CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter defines the research methods adopted by the researcher to conduct this study. By so doing, the researcher explains how the data were collected, analysed, and presented to address the research questions and objectives of the present study. It is organised under four sub-headings namely: research design, sampling design, study instruments, and analysis design. Reasons and justifications for the research design, data sources, data collection techniques, and analytical techniques used are incorporated in the methodology. At the end, the limitations of the study and the structure of the same are also presented.

3.2. ‘ELT’ and ‘ELL’ Perspectives

English Language Teaching (ELT) is a widely used teacher-centred term. For centuries, teachers have been occupying the central stage at educational institutions. From the time of Socrates, successful teachers (‘pedagogues’) have been acclaimed as such for their effective pedagogy. However, the etymological origin of the term ‘pedagogy’ reveals the true sense. It derives from the ancient Greek word, *paidagogus*, meaning ‘the slave who led children to school’ (Knowles). Thus, the usual understanding of pedagogy as the ‘art or science of teaching’ is at odds with the activity of learning. Teaching, as per the original sense, is leading or guiding others to learn, not to dominate the learners in the classroom. In a truly learner-centred ecology, learning should be the focus of concern, rather than teaching. These two terms have come to be used in tension and even in opposition to one another.

In extreme cases, the term ‘teaching’ is seen as denying the active nature of learning and individuals’ unique capacities to learn (Alexander). Undue emphasis has been placed in the past on the content of what was taught and the act of teaching. This has led to dominant, rigid, unhelpful, and even repressive pedagogical practices. However, learning
has to be reinstated as the central concern of pedagogy in the modern times. “The present trends in pedagogical thinking amount to a new emphasis on the individual capacities and needs of learners. Learners are no longer seen as passive recipients of knowledge and skills but as active participants in the learning process” (Sharpe).

Besides, education has become a tradable commodity, amenable for trade negotiations under the General Agreement on Trade in services (GATS) from 1995. “The permeation of the market process in education and full pricing of educational services by the private sector has paved the way for trading in educational services” (Varghese). Learners are to be treated as consumers (L. Stephen Cohen 54). “A teacher’s role is no longer ‘sage on the stage’, but ‘guide on the side’, a facilitator of information. A facilitator of information views students as little thinkers who desire to learn not only the what, but also the why, how, and because of the world around them.” (Mulligan 1). The researcher opines that ELT has consumed enough attention of the experts in the past and enough literature has been produced in this field. Now it is time for English Language Learning (ELL) to be probed more. ELT should pave the way for ELL now. Therefore, he has adopted ELL rather than ELT as the focus of his study.

3.3. The ‘Emic’ and ‘Etic’ Perspectives in ELL

The researcher, from his critical review of literature in the field of ILD, has found that sufficient efforts have been made to gain etic knowledge about learner variation whereas the emic perspective has not been given its due importance. Therefore, he has adopted the emic perspective in this study. An emic approach (sometimes referred to as ‘insider’, ‘inductive’, or ‘bottom-up’) takes as its starting point the perspectives and words of research participants. On the other hand, the etic approach (sometimes referred to as ‘outsider’, ‘deductive’, or ‘top-down’) uses as its starting point theories, hypothesis, perspectives, and concepts from outside of the setting being studied. As James Lett points out, “In taking an emic approach, a researcher tries to put aside prior theories and assumptions in order to let the participants and data ‘speak’ to them and to allow themes, patterns, and concepts to emerge” (Lett 130).
3.4. The Concatenative Approach in ILD Research

The researcher has adopted the concatenative approach (Skehan 1989) in the present study. As opposed to the hierarchical approach which has a hypothesis or a theory as its starting point, the concatenative approach is an inductive method that follows a research-then-theory approach. Its starting point is the identification of the research questions, “Why do some learners learn L2 better or worse than others?” and “What are the major factors that influence learners’ performance in L2?” The next step is to collect relevant data that can be used to identify the various ILD which serve as the independent variables. The dependent variable is the performance of learners in L2 in the first and second semester examinations taken together for students from autonomous colleges in Andhra Pradesh (AP) and the same in their first year-end examinations for students from non-autonomous colleges.

3.5. The Confirmatory Research Tradition

The researcher has adopted the confirmatory tradition in the present study. “Such research is co-relational in nature, using data collected from the specially designed questionnaire and the semi-structured interview to establish whether any relationships occur among the variables” Ellis (1994:475). Unlike the naturalistic research tradition in which people are studied in their real-life settings and qualitative data are collected through observation, the confirmatory research is interventionist in nature and seeks to control the learning environment and to manipulate key variables. Quantitative data are collected by asking learners to complete various kinds of tests or making them answer the questionnaire specially designed for the purpose.

3.6. Research Model for the Present Study

With the blend of the concatenative and hierarchical approaches and the confirmatory and naturalistic research traditions, Ellis (1994:477) proposes four types of research models in ILD research. The researcher has adopted the concatenative approach with confirmatory tradition for his exploratory study of major factors influencing learners’
performance in L2 at degree colleges in AP. This co-relational study investigates whether any patterns of relationships involving ILD and L2 learning occur in specially selected groups of learners.

3.7. Statement of the Problem

During the past fifteen years of teaching ESL at a few degree colleges in AP, the researcher has encountered a few academic problems with learners belonging to different streams of Arts, Science, and Commerce. One of the major problems he has grappled with has been the uneven standards of English among students in general and, in particular, the pitiably low standards of the same among students hailing mostly from the rural parts of AP. Despite the fact that the same pedagogy, same textbooks, and the same methods of evaluation are used by the same teacher for all students of the same class, the outcome seems to be different and dissatisfactory. Due to various reasons, most of these students have failed to achieve a certain standard in English to undergo their intermediate studies in English-medium at various junior colleges in AP.

Such students undergo a lot of stress and strain as they have to compete with their urban counterparts who have been exposed to English-medium schooling. With a highly demanding syllabus in English and other group subjects at the intermediate level, many of them may not be able to complete their studies and get well-settled in life. Students from the Arts stream are particularly vulnerable. Neither are they confident with their command over their group subjects nor are they so with their ability to communicate in English. Unfortunately, such students never get any help to pick up good English, as teachers are engrossed in covering the syllabus in the class, that too mostly in the vernacular medium. However, the present job market looks for communicative proficiency in English which seems to be the key that opens all doors for employment.

3.8. Justification of the Choice of Area of Study

In AP, all students have to score high at the Intermediate Public Examinations and clear the highly competitive EAMCET (Engineering, Agricultural, and Medical
Common Entrance Test) in order to join the professional courses in AP, which is the dream of most parents for their wards. Those who are from the rural Telugu-medium schools may find it extremely difficult to encounter these examinations and, as a result, those from the urban English-medium schools manage to grab all the seats. The remaining ones have the Hobson’s choice of joining various degree courses and continue to struggle to acquire the all-important communicative competence in English. From the young scholars leaving the portals of different degree colleges, the present job market looks for adequate soft skills and communicative competence in English, failing which a vast majority of the present student population will remain unemployable.

It is believed that the principal reason behind India’s current progress is its youth force, the highest in number in the world. However, a big chunk of Indian youth is not only unemployed but unemployable. Since the beginning of planning in India, the youth have been recognised as “the most vital section of the community” (Planning Commission of India 615). Still, the unemployment rate for 2010-11, according to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, was 9.8% nationwide (Labour Bureau). John Spargo calls unemployment ‘a menace’ because “when the army of unemployed workers swells, ... the foundations of the social order are endangered. There is an increase of poverty, of vice, and of crime which threatens to engulf society” (Spargo 157).

Many of these unemployed youth tend to become a burden to themselves and to others. Out of frustration, some of them may even become anti-social elements, thus depriving the Nation of vital human capital. Therefore, the long-cherished dream of ‘a Vibrant India’ will never be fully realised. One significant way of staying clear of the current impasse is through training of the youth in soft skills along with good proficiency in English. Any such venture should definitely pay attention to those at the deprived bottom of the youth-pyramid of India and take remedial measures to bring such categories to the main stream. This perspective has motivated the researcher to undertake this exploratory study to investigate the major factors that are responsible for learner variation in learning L2 so that such learners can be helped to achieve high proficiency in English and good placements in life later.
3.9. Research Questions

1. In the context of ESL teachers delivering the same L2 curriculum to all students of the same class, employing the same pedagogical procedures, and using the same methods of evaluation, why do learners progress at different rates in L2?

2. Are there any significant factors responsible for learners’ differential achievements while learning L2? If so, what are those major factors? Are they purely essential and pertinent to the L2 learning context alone or totally extraneous to the L2 classroom?

3. What is the role of the affective variables such as learners’ likes and dislikes, their levels and types of motivation, their positive or negative attitude towards L2 learning, their fear, anxiety, and level of confidence about learning a foreign language?

4. What role do the cognitive variables like learner aptitude and IQ level, personality types and traits, and learner preferences and styles play in influencing the learner variation in L2 learning?

5. How do the micro-social variables like the learners’ classroom and college campus culture and the macro-social variables like the family background and their socio-cultural ecology exercise an impact on the learners’ performance in L2?

6. At what proportions do the affective, cognitive, and social factors affect the learners’ differential performance collectively? Do these proportions vary for students according to their rural and urban backgrounds?

7. What is the role of the demographic variables such as learners’ age, gender, socio-economical status, and ethnic identity in causing the individual learner differences, over and above the roles played by the affective, cognitive, and social variables?
8. What are the effective remedial measures for channelising the learner differences to enhance L2 learning? What are the attributes of the emerging new ELT paradigm which can help learners to maximise their L2 learning, in spite of their differences?

3.10. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the phenomenon of L2 learning by students of degree colleges in AP and analyse the reasons for the individual learner variations among them;

2. To identify the significant factors responsible for learners’ differential achievements in L2 and investigate whether these factors are extraneous to the L2 classroom;

3. To find out whether L2 learning is influenced by the affective variables exclusively or along with other influencing factors;

4. To discover the role played by the cognitive variables both separately and in conjunction with other influencing factors;

5. To assess whether the social variables exercise any impact on the learners’ performance in L2 either exclusively or together with other variables;

6. To judge the collective influence of the affective, cognitive, and social factors on students from rural and urban backgrounds;

7. To discern the impact of the demographic variables over and above the roles played by the affective, cognitive, and social variables;

8. To suggest effective remedial measures for channelizing the learner differences and evolve a new ELT paradigm to maximise their L2 learning.
3.11. Research Setting

Keeping the objectives of this study in mind, the researcher opted for Andhra Pradesh as the primary setting for his research. AP is the fifth largest State in the Indian Union having an area of 275,909 sq. kms and a population of about 80 million. AP is bound in the North by Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, in the East by the Bay of Bengal with a 960 km long coast line, in the South by Tamilnadu, and in the West by Karnataka and Maharashtra. AP forms a major link between the north and the south of India. AP consists of three distinct regions namely, Andhra, Rayalaseema, and Telangana. Andhra and Rayalaseema were part of the Madras Presidency of the British Empire. For approximately 400 years, Telangana was part of the Hyderabad State, an independent kingdom ruled by Muslim Qutub Shahi and Nizam dynasties. Thanks to the sacrifice of Potti Sriramulu, Andhra and Rayalaseema were separated from the Madras Presidency in 1953.

Andhra State (Andhra and Rayalaseema) was the first state in India that was formed purely on linguistic nationality, like many European States. Based on their linguistic and national affinity, Telangana was merged with Andhra State in 1956 to form the present State of Andhra Pradesh with Hyderabad as its capital. The Krishna and the Godavari are the major river systems in AP. The Godavari is the largest and the broadest river of South India. The primary official language of Andhra Pradesh is Telugu with Urdu a common secondary official language in some areas. Other languages often spoken in the State include Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Kannada, and Oriya. (Wikipedia)

The overall literacy rate has gone up from 60.47 percent in 2001 to 67.66 percent in 2011; the male literacy rate has increased from 70.32 percent to 75.56 percent. The female literacy rate has gone up from 50.43 % in 2001 to 59.74% in 2011 (APOnline 1). The maps below show the location of AP in the Union of India and the State of Andhra Pradesh with its three distinct Regions. As per the AP Socio-economic Survey Report 2011 – 2012, there are 251 government degree colleges and 179 aided colleges in the state with a total enrolment of 3,85,126 students (APOnline 7).
3.12. Research Design

A research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. In other words, it is a plan or structure for an investigation or a list of specifications and procedures for conducting and controlling a research project. “The design explains in some detail how the researcher intends to conduct the work, namely how the questions asked in each research step will be addressed. This implies that the researcher will go through the research steps, one by one, and describe adequately the activities to be undertaken in each step” (Sarantakos 105). “It is worth stressing that the research design is to be perceived as a dynamic process, with the steps being inter-related and with each affecting the other, and being fully understood within that context” (107).

“Quantitative research is obtrusive and controlled, objective, generalisable, outcome-oriented, and assumes the existence of ‘facts’ which are somehow external to and independent of the observer or researcher. Qualitative research, on the other hand, assumes that all knowledge is relative, that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research, and that holistic, ungeneralisable studies are justifiable” (Nunan 1992:3). The research design of the present study is exploratory, quantitative, inferential, and analytical in nature. This theory-building approach, unlike the theory-testing one, enables

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Location of AP in India</th>
<th>Three Regions of AP</th>
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Figure 3.1: Andhra Pradesh
the researcher to adopt an inductive reasoning to discover new ideas and insights emerging from the data collected.

Through this cross-sectional study, the researcher attempted to discover the various factors which caused the individual learner variations from the data collected from the second year degree students of various colleges of AP. Besides, he endeavoured to ascertain if there was any co-relation among the demographic, affective, cognitive, and social factors (the independent variables), while influencing the learning outcomes. Learners’ performances were the actual marks scored in the first year-end examinations by students of non-autonomous colleges and those scored in the first and second semester-end examinations by students of autonomous colleges (the dependent variable).

3.13. Sampling Design

A sample design is a definite plan determined before any data are actually collected for obtaining samples from a given population. The researcher selected six degree colleges, opting for one urban-based college and another rural-based one from each of the three different Regions of AP in order to maintain the regional balance. These colleges extended maximum co-operation and support to the researcher to carry out his survey. The questionnaires were administered directly to the respondents by the researcher in their respective campuses with the prior permission from the respective principals.

3.13.1. Selection of Colleges

The colleges chosen are representative samples of the degree colleges in AP with a judicious blend of categories such as rural/urban, government/private, aided/unaided, exclusively for men/women, with/without co-education, good/average student population, autonomous/non-autonomous, semester/non-semester system, NAAC-accredited/non-accredited/re-accredited, with/without the status of ‘a college with potential for excellence (CPE)’, and having/not having choice-based credit system (CBCS). Therefore, the findings of the researcher can be generalised to all colleges in AP. Given below are the profiles of the six colleges chosen for the present study:
3.13.1. 1. Andhra Region

1. Andhra Loyola College (ALC), Vijayawada: Started in 1953, ALC, under the jurisdiction of Krishna University - Machilipatnam, is an urban-based, private-aided, autonomous college with co-education. It has a student population of 1940 men and women, out of whom 621 are from the second year section. Besides being a NAAC-re-accredited college with ‘A’ grade with 3.65/4.00 points, it has also received the status of CPE from the UGC. It follows the semester pattern as well as the CBCS.

2. JMJ College for Women (JMJ), Tenali: Started in 1963 as a college for women under Acharya Nagarjuna University - Guntur, JMJ is a rural-based, private-aided, autonomous college. It has a student population of 589 women, out of whom 192 are from the second year at the degree section. Besides being a NAAC-accredited college with ‘B’ grade, it has also received the status of CPE from the UGC. It follows the semester pattern but not CBCS.

3.13.1. 2. Rayalaseema Region

1. Y.S.R.R. Loyola Degree College (YSRR), Pulivendla: Started in 1979 as a college for men and women under Sri Venkateswara University - Tirupati, YSRR is a rural-based, private-aided, non-autonomous college. It has a student population of 1734, out of whom 574 are from the second year at the degree section. It is neither a NAAC-accredited college nor has it received the status of CPE from the UGC. It neither follows the semester pattern nor CBCS.

2. Degree College for men (GDC), Kadapa: Started in 1948 as a college for men under Sri Venkateswara University - Tirupati, GDC is a rural-based, government-run, non-autonomous college. It has a student population of 1630 men and a few women are admitted occasionally. There are 659 second year students. It is a NAAC-accredited college at ‘B++’ level. It has no status of CPE from the UGC. It neither follows the semester pattern nor CBCS.
3.13.1. 3. Telangana Region

1. Loyola Academy Degree and P.G. College (LA), Secunderabad: Started in 1976, LA under Osmania University - Hyderabad, is an urban-based, private-aided, autonomous college with co-education. It has a student population of 2059 men and women, out of whom 650 are from the second year at the degree section. Besides being a NAAC-re-accredited college with ‘A’ grade with 3.5/4.00 points, it has also received the status of CPE from the UGC. It follows the semester pattern as well as CBCS.

2. Vidya Jyothi Degree and P.G. College (VJ), Station Ghanpur: Started in 1994 as a college for men and women under Kakatiya University - Warangal, VJ is a rural-based, private-unaided, non-autonomous college. It has a student population of 782 men and women, out of whom 305 are from the second year at the degree section. It is neither a NAAC-accredited college nor has it received the status of CPE from the UGC. It neither follows the semester pattern nor CBCS.

3.13.2. Selection of Respondents

“Small populations in a study tend to magnify the effects of individual variability, thus presenting a possible distortion” (Seliger and Shohamy 98). The researcher chose six hundred samples (n = 600), choosing one hundred from each of these six colleges for the present study. Since the population from which these samples were drawn did not constitute a homogeneous group because of the three different streams of degree courses, the stratified random sampling technique was applied so as to obtain representative samples. In this technique, the population was stratified into three non-overlapping sub-populations or strata such as arts, science, and commerce streams and then samples were selected from each stratum using random number generation tables. It was based on simple random sampling where each and every sample in the sub-population had an equal chance of being included and the same probability of being selected.
3.14. Study Instruments

Study instruments play a vital role in conducting an exploratory research. Based on the existing theories on second language acquisition and individual learner differences along with the available tools of research in this area, a new instrument in the form of a survey questionnaire was designed by the researcher so as to collect reliable and valid data for the study. The researcher consulted some ELT experts, sociologists, psychological counsellors, and statisticians while framing different items in the instrument. There are two aspects to the instrument: the first deals with the questionnaire yielding quantitative data whereas the second is concerned with the semi-structured interview generating qualitative data.

3.14.1. Sources of Data

While essentially adopting quantitative approaches that supported the research design, the researcher adopted a qualitative method also through the semi-structured interview to add value to his findings. He intended to collect only primary data directly from all the 600 respondents. As part of the ‘emic’ approach of the study, no secondary data were collected from any other source. The primary database included the quantitative data gleaned from the questionnaire and the qualitative data generated from the semi-structured interview. The outcome of both contributed to the findings of the survey.

3.14.1.1. Quantitative Data

The questionnaire was formed on Likert’s method of summated ratings to elicit convenient, time-saving, and easy responses from the respondents. The scale is named after its inventor, psychologist Rensis Likert. A Likert scale is “a psychometric response scale primarily used in questionnaires to obtain participant’s preferences or degree of agreement with a statement or set of statements. Likert scales are a non-comparative scaling technique and are unidimensional (only measure a single trait) in nature” (Likert). This method uses items worded for or against the proposition, with a five-point rating response indicating the strength of the respondent’s approval or disapproval of the
statement. The format of a typical five-level Likert item is: 1) Strongly Agree, 2) Agree, 3) Neutral, 4) Disagree, 5) Strongly Disagree. After the questionnaire is completed, each item may be analysed separately or, in some cases, item responses may be summed up to create a score for a group of items. For the present study, Likert responses were analysed using non-parametric tests such as Chi-square test, one-way ANOVA, two-way ANOVA variance, multiple regression analysis, factor analysis, and TOPSIS analysis.

3.14.1.2. Qualitative Data

The researcher also collected responses from all the 600 respondents, using the semi-structured interview which provided a reliable source of qualitative data quickly, easily and efficiently. In tune with the ‘emic’ perspective of the study, all the respondents at the interview were requested to offer in writing their suggestions and recommendations for five open-ended questions on effective ways of learning English at the college level. Complex and abstract variables were converted into measurable units through operationalising the qualitative data into quantified data for statistical analysis.

3.14.2. Pilot Study and Field Testing

Having planned the research design, the researcher tried out and tested his questionnaire for sensitivity, before the instrument could be administered to the research population. “The aim of the try-out or pilot is to assess its quality while it can still be revised and improved and before it is used with the actual subjects in the research. The researcher collects information about the instrument, its items, and the criteria for scoring and rating its items, and this provides the basis for improving the instrument” (Seliger and Shohamy 195). The researcher conducted the pilot study to test the psychometric properties of the instrument on sixty students (n = 60) using simple random sampling method. They were chosen from the second year degree section of inmates from Loyola Hostel, Chennai. The pilot phase to field-test the instrument offered many valuable clues. One was concerned with the practical aspects of administering the data collection tool such as the clarity of the concepts used, time consumed by respondents, etc.
Another clue was related to the ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ of the instrument. “Reliability provides information on the extent to which the data collection procedure elicits accurate data, and validity provides information on the extent to which the procedure really measures what it is supposed to measure” (Seliger and Shohamy 185). To establish reliability and validity, the filled-in questionnaires were put to test and Cronbach’s co-efficient Alpha test was conducted. The result showed 0.9 (0.9496 to be precise) reliability coefficient at 95 per cent confidence interval. Further tests also suggested that replacing some questions, as suggested by some respondents, could increase the reliability of the questionnaire to 0.9607. For all the variables, Cronbach’s Alpha was in the range of .70 and .80 which is the acceptable level of reliability of the instrument (Kaplan 126).

Table 3.1: Distribution of Items in the Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Personal Data</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Age, gender, religion, community, house location, family background, income, educational levels of family members, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Academic Profile</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(High School, intermediate, and college education, Group, syllabus, location, medium of instruction, Academic achievements, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Influencing Factors</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Affective, cognitive, and social factors influencing learners’ performance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2: Distribution of Items in the Semi-structured Interview

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Suggestions &amp; Recommendations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Based on the scores of reliability and validity of the pilot study, the final version of the questionnaire was re-constructed after further consultation with the same ELT experts, sociologists, psychological counsellors, and statisticians. In order to acquire authentic views from the respondents and learning from the practical difficulties faced by them, the questionnaire was re-structured into logical thematic parts. Some questions were re-phrased while others were replaced. The pilot study questionnaire which contained six parts was reduced to four parts namely, A. Personal Data, B. Academic Profile, C. Influencing Factors, D. Suggestions and Recommendations. Four sections of the study were clubbed into three namely, Affective, Cognitive, and Social Variables. Though the original 30 items on Personal Data and Academic Profile were retained, the items in Section C on Influencing Factors were reduced from 75 to 60.

In the section D on Suggestions and Recommendations of the semi-structured interview, the number of the items was reduced from 7 to 5. All this was done to minimise the tedium and distraction of the respondents, without losing their attention to the job at hand. Keeping the target audience in mind, the researcher also got the questionnaire printed in an attractive manner. Thus, the pilot study helped the researcher to fine-tune the instrument in order to focus on the relevant information needed for the study.

3.15. Data Collection

After the pilot study, the researcher made elaborate arrangements with the Principals of the chosen colleges for the smooth conduct of data collection process. Assistance from the local staff was sought to identify the respondents as per the prescribed procedure.
The researcher also endeavoured to maintain a friendly and non-threatening environment in the classroom where he met the respondents to explain the purpose of the survey. After the survey, there was an informal interaction with the respondents and this created conducive atmosphere for the semi-structured interview.

3.16. Tools of Analysis

The survey as well as the semi-structured interview yielded a huge database of quantitative and qualitative data. After allotting unique numbers to the questionnaires, the data were codified and verified to ensure the completeness of the data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-17) was used for data analysis.

3.17. Tools of Representation

Tables, figures, charts, and diagrams were used to represent the study as well the outcome of the various analyses undertaken.

3.18. Four Stages of Research

The four-stage process of this study is portrayed in the diagram below:

**Figure 3.2: Four Stages of Research**
Stage One: Exploration

Step 1: Planning and brain-storming with ELT experts, sociologists, and statisticians;
Step 2: Establishing contacts with College Managements and ESL teachers;
Step 3: Pilot-study with 60 respondents to field-test and fine-tune the instrument.

Step Two: Execution

Step 1: Administering the questionnaire to the 600 respondents;
Step 2: Conducting semi-structured interviews with participants;
Step 3: Informal interaction with ESL teachers and College Management.

Step Three: Evaluation

Step 1: Codifying the questionnaire with unique numbers
Step 2: Operationalising the qualitative data into quantitative data for analysis
Step 3: Statistical analysis of the data using SPSS -17

Step Four: Encapsulation

Step 1: Identifying the major factors influencing learners’ L2 performance;
Step 2: Formulating new hypotheses about L2 learning in the classroom;
Step 3: Proposing remedial measures to L2 curriculum.

3.19. Limitations of the Study

1. The researcher has identified the performance of students in the semester-end or year-end examinations as the dependent variable as there is no other concrete way of assessing the performance of individual learners. Though learners’ marks can indicate their level of performance to some extent, it is often a debatable proposition.
2. Stratified random sampling has been employed to reduce the potential for human bias in the selection. As a result, highly representative samples of the population have been studied, assuming that there is limited missing data. The study may suffer from the demerits of such sampling technique.

3. While adopting the ‘emic’ perspective, the researcher tried to put aside prior theories and assumptions in order to let the data ‘speak’ for themselves and to allow themes, patterns, and concepts to emerge. However, ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ perspectives are complementary to each other and are essential for developing a global view of any vital issue in ILD studies.

4. Due to the limited research carried out in the field of ILD, this aspect of ELT research which commenced only in 1970s suffers from a strong theoretical support. There is still no comprehensive theory of learner differences in SLA research. The present study, being an exploratory one, may reflect the same.

5. There is a veritable plethora of individual learner variations which researchers have identified as influencing learning outcomes. These constructs are often vague and overlap in indeterminate ways. This makes it difficult to synthesise the independent variables and to arrive at a coherent overall picture of the phenomenon.

6. Though researchers have pointed out that the fertility of the concatenative approach is far from being exhausted, they also argue for more naturalistic studies and action research which can shed light on the individuality of learners and show the dynamic nature of the interplay between the more malleable aspects of ILD.

3.20. Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction. The introductory chapter clarifies the context of ELT study, statement of problem, objectives, importance, scope of the study, and operational definitions.
Chapter 2: A Review of Literature. This chapter reviews the literature on the various methods of teaching English and the individual learner variation.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology. This chapter deals with the methodology adopted for the study - Research design, Sampling Design, Instrumentation and Analysis Design.

Chapter 4: Results, Analyses, and Discussion

Chapter 5: Major Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Appendices

1. Works Cited
2. Schedule for Data Collection
3. Sample Survey Questionnaire and Semi-structured Interview
4. Key to Survey Questionnaire
5. SPSS Data: Chi-square Test Tables
6. A Glossary of Basic ELT Terms

The next chapter deals with the processing of the data collected and presents the analysis in the appropriate statistical format, along with a discussion on the same.