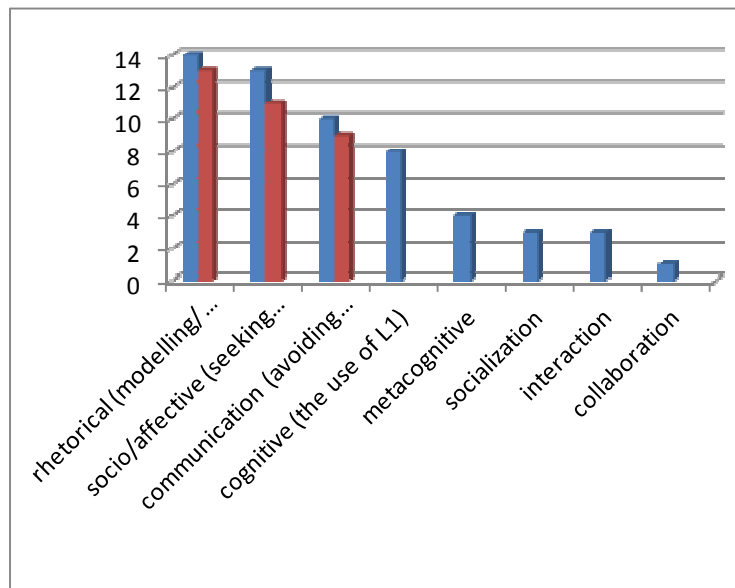
5. Discussion

The above findings are summarized in Table 2, ordered according to the frequency of their appearance in the students' comments:

Table 2: Summary of codification results

Theme	category	sample
Textual strategies	Rhetorical strategies (modeling, comparison)	1. For the first time, I referred to published articles as well as theses and dissertations to see how they have constructed their texts. 2. I read many journal articles to compare their ways of stating the problem, background and methods.
	Socio-affective & communication strategies	3. By using some sentences from published articles, I want to assure myself that my writing is acceptable. 4. I was thinking about publishing my papers and I was always concerned about plagiarism. I was afraid that even if I changed words and structures, this would be regarded as a case of plagiarism by professional journals.
	Cognitive Strategies (the use of mother tongue)	5. First of all, I develop the idea in Persian and then try to elaborate on the relevant concepts that come to my mind.
	Metacognitive strategies	6. I hate revising my papers. Once I have written a text, I cannot return and make any changes.
Informal strategies	socialization	7. Our professors do not regard us as future colleagues. They are not of much help to us. We are just students and are supposed to do our work by ourselves.
	interaction	8. The atmosphere in this university encourages a kind of negative competition among students.
	Informal collaboration with experts, instructors, and peers	9. I email my professor only when I want to submit an assignment. 10. I don't think that being in contact with experts is helpful. I did so just once and received very general comments, not helpful details.

Based on the information in Table 2, it is evident that the most frequent types of strategies utilized by the L2 postgraduate writers were rhetorical, socio-affective and certain cognitive strategies. On the other hand, metacognitive strategies, socialization, interaction and collaboration practices were rarely used or regarded important by them.

The findings of this study are in line with those of previous research (e.g., Arndt, 1987; Freedman, 1987, 1993; Herrington, 1985; Manchón, 2001; Prior, 1991, Riazi, 1997; Sasaki, 2000; Shaw, 1991; Wenden, 1991). The present study adds to the findings of previous research studies by demonstrating that rhetorical, socio-affective and cognitive strategies are more widely used by postgraduate students in a foreign language context, while metacognitive and social strategies are used less often. The reason may be related to the nature of academic work in this university context, which is regarded as an individualistic, self-learnt endeavor rather than an ability which can be constructed and developed through collaboration with experts and peers. As mentioned earlier, this atmosphere also encourages competition among peers rather than collaboration. As a result, it is not unexpected that students turn to those strategies which are more internal, individual and directly related to the materials and tasks. The rather low use of metacognitive strategies may be attributed to a lack of explicit instruction of these strategies as metacognitive strategies are mostly developed through explicit teaching rather than being left to the students themselves to be acquired indirectly (Goh, 2008; Wenden, 1991). As many interviewees in this study asserted that they did not regard the instructions they received in courses like "Advanced Writing" or "Proposal Writing" as helpful in the development of their academic writing skills, they, intuitively, then, turn to modeling and comparison or their L1 as the most convenient and easiest ways to circumvent the problem.

These results strongly support the idea that instruction and context are two major factors determining the use of writing strategies by L2 postgraduate students during the process of writing discipline-related compositions. Metacognitive and cognitive strategies are the most important types of strategies which are learned via instruction. However, these students do not receive enough instruction (as they would have

liked) raising their awareness of such helpful strategies. As a result, they turn to some strategies which can be called intuitive strategies in order to deal with the difficult task of composing discipline-specific written work. Educational context is also an important factor determining the type of strategies used by students. An academic context which encourages competition rather than collaboration among students, puts the students under stress with time limitations, and provides them with no practical instruction cannot help L2 postgraduate students become self-regulated, innovative writers in their disciplines.

6. Conclusions

The findings of this study can be summarised as follows:

1. Writing-based strategies were greatly utilized. These strategies include rhetorical, socio-affective, communication and cognitive strategies used in formal settings. Metacognitive strategies were the least used strategies. This can be attributed to a lack of explicit training in genre awareness and advanced academic writing.

2. Informal strategies were utilized very rarely by respondents. A competition-fostering atmosphere rather than a collaborative one and lack of peer support groups were among the reasons which caused these postgraduate students to ignore social apprenticeship strategies in informal ways.

   Advanced academic literacy is a competence which goes beyond mere abilities of reading and writing at tertiary levels or acquiring the content matters of disciplines. Rather, it includes acquiring the culture of a specific community of practice or transforming the roles of postgraduate students from observing novices to practitioner contributors. The respondents of this study intuitively used certain strategies to help themselves in this process. However, as the results showed, the acquisition of certain aspects of academic literacy can be fostered through providing novice students with explicit instruction on specific genres and creating a setting in which they can work more collaboratively with and help each other. Metacognitive genre awareness

is an important aspect of academic literacy in every discipline and can be fostered via explicit instruction. The expert-novice relationship should change from a unidirectional transmitting process to that of a collaborative transformation.

The postgraduate respondents in this study had concerns about the negative feelings which they had, such as anxiety, when they wanted to initiate their professional writing. These feelings can be managed through social apprenticeship practices in which students work with each other and with experts in support groups. Instructors must be aware of the fact that many of these novices have not yet acquired the principles of academic writing in their particular discipline and need sufficient time to become acquainted with these principles and begin incorporating them in the writing process. However, due to time constraints, the explicit instruction of writing in that particular discipline may be necessary to foster the enculturation of novice writers into the particular community of practice to which they are going to contribute as members.

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