CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology involved in gathering information concerning the use of web sites as a teaching and learning tool in the ESL classroom. The selection of subjects and web sites, the research design, the instruments used and the administration of the instruments are described and explained.

3.1   Sample

In order to carry out the research on the use of web sites in the ESL classroom, the researcher decided to choose the sample from those who are currently studying and teaching in the Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying at MARA University of Technology. This was because the researcher was familiar with the background of the students, the personality of the English language teachers and the environment of the faculty.

3.1.1 Students

A total of 40 Part 3 diploma students from two different classes participated in this study which was carried out from July to August, 2003. These students were in their third semester and were taking Mainstream English II as one of their core subjects. They had passed Basic English in Part I and Mainstream English One in

Part II. These students were chosen because they had undergone two semesters of learning English in Part I and Part II, so they were assumed to have mastered the basics of the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. They were also chosen based on the suitability of their English class hours. This was important since this study had to make use of the computer lab in the faculty. The faculty computer lab is opened every day except on Saturdays and Sundays.

3.1.2   English Language Teachers

Five English language teachers who teach in the Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying participated in this study. The teacher sample included the two teachers who teach the two classes involved in this study while the other three teachers were selected randomly.

3.2   Instrumentation

Three sets of instruments, namely classroom observation, questionnaire and interview were employed to gather data for this study. More specifically, the instruments comprised:

the classroom observation

the student questionnaire (Appendix A&B)

the student interview (Appendix C)

the English language teacher interview (Appendix D)

3.2.1   Classroom Observation

Classroom observation took place from the second week of July to the second week of August 2003, a duration of 6 weeks in total. The observation was done at the faculty computer lab. It was conducted for an hour a week for both classes at different time slots. The researcher focussed on the students' responses and participation while engaging in the web site activities.

3.2.2   Student Questionnaire

Two sets of questionnaires were used to elicit the students' opinions and views on the use of web sites as a tool for learning English. The questionnaires employed the Likert Scale that is a five point scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The first questionnaire consists of two parts (refer to Appendix A). The first part consists of 6 items. This part sought to obtain demographic data from the students regarding sex, age, total family income and parents' education background. This part was administered to the students at the first session only.

The second part consists of 14 items. This part was administered to the students at the end of each session. The rationale for doing this was that the students would be able to remember well the activities they had participated in during each session since the information was still fresh in their minds. In this second part, the 14 items sought to elicit the students' views on the ways in which each chosen web site had helped to enhance their English language learning such as the skills they had acquired, their comprehension of the lesson, as well as the content and the language that they were exposed to in each web site.

The second questionnaire (refer to Appendix B) was administered to the students after they had accessed all the six web sites. It consists of 15 items. It was aimed at eliciting the students' overall views on the use of web sites as a learning tool as well as getting feedback on any difficulties they had encountered during the sessions using the selected web sites.

3.2.3 Student Interview

Interviews were carried out with selected students from both classes at the end of the six sessions. A total of 10 students were interviewed. They were chosen randomly. The questions were made open-ended. The rationale for doing this was so that the researcher could discuss any related issues that might arise from the set questions. The interview sessions with the students were conducted over a period of three days.

A total of 10 questions were formulated for the interview sessions (refer to Appendix C). The interview questions were designed to gather more detailed information on the use of web sites as a tool in the learning of English. The data obtained from the interview was used to triangulate the findings from the student questionnaire.

3.2.4 English Language Teacher Interview

Interviews were carried out with the five English language teachers after the researcher had conducted the classroom observations, the administration of the questionnaires and the student interviews. The rationale for doing this was to enable

the researcher to make use of the field notes from her observation and the students' views expressed in the questionnaires and the interviews to come-up with pertinent questions. This was important in helping the researcher gauge the lecturers' perception towards the use of web sites as a learning and teaching tool.

The interviews with the five English language teachers were conducted during the second week of August. They were conducted informally with the teachers according to the availability of time of each teacher. A total of 10 questions were asked during the interview session (refer to Appendix D). All the questions were designed to elicit the views and opinions of the teachers on the use of web sites as a teaching and learning tool. All the interview sessions were tape recorded so as to ensure that no information was left out.

3.3   Validation of Instrument (Pilot Study)

For the purpose of validation of the instruments, the questionnaire was administered to a class of 30 Diploma of Quantity Survey students from the Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying. They were asked to answer the questionnaire after they have accessed The Lonely Planet web site. The researcher took some time to explain to the students certain items in the questionnaire that might cause confusion before they started to answer the questionnaire. After looking at the responses given by the students, no changes were made to the questionnaire since they did not have any difficulty in answering all the items in the questionnaire.

3.4   Administration of Questionnaire

The first questionnaire was administered to the students at the end of each session. This was because the questionnaire was meant to elicit the students' views after they had accessed a particular web site in each session. This hopefully would help them to answer the questionnaire better as the information would still be fresh in their minds.

The second questionnaire was administered to the students after all the six sessions had taken place. This was done because the questionnaire was aimed at eliciting the students' overall views on using web sites as a learning tool and the general problems that they had faced in using the web sites.

3.5   Rationale for Choosing the Web Sites

For the purpose of the research, the researcher decided to make use of these six web sites: Dave Sperling's ESL Café, Interesting Things for ESL Students, Karin's ESL Partyland, The ESL Gold, The Tower of English and BBC Learning English. The six web sites were found to be interactive in nature and a variety of topics was covered. This would cater to the different needs and interests of each student. In addition, these web sites were created by well-known ESL instructors and were very popular among ESL learners worldwide.

3.6   Data Analysis

The data gathered from the classroom observations was analyzed in order to establish whether the web site was a useful tool for language learning. The data from each observation was analyzed separately and the field notes gathered were used to support the findings from the observations.

All the data gathered from the questionnaire was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. After the data was tabulated, the significance of the responses was discussed. The primary findings would be furnished by the data gathered from the questionnaire. Meanwhile, the data from the interview sessions with the students and the English language teachers would help to triangulate the data obtained from the questionnaire.