CHAPTER - III

METHODOLOGY
This chapter outlines stage one and two of the research. The objective of stage one is to find out teachers’ knowledge on technology particularly in teaching and students’ knowledge on using technology for learning English. It also explores the possibilities to integrate technologies for effective language teaching and learning. The support of technology on students’ autonomy is focused in the stage one. It also aims to support teachers to cope with the technology enhanced classroom. Identifying technological competency of teachers and learners may strengthen the classroom in terms of making the environment positive for learning as well as teaching.

In the stage two of the research, the technologies recently used for teaching English are selected and also emerging internet applications are chosen to study. Effectiveness of those technologies is identified by collecting feedback from research participants as well as teachers who use those technologies. The advent of internet has provided ample applications and software for teachers and students. It is the duty of the teachers to identify the best tools to use in the classroom. Therefore, the stage two of the research tries to list the effective and suitable tools for language classroom based on the feedback from students. Further the research focuses on free internet tools which motivate students in learning English. In this context, it is essential to know the resent theory and approach in English language teaching.

3.1. RELEVANT THEORIES AND PEDAGOGY

Communicative language teaching makes use of real–life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audio lingual method of language teaching, which
relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions responses. Students’ motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics.

Margie S. Berns, an expert in the field of communicative language teaching, writes in explaining Firth’s view that “language is interaction: it is interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society. In this light, language study has to look at the use (function) of language in context, both its linguistics context and its social or situational context (Berns, 1984, p.5).

Content –Based instruction is an approach to language teaching that focuses not on the language itself, but rather on what is being taught through the language: that is, the language becomes the medium through which something new is learned. In the Content based instruction approach, students learn the target language by using it to learn something other new content. The language being learned and use is taught within the context of the content. The theory behind Content based instruction is that when students are engaged with more content, it will promote intrinsic motivation. Students will be able to use more advance thinking skills when learning new information and will focus less on the structure of the language. This approach is very students-centered as it depends entirely on the students’ ability to use the language. Thus, content based instruction offers opportunities for learners to be exposed to meaningful use of second language.

Sociocultural theory

The field of sociocultural studies of education has grown significantly in recent years, with neo-Vygotskian educational research conducted by a number of scholars, including Mercer(1994), Lantolf (2000), Hammond (2001), Gibbons(2002),
Van Lier (2004), Hammond and Gibbons (2005). Central to socio-cultural theory is the view that children do not learn in isolation: rather that learning occurs when a child interacts with other people in various social and cultural environments. Therefore sociocultural theory views human learning and cognitive development as socially and culturally mediated, communicative process. Knowledge is seen to be shared; new understandings are constructed through interaction: and language is the major tool which enables learners to engage in this process. Thus, cognitive development may be seen to result from culturally contextualized events (Mercer, 1994:93). According to Vygotsky, as pointed out by a number of authors, for example, Lantolf and Apple(1994), Daniel(2001), and gibbons(2002), learning is seen as the development of cognitive or mental functions, which occurs when a child internalizes external activities, through language as mediating tool, into mental activities. The child is assisted and guided by more experienced people, parents or peers: that is, the child engages in other regulation, also called intermental activity on the inter psychological plane. Later the child appropriates or takes over the knowledge that she learns from experts, and becomes able to perform such tasks and other similar tasks independently.

There are many things that can be considered “content” what is important is that what is being taught or discussed through the language not being language instruction related. Aspects of the curriculum, discussions about current events and world cultures or even general topics of interest are all valid “content” options.

Collaborative learning is the act of giving the responsibility of the learning to the students. It is basically the instructional art of using groups and pairs of students to fulfill a task/assignment. These activities can create a valuable source of motivation, critical thinking skills, and active learning while the students learn to manipulate classroom information into their own working knowledge.
Learner–Centered Approaches

The ultimate goal of education, whether it is teacher-centered or learner-centered, is the homogenous, development of linguistic, cognitive, social and emotional skills. The traditional teacher–centered instruction with a uniformly prescribed curriculum however yields heterogeneous outcomes, and the approach therefore works against the homogenous goals. Katz and Chard argue that learner-centered curriculum by contrast, is organized based on heterogeneous, and provides varied instructional methods and activities, so the outcomes are homogenous. Citing research on the long term effects of early childhood curricula, Katz and Chard also advocate that “the curriculum should provide interaction, active rather than passive activities, and opportunity to initiate and be engaged in interesting activities “Learners need an opportunity to develop new skills and knowledge based on what they already have learned”.

Cognitive approaches

Cognitive approaches to communicative language teaching are based on the view that learning a language is an individual psycholinguistic act. From this perspective, language learners construct a mental model of a language system, based not on habit formation but rather on innate cognitive knowledge in interaction with comprehensible, meaningful language (Chomsky, 1986). Errors are seen in a new light? not as bad habits to be avoided but as natural by-products of a creative learning process that involves rule simplification, generalization, transfer, and other cognitive strategies (see Chaudron, 1987). Learners' output, (i.e., what they say or write), if relevant at all is beneficial principally to the extent that it helps make input (i.e., what they hear or read) more comprehensible or salient so that the learners can construct their own cognitive models of the language.
Technologies which support a cognitive approach to language learning are those which allow learners maximum opportunity to be exposed to language in meaningful context and to construct their own individual knowledge. Examples of these types of technologies include text-reconstruction software, concordance software, and multimedia simulation software.

Text-reconstruction software allows teachers to provide students various texts in which letters or words are either missing or scrambled. Students work alone or in groups to complete or re-arrange the texts, thus supporting a process of mental construction of the linguistic system. While such activity could in theory be carried out with paper and pencil, the computer facilitates the process for both teachers and students. Teachers can quickly and easily create re-arranged texts or cloze exercises from any original word-processed passage. Students can use hints provided by the computer to assist their learning process.

Concordancing software (allows teachers or students to search through small or large texts to look for instances of the actual use of particular words. Concordancers are thus supplements to dictionaries in that they help illustrate the usage of a word, rather than just its definition. Concordancers are also useful for investigating collocational meanings (e.g., "large box" vs. "big box," or "think about" vs. "think over") or grammatical features (e.g., "was going" vs. "used to go").

Multimedia simulation software allows learners to enter into computerized micro worlds with exposure to language and culture in a meaningful audio-visual context. The best of these programs allow learners a good deal of control and interactivity so they can better manipulate their linguistic input. One excellent example of this is the multimedia videodisc program A la reencounter de Philippe
developed by the Athena Language Learning Project at the M.I.T. Laboratory for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. **Philippe** is a game for intermediate and advanced French learners that incorporate full motion video, sound, graphics, and text, allowing learners to "walk around" and explore simulated environments by following street signs or floor plans. To help language learners understand the sometimes challenging French, the program provides optional comprehension tools, such as a glossary and transcriptions of audio segments, as well as a video album that includes samples of language functions. Students can also create their own custom video albums, which they store on their own computer diskettes.

### 3.2. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The questionnaires investigated in stage one and two of the research help to shape the conceptual framework on the following questions

1. **What is the competency level of language teachers in using technology for teaching English?**
   
   1.1. What are teachers’ current teaching practices in engineering colleges?
   
   1.2 What is the competency level of students using technology?
   
   1.3. What factors support or limit the use of technology in teaching and learning process?

2. **What is the advantage of technologies in teaching English?**

   2.1. What principles need to be considered in ESL program which incorporates extensive use of technology?

   2.2 What are the technologies useful for teaching English as well as learning English?
3.3. RESEARCH TOOLS

The research tools used to analyze learners’ technical competence and teacher’s technical competence are:

- Researcher’s observation
- The questionnaire
- Student’s profile
- Teacher’s profile
- Teachers’ feedback
- Students’ feedback

Research observation

The researcher has generally observed that English language teachers in engineering colleges are not very comfortable at technology enhanced ESL classroom. Researcher’s aim is to motivate them to use current technologies. Engineering colleges today are equipped with emerging technologies and sophisticated facilities. The utility of those technologies and facilities depend on the teachers’ knowledge on using those. Therefore, this research, intends to observe how they teach in technology enhanced classroom, mode of preparation, and their willingness to learn technology in the future. It also aims to observe students’ behavior and learning style in such classes. This research also observes teachers who never use technology for teaching English and their approach to computer and internet.
Research questionnaire

The research questionnaire in stage one is framed to find out teachers’ and learners’ technological know-how. The questionnaire is set as closed question and the participants are given time to answer the questions with options to be selected. The quantitative approach is used in the questionnaire to find how many of them have computers, internet connection, camera etc., and it has helped the researcher to understand teachers and learners in terms of teaching and learning. It is decided to use the same questionnaire to measure both teachers’ and students’ technical knowledge. A questionnaire, copy of which is presented in Appendix, is completed by fifty respondents who are working in engineering colleges. The questionnaire aims to elicit teachers’ demographic information like age, gender and other information. The researcher has planned to interview teachers to know their approach to technologies. Through the questionnaire, the technological possession, ability to use computer, awareness about internet browsing and technologies used for teaching are analyzed. The researcher uses the same questionnaire for students to study their approach towards technologies.

The questionnaire is divided into four main parts

1. Technologies possessed by learners and teachers
2. Competency level of learners and teachers in using technologies
3. The awareness about internet and its applications
4. Awareness about emerging technologies in teaching English

In the research stage two, the questionnaire is set as open question and participants are asked to give their opinion and views on the tools or technologies used for teaching. The rating on the technologies by students is collected.
Understanding the lesson and students’ interest are measured in the stage two. Students’ feedback and teachers’ choice of technology are taken for analysis. In this stage, traditional and latest methods based on technology for English language teaching are outlined. A list of technologies including internet applications are introduced to teachers and their feedback on those are collected in the form of audio and written. It is also aimed to find out the best tools for teaching and learning English. The research tests the listed technologies with selected students to identify the effective tools for teaching English.

**Teacher’s profile**

In the research stage one, teachers’ professional background is recorded. Teaching experience, gender, qualification, college addresses are collected. The teachers who used the selected technologies and their feedback are noted for future reference.

**Student’s profile**

In the research stage one, the information about students’ backgrounds are recorded. The living place, the medium in which they studied, parents’ education background are noted for future reference.

**Teacher’s feedback**

Teachers are introduced to the new technologies via online and personal meeting with them and requested them to use in their classroom for language teaching. Finally, the researcher collected their feedback in the form of mail, audio, and video. These feedbacks are analyzed for interpretation.
Student’s feedback

Students are introduced to learning technologies and their feedbacks are collected in the form of mail, audio, video and personal interview. The researcher also framed lessons to teach students using technologies and taught them 30 hrs. The feedbacks for those classes are collected by a questionnaire and the questionnaire is analyzed for interpretation.

Research participants

Participants for research stage one are English language teachers from engineering colleges in Tamilnadu. The total numbers of participants selected for the personal interview on a questionnaire are 50. The researcher selected 50 teachers who are working in engineering colleges. The researcher selected two different groups for questionnaire to find out what factors motivate them to use technologies. In stage one, 100 pre final year engineering students, who are preparing themselves for job, are selected. The researcher uses the same questionnaire on students’ perspective to find out how they approach technologies to learn English. Participants in stage two are 35 pre final year engineering students who are preparing themselves for job. The selected technologies are used to find out how effective they use technology for learning English and students’ feedback are collected for analysis. Students’ pre-test and post test are taken into account for analysis. The stage two aims to short list technologies which benefit both the teachers and learners. The problems and challenges in using technologies are discussed.

3.4. RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

As indicated in chapter one, in stage one, the researcher’s aim is to study teachers’ approach and attitude towards using technology in ESL classroom. The role of technology today in education is indispensable. Further it explores the current
teaching practices of English teachers. In stage one; the researcher also tries to study the approach and attitude of learners towards using technology. The stage one focuses on teachers and learners whereas the stage two explores the classroom. In the stage two, the research is carried out upon the characteristics of ethnography.

Ethnography has derived from anthropological studies that seek to answer questions concerning people’s way of lives through examining culture, behavior, and perception. Ethnography, as pointed out by Burns (2000:395), has the purpose of uncovering social, cultural, or normative patterns, an generally” this involves an analytic description in terms of a social setting, organization, behavior and activities. "Thus, ethnography aims to investigate participants’ behavior and perception in real context and involves process of process of describing, analyzing, and interpreting such behavior and perception as well the contexts where the behavior occurred. Similarly, Wiersman 2000.

Ethnography is holistic in nature: that is, the researcher takes into account the whole context because human behavior cannot be understood outside of the context in which it is embedded (Burns, 2000: Van Lier, 1990: Wiersman, 2000). Moreover, ethnography follows an emic principle, which seeks to understand how the research participants perceive events in the light of their own knowledge an belief system. This means the researcher needs to understand the context of study as well as participants’ behavior, experiences and perceptions. Ethnographers view the social world as a world of interpretations’ and meanings which are produced through social interactions (Burns, 2000:397) Thus, theoretical frame work underpinning this research can be described as interpretive. Mertens (1998:12) points out that an interpretive paradigm views reality as socially constructed: it sees that research is a product of the values of researchers and cannot be independent of them.
3.5. DATA COLLECTION

The data are gathered in two main stages as indicated in the following table:

**Table – 3.1**

**DATA COLLECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of data gathering</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data gathered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage one</td>
<td>July 2012 to September 2012</td>
<td>- questionnaire (50 engineering college teachers)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Questionnaire (100 engineering college students)</td>
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<td>- field notes from diary</td>
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<td>- individual interview with</td>
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<td>Stage two</td>
<td>January 2013 to March 2013</td>
<td>- Questionnaire (35 engineering students)</td>
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<td>- 15 lessons (15x2=30 periods)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- audio feedback 10</td>
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<td>- Pretest marks</td>
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<td>- And post test marks</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- websites accessed by students</td>
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</table>

**Stage one**

Stage one is aimed to measure teacher’s knowledge on technologies used for teaching English by questionnaire. Since the researcher is working in an Engineering College, the researcher prefers to investigate teachers who are teaching technical English and communication skills laboratory. The questionnaire consists of four sections, first, it measures what is the technologies teachers use or they have. Second section seeks information on teacher’s proficiency in computer literacy. Third section tries to explore teacher’s knowledge on internet literacy and their approach to new technologies. Finally, it studies on teaching presentation tools used by teachers. The same questionnaire with learner’s perspective is used to investigate students’ technical knowledge in comparison to language teachers. In the stage one, two questionnaires are set. First, the questionnaire for teachers aims at fifty teachers only from engineering colleges in Tamilnadu. The questionnaire for learners aims at hundred pre final year students in engineering colleges. The main focus of the two questionnaires
are to study their technological possession, their knowledge on computer usage, knowledge on internet browsing and selection of internet tools for learning and teaching English. These data are analyzed to find out the technical competency of teachers as well as learners. The findings from the stage one survey paved way for the next level research on experimenting selected technologies.

Stage two

The stage two aims at testing some selected technologies with ELT approach. The selected technologies are free internet tools, software, computers and LCD projectors. The lessons are set and they are taught with the help of listed technologies in the language lab. Student’s feedback and views are recorded. In the stage two, the interesting technologies for ESL classroom are identified.

The following table shows the skills and technology integration to energize English language learners;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language skills</th>
<th>Technologies used for</th>
<th>Technologies used for</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>LCD</td>
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<td>Smart board</td>
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<td>Blogs/personal websites</td>
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<td>Websites</td>
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3.6. STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF ENGINEERING COLLEGE STUDENTS

English language is the current lingua franca of the international, business, technology, aviation, diplomacy, banking, computing medicines engineering and tourism. About one fifth of people all over the world know more or less about English. Almost every single university in the world is conducting scientific studies in English. Total 60% of radio programmes are broadcast in English, more than 70% of the content or address of mailing letters are written in English. English plays an important role in the world. Engineering is the biggest field of study. First English is a tool that significantly affects engineering students in academic life. When most of the subjects in engineering are taught in English, it requires good communication skills. Being an engineer requires to co-operate and communicate with different people from different part of the world.

Problems faced by engineering students

In our country, about 75% students of the engineering are from rural areas and most of them are coming through regional language medium schools. They face a lot of problems in acquiring the skills of communication. It is important to explore the other reasons which make the learning process difficult.

Socio economic background of family

Classroom contains students from different strata of the society who possess different grasping power and English communication competence. It is found that the English communication competence of the students whose parents are literate belongs to higher middle class is better than that of the students whose parents are illiterate
and belong to lower middle class. The fact for this situation is the literate parents can provide more exposure to their child to English as they are aware of the importance of English competence. They consult the teacher about child’s progress and guide him/her at home to perform better. Intact, it never happens with the second group as they lack parental supervision and guidance.

**Lack of skillful teachers**

The other important factor is the education system and lack of skillful teachers. Most of the teachers at all the learning levels are untrained they are unaware of the current trends and advanced techniques of English Language teaching (ELT). The condition is same with the regional medium as well as the English medium primary, secondary and higher secondary schools in rural or semi urban area. Again teaching –learning process is much exam result oriented. And the exams do test the memory power alone. Even the parents are craving for the marks than skills or knowledge. So, teachers make students to habituate by heart method, as a result, English seems to be a dreadful demon for the students. This fright remains in the mind till higher education because of lack of proper guidance. Again these exam oriented students give prior importance to their technical subjects than to the communication competence.

The other important factor is the traditional education system which affects English language learning and acquisition. Basically it requires four skills i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. (LSRW) students are being trained in reading and writing for long ages and listening and speaking skills are neglected and ignored which are very important. Learning is the one basic skill which makes
speaking possible. Learning language is possible only through active listening. As an illustration we can take an example of language acquisition by a baby. It starts speaking the words which it listens frequently. Our education neglects the importance of listening which results in lack of skill of speaking. Lack of modern and advanced technology in the process of language learning also affects the language acquisition. E.g. use of computers and internet, power point presentation, OHP etc.

There is a much controversy upon learning English as a second language. Researchers ask a question that had we learnt grammar of our mother tongue when we learnt it. So, grammar is learnt only for the sake of getting marks and not as a tool for learning a language. Again the application of grammar in day to day life is being neglected.

Majority of the engineering college students can be ranked as pre intermediate in their language proficiency. The researcher has undertaken preliminary needs analysis that is based on observation from teaching experience as well as extensive discussion with colleagues on characteristics of students and their English language ability. This initial analysis summarized below provides the base for the research stage two.

**Listening**

Engineering students in semi-urban colleges lack exposure to real English outside the classroom because of the limitation of EFL context where English is taught as an academic subject rather than for use in society. Though TV and radio programme exist, this type of listening input is only comprehensible to advance level of students. Listening task which are suitable to student’s level include, for example,
listening to sentences and repeating in order to practice pronunciation or listening to dialogues.

**Speaking**

The chances for students to practice speaking English outside the classroom are rare. Thus students rely upon classroom opportunities in order to develop speaking skills. The most common speaking tasks which students undertake are those relevant to everyday situations such as greeting, introducing oneself and other people, taking leave expressing thanks, making apologies, making request, asking for permission, giving direction, shopping and talking in the phone. However speaking in these tasks is often a struggle for framing sentences rather than spontaneous speech. The other speaking task which students can master in English are, for example, talking about themselves, describing things and picture, recounting past events, and giving instruction. In order to talk in English, students need the teacher to teach, guide and introduce them to language features and key vocabulary. For example, they need to know how to use tenses in particular situations.

**Reading**

Students are required by the syllabus to read and interpret English tasks for comprehension and to identify the writer’s purpose. Difficulties experienced by students generally relate to lack of background knowledge such as cultural aspects as well as to vocabulary and grammar in the text they read. This is why the teacher focuses on these aspects prior to students reading. Generally when facing unknown words, students look for meaning in English dictionary. This is time consuming and student’s reading is interrupted but the practice does ensure that a text is understood. Another problem which is quite common occurs when a word has many different
meanings and students do not know which meaning fits the word they come across in a particular context.

**Writing**

Writing tasks which students can master are based on topics that are relevant to them and per the syllabus. For example, students are asked to write about their family and about themselves, about their country and hometown, describing places, objects, and people, giving instruction such as recipe or how to make something comparing things and or places and writing about their festival. Such writing tasks are completed in line with the writing models provided by the teacher. Therefore, the teacher assigns students to write about topics of their interest and gives them models of writing.

The major difficulty which students face is to construct paragraphs which flow smoothly from topic sentence. Other difficulties faced by students are related to spelling, using correct grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and connectors to make the text cohesive. Mistakes often found in students’ writing include verb tense, verb and subject agreement, plural form, order of adjective and nouns and the use of article. Though students understand grammatical features and the meaning of vocabulary, it appears that most students lack such competence.

It can be concluded that these students usually learn English under the supervision and guidance of teachers, that teachers need to set learning task and teach relevant aspects and essential skills. Students are practiced to teacher-guided learning rather than being independent learner.

As this preliminary analysis suggests, a major challenge in ELT to engineering students is providing students with a real reason for learning English. That is with a reason beyond the requirements of passing examination. The analysis also provides a
summary of issues that needs to be taken into account when developing teaching programme for research stage two.

The researcher aims to introduce student’s new internet tools in language lab, enhancing all the four skills with the selected technologies. The selected technologies with skills related are listed below. All the skills are evaluated by students’ rating system and open feedback from them.

To answer the research questions in section I, the study aims to understand teacher’s current teaching practices and also tries to find current knowledge of teachers on technologies which are used for teaching English. Further, it is also aimed to measure students’ knowledge on educational technologies and their approach to internet applications. The limitation and constraints using the technology in the perspective of teachers and learners are focused to study.

To answer the research questions in section II, the study aims to check the students’ approach to technology enhanced classroom and the impact of lessons taught with technologies. It is also aimed to measure the technologies which are most relevant for students to learn English.

3.7. ETHICAL ISSUE

Before conducting the Research, I got permission from the college where I am working. The research questionnaire; research methodology and duration of the research were clearly explained to the principal. Since I was working in the language lab as a trainer, students had good exposure to the environment which was a motivation factor. I decided to choose pre final year students for research because they were in the position to improve their communication skills asked students
willingness to participate in the research and there were 75 students interested to participate. I shortlisted the candidate in terms of rural and urban specifically students’ technological possession like computer internet connection, iPod etc,. Before collecting data, I clarified students’ right to withdraw from research at anytime without any reason. In addition, students were told that the research work would not affect students study and assessment. I was not teaching them in their normal class during the data collection, and that there could be no negative implication for their study. All procedure in research stage one and stage two were carried out in student’s free time. Therefore, their learning progress was not disrupted, hindered or harmed.

Stage two of the research, students’ achievement of goals of the program was assessed from their performances and complete tasks. I regularly collected feedback after the lesson. These assessments were not relevant to their normal subjects, and therefore the evaluation of my teaching program could not have any impact on student’s normal program of study. I also reassured students that when writing up the research, I would use pseudonyms and would keep all information confidential. I also explained to participants that no one would be identifiable from published or unpublished data except by me and by my supervisor.