

## **What Goes On When Tertiary Students Are Engaged In An Online Academic Writing Course?**

*Chan Swee Heng*  
[shchan@fbmk.upm.edu.my](mailto:shchan@fbmk.upm.edu.my)  
*Universiti Putra Malaysia*

*Han Ai Leen*  
[han.aileen@uob.com.my](mailto:han.aileen@uob.com.my)  
*United Overseas Bank Malaysia*

### **Abstract**

Using resources from the World Wide Web as learning materials has immense potential judging from the proliferation of such sites. In this investigation, the focus is on strategy use in learning to write in an online environment. A group of tertiary level students were put through a writing course which consisted of a staged exposure to a variety of theme-focused topics related to writing. These materials were assembled from sources posted by a number of providers to give students the relevant online writing experience. From this encounter, the students' learning strategies were teased out through the use of SILL (a well recognized strategy checklist invented by Rebecca Oxford). The results showed details that helped define a good strategy user and a poor strategy user in the online writing environment, and gave insights into the trend of use of the various strategies. In the process, two new strategies were also uncovered which could be said to characterize online learning of writing. From follow-up interviews, it was established that the ESL online writing students have yet to attain the confidence level for of full autonomous learning as they expressed overwhelmingly for the desire of a facilitator. However, on the whole, the online writing encounter was a positive experience with the report of a marginal increase in the use of the metacognitive and socio-affective strategies in the post score.

**Keywords:** web-based learning resources for writing, online writing environment, learning strategies, tertiary level students, SILL.