CHAPTER 8
SUMMARY

With the growing need for in-depth training in reading and writing skills to TOEFL aspirants, a single group experimental study was conducted with the help of the web 2.0 tool, Wiki. The subjects for the current study were chosen using purposive sampling method. The subjects were first year engineering students of a Chennai-based college who were aspiring to pursue their higher studies abroad.

The study was conducted in three phases, namely, pre-training, during training and post-training. In the pre-training phase, a questionnaire was distributed to find out the students’ familiarity with usage of the Internet, Wiki and its use for language learning and TOEFL. A pre-test on TOEFL Reading and Writing was also conducted to find out their reading and writing competency before training. The strategies used by the students to answer the reading and writing questions and the time taken by them to complete the test were also studied.

The analysis of pre-training phase data revealed that the majority of the students were familiar with and efficient in using the Internet. They accessed the Internet almost daily for different purposes like email communication, chatting and collecting information, but they did not have any knowledge of using Wiki and the pattern of TOEFL. Evaluation of their answers to TOEFL Reading questions revealed that the reading competency level, as expected of TOEFL, of the majority of the students (87%) was of a ‘low’ level though the average time taken (78.10 minutes) was well within the time limit specified by ETS. The students did not mention any method used by them to answer the reading comprehension questions. Analysis of their responses to TOEFL Writing showed that the writing proficiency, as expected of TOEFL, of the majority of them (97%) was ‘limited’. The average time taken by the students (66.57 minutes) was more than the time (50 minutes) stipulated by ETS. The nature of the responses revealed that they were free writing in style, i.e. they had written whatever that came to their mind and their writing had not passed through the different stages of writing such as pre-writing, while writing and post-writing.

Web 2.0 tool, Wiki was chosen as a platform to conduct the training in reading and writing online. A wiki workspace ‘rwenhancement 2010’ was created for free at
PBworks. Training for a period of 23 weeks was designed based on the adapted version of Dick and Carey Model. The object-oriented approach was adopted in the selection and use of instructional content for the training. The training comprised four module: (i) preparatory module that oriented the students in using wiki and understanding TOEFL; (ii) reading module that gave explicit instruction in the application of strategies for reading comprehension; (iii) writing module that provided explicit instruction in adopting the process approach to writing; and (iv) consummatory module to elicit the students’ perceptions on the contribution of Wiki and instructional materials towards learner participation and their sequential influence on learning outcomes.

In the first three modules of training, the students accessed the weekly lessons, learnt the lessons assigned for the particular week and sought clarifications during the process from the instructor or fellow learners. The students then practised whatever they learnt and also took a formative assessment test that was given every week. During the final week of training, to find out the effect of Wiki and the training materials on learner participation and their sequential effect on learning outcomes, a 5-point Likert questionnaire containing 131 questions was administered. The responses of the students were evaluated and analysed through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using SPSS AMOS. Based on the standardized co-efficient it was concluded that the students felt that creating pages (0.298), a feature of wiki, was the most prominent feature that influenced their participation in the training and this was followed by features like restoration (0.177) and inserting plugins (0.137).

After training, a post-test on TOEFL reading and writing was conducted. The time taken by the students to complete the reading and writing tests was separately monitored. The students’ performances were compared with those in the pre-test on reading and writing.

The comparison of the students’ score in pre-test and post-test revealed that the number of students whose reading and writing skills had been low (66%) and ‘limited, (95%) respectively in the pre-test had declined. There was an increase in the number of students whose reading skill was at ‘intermediate’ (28%) and high level (6%), and writing skill at ‘fair’ (4%), ‘good’ (1%). The time taken to complete the reading (59
minutes) and writing (50.38 minutes) tests had also reduced. A paired t-test was done using SPSS 20.0 to find the level of significance in difference between the performances in pre-test and post-test in TOEFL Reading and Writing. Comparison of the performance data of the pre-test and post-test on TOEFL Reading revealed that the p-value was less than 0.01; there was significance at 1% level. The mean score of post-test was greater than that of the pre-test, indicating that the training in TOEFL Reading was effective. Similarly, comparison of the performance data of the pre-test and post-test in TOEFL Writing revealed that the p-value was less than 0.01; there was significance at 1% level. The mean score of post-test was greater than that of the pre-test, again indicating that the training in TOEFL Writing was effective.

Thus it is proved that students who aspire to do TOEFL would perform better in reading and writing when they are offered training with the Web 2.0 tool Wiki.