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FINAL REPORT FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

FACTORS THAT INTERFERE IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF AN ADVANCED- MID LEVEL OF ORAL PROFICIENCY BY THE GRADUATION PROCESS STUDENTS TERM I-2010 OF THE LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLÉS OPCIÓN ENSEÑANZA AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR

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ABSTRACT

This research project presents an analysis regarding the reasons behind our research question which mainly discusses why the Graduation process students are unable to reach an advanced-mid level of English oral proficiency at the end of the major of Licenciatura en Inglés opción Enseñanza at the University of El Salvador.

This project includes the three levels of English oral proficiency found among students, Intermediate-Low, Intermediate-High and Advanced-Low, who are currently carrying out the Graduation process at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador, providing the research team with the necessary information to draw conclusions on what factors interfere with students' achievement of an Advanced-Mid level of English oral proficiency.

INDEX

3.4 Data analysis and interpretation

3.5　Findings

3.7 Conclusions

3.8 Recommendations

4.1 Bibliography

4.2 WEBBLIOGRAPHY

Annex 1

Annex 2

Annex 3

Annex 4

Annex 5

Annex 6

Annex 7

Annex 8

Annex 9

Annex 10

Annex 11

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this Project was to identify the main factors that interfere in the accomplishment of an Advanced-mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students who are the ones working on their undergraduate research in order to obtain their bachelor degree and currently taking the term I-2010 of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador.

This research project was possible, in the way that the research team just worked coordinately with the Professor M.I. Pedro Antonio Salazar Murcia who was the research team`s advisor in this investigation, and Graduation process students who were assessed and surveyed about their level of English oral proficiency.

The research team took into account the instructions to be followed from the graduation process at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. The first step from the graduation process was that our advisor had to approve the topic of the research; then the research team investigated the literature related to the topic; afterwards the research team designed the instruments for the investigation, among the instruments the research team applied in this investigation there were : Tests (Oral Proficiency interview), structured interviews, and Surveys, so when the advisor gave the research team the permission for passing Tests (Oral Proficiency interview) to the graduation process students, the research team noticed that students do not accomplish the level of English oral proficiency demanded by the Graduate student profile of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador that is why the research team decided to evaluate the rate of competence in the oral level of the students using a proficiency scale of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) in order to know the real level of English oral proficiency accomplish by the graduation process students

Therefore, it was for that reason this project appeared, for making this research process an interesting reading for the teachers and students and at the same time providing real solutions that help students to achieve the Advanced English oral proficiency demanded by the Graduate student profile.

1 Topic, Statement of the Problem, objectives, and Justification

1.1 Topic

Factors that interfere in the accomplishment of an Advanced-mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students term I-2010 of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Currently, the Department of Foreign Languages (FLD) administers three careers which are Profesorado en Idioma Inglés para Educación básica y Media, Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas, and Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés. The latter major as all of the other careers, has a study plan in which there are components as the career description, syllabus and the profile (see annex 2) which consists of the characteristics a student should possess for entering the career as well as the features a student picks up throughout the process.

The study plan (see annex 1) of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza is composed of a number of subjects designed to develop English oral proficiency; among these subjects are: first, Basic English whose objectives are that students perform tasks such as introducing self, ordering a meal, asking for directions, making a purchase and the like. Second, Intermediate English I and II demand that students exchange basic information about work, school, recreation, and particular interests in conversation requiring narration and description, though with some language limitations; also, students should be able to initiate, sustain, and close a general conversation with a number of strategies appropriate to a range of circumstances and topics, and be able to use connected discourse, particularly for simple narration and/or description. Third, Advanced English I and II prepare students to handle complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining and apologizing, communicate facts and talk about topics of current public and personal and general interest using general vocabulary. Moreover, these two subjects help students use

language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes, at the same time, formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate their contribution skillfully to those of other speakers.

Besides the previous, there are some other subjects that provide students with more oral practice. To start with, it is Readings and Conversations I and II, here the students learn how to express their ideas in a coherent way, and use vocabulary from context. Indeed, they accurately paraphrase key ideas in their own words. To finish, English Pronunciation train the students on how to use the sounds of American English appropriately in the context of speech.

Nevertheless, according to Landaverde B., Hernández M. (Graduation Work, 2005), students do not reach the Advanced-mid oral level of proficiency stated by the ACTFL (see annex 3), but they get an intermediate high level of oral proficiency, which is not the one demanded by the profile of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés when students culminate their major,

Such profile demands that a student must have an Advanced–mid English oral proficiency (as interpreted by the research team based on undergraduate student´s profile in which it says that students should have an advanced level of English and the description of Advanced English II which states that students should have an advanced + 1 level of English). According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines students performing an advanced- mid level of English oral proficiency are able to demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse, when they end the major.

As previously mentioned, this signifies that the end-of the career students' profile is not being achieved but it is far from it. Therefore, the following question arises, what factors interfere in the accomplishment of an advanced mid level of oral proficiency?

1.3 Objectives

General objectives

- To diagnose the level of English oral proficiency reached by the graduation process students.

- To find out the factors that affect graduation work students´ accomplishment of an advanced-mid English oral Proficiency level at the end of their major.

Specific objectives

- To identify the main factors which block students´ right development of Advanced-Mid oral proficiency

- To describe the factors that affect graduation work students' accomplishment of an advanced -mid level of oral proficiency.

1.4 Justification

As stated in the profile demanded by the Foreign Language Department at the end of the major in English specialized in Teaching, students should have an advanced - mid English oral proficiency which affirms that students can demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse.

In order to find out if the students reach an advanced-mid English level of oral proficiency, this research had as a main objective to identify the students' actual level of oral proficiency and the reasons why the graduation process students do not achieve the standards that are demanded by the Department.

Consequently, the profile standard is not being reached and this indeed presents a problem. Undoubtedly, this makes the research team research on the students' deficient performance at the required level, and the results of our investigation are going to shed light on the factors that are preventing students from fulfilling an advanced- mid English level of oral proficiency as well as decide what can be done to improve the conditions to develop oral proficiency in students.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theory

Currently, learning a second language has become an important   tool in our lives since knowing a second language can give you more opportunities to get a better job ,or it can give you the chance to study abroad etc, but knowing a second language consist of managing the four macro skills which are: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The latest one is the one that most of the people have trouble with because at speaking we can find many problems such as: misunderstandings due to our pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, intonation etc. For that reason the following question arises: What does to be proficient in a Language mean?

As a first step the research team has to say that According to Crystal (1987) oral proficiency is the ability to communicate verbally in a functional and accurate way in the target language. A high degree of oral proficiency implies having the ability to apply the linguistic knowledge to new contexts (topics) and situations.   Besides, communicative language competences are those that empower a person to act using especially linguistic means. Recalling our topic, which concentrates mainly on the communicative area, the research team is going to focus mainly on the linguistic mean of oral proficiency which according to Omaggio, *(2000)*, in order for a student to be rated as "advanced-mid in oral proficiency, he/she needs to be able to use the language in a variety of contexts with considerable flexibility and creativity".

For starters, in order to assess students' level of oral proficiency, the research team used the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). The OPI is a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability, or oral Proficiency. It is a standardized instrument since to assure reliability in assessing different speech samples, a prescribed procedure must be observed.

It took the form of a 10 to 30 minutes tape-recorded conversation between an interviewer and the interviewee whose speaking proficiency is being assessed. The OPI should resemble, to the greatest extent possible, a natural conversation. There are two major interrelated aspects of the ACTFL OPI process: the elicitation of the speech simple, and the rating of the speech sample.

Elicitation**:** involves a mandatory structure of four phases: warm-up, level checks, probes and wind- down.

Rating**:** is a two steps process: it is an ongoing process during the OPI itself, and at the conclusion of the OPI the interviewer listens to an audiotape of the entire OPI before assigning a final rating. In each instance, features of the speech simple are first compared to the criteria for each major level (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior) of the rating scale, and the assigned a sublevel rating(Low, Mid, High) by carefully comparing the simple with the appropriate sublevel descriptions in the ACTFL. The OPI assesses functional language skills as they exist at the moment of assessment without referencing to the circumstances under which learning took place. Its goal is to permit the extrapolation of global linguistic competence on the basis of necessarily limited performance in the interview situation. One reflection of this goal is that the rating is based on determining a level of performance which the speaker can consistently sustain during the interview. The sustained level of communicative ability must be demonstrated in the OPI across the level-appropriate range of assessment criteria: global tasks, formal and informal contexts, content areas, and accuracy features.

In order to develop oral proficiency there are some recommendations and theories to be followed; let's start first with the recommendations:

Teaching oral skills in the classroom

Since Communication is a process, it is not sufficient for students to simply have knowledge of the target language forms, meanings, and functions. Students must be able to apply this knowledge in the negotiation of meaning. A speaker will choose a particular way to express his/her ideas according to whom he is addressing; furthermore, a speaker must be able to anticipate and produce the expected patterns of specific discourse situations where they must manage discrete elements such as turn-taking, rephrasing, providing feedback, or redirecting.

According to Brown, Douglas H. (2000) there are six categories that apply to the types of oral production that students are expected to carry out in the classroom. They are the followings:

1. **Imitative**: Learners imitate certain kinds of speech not for the purpose of meaningful interaction, but for focusing on some particular elements of language form. Drills focus on one element of the language in a controlled activity.

2. **Intensive**: Intensive speaking performance is designed to practice some phonological or grammatical aspect of language; it can be self-initiated or it can form part of some pair work activity, where learners are going over certain form of language.

3. **Responsive**: Short replies to teacher or student initiated questions or comments that do not extend into dialogs, but such speech can be meaningful and authentic.

4. **Transactional** *(*dialogue*)*: It is carried out for the purpose of conveying or exchanging specific information; it is an extended form of responsive language, where conversations may have more of negotiate nature to the students than merely responsive speech. This means that contrary to the responsive speech, students can maintain a more meaningful conversation with the teacher or someone else.

5. **Interpersonal** *(*dialogue*):* It is carried out more for the purpose of maintaining social relationships than for transmission of facts and information.

6. **Extensive** *(*monologue*):* At advanced levels, students are called on to give extended monologues in the form of oral reports, summaries, or perhaps short speeches, these monologues can be planned or without previous preparation.

Principles to designing speaking techniques

According to Brown, Douglas H. (2000) in his book "Teaching by Principles" if teachers really want to make their students improve their speaking ability, then they should take into account the following principles to select the best techniques.

1. Techniques should cover learners' needs from language-based focus on accuracy to message-based focus on interaction, meaning and fluency.

2. Techniques should be intrinsical motivation, and should encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts.

3. Techniques should provide appropriate feedback and correction and should give students opportunities to initiate oral communication.

4. Techniques should capitalize in the natural link between speaking and listening because these two skills reinforce the one to the other.

5. Techniques should encourage the development of speaking strategies to accomplish oral communicative purpose such as:

➢ **Guessing:** This strategy is useful when speakers have not heard or understood something well enough, when they do not know a new word or when they suspect that there is a meaning hidden "between the lines".

➢ **Taking control of a conversation:** It requires speakers to be much more active when trying to follow a conversation. "Taking control includes the following sub-strategies: Asking a conversation partner to slow down, asking for repetition, clarification, using synonyms, repeating information back to the speak

➢ **Expressing yourself when you do not have the exact words.** Many learners feel they do not have enough vocabulary to express themselves clearly in English. So, they avoid communication partially or to coin new words specially when referring to new ideas and concepts or the latest developments in technology.

Types of language teaching techniques developed in the classroom

There are three types of language teaching techniques that can be carried out in the classroom, these are the following:

1. **Controlled Techniques**: Warm-up, role-play, demonstration, question and answer-display drills.

2. *Semi controlled* **Techniques**: Story-telling, information exchange, brain storming, wrap-up.

3. *Free* **Techniques**: Role-plays, games, report, problem solving, drama, simulations, interview, and debates.

Strategies for promoting the development of oral proficiency in the classroom

1. **Perform needs analysis.** Teachers should listen to their students' use of the language when they talk to them, when they give oral presentations to the class and when they interact with each other while working in groups. They should ask themselves, "What strengths and what weaknesses do their oral language show".

2. **Familiarize yourself with the linguistic structures in the target language (phonology, morphology, syntax***).* Knowledge of the linguistic structures enables teachers to assess their students' needs. Some examples of specific phonological differences and linguistic structures include:
    a. Article-noun-adjective agreement (syntax and morphology)
    b. The verb system (tense, aspects, moods) (syntax and morphology)
    c. Use of prepositions (syntax)

3. **Encourage use of nonacademic vocabulary in the classroom.** At the upper levels many of the daily activities require the teacher to be creative and incorporate activities that include everyday vocabulary such as, the one used for shopping, traveling, food and nutrition. By making use of story books and activities that emphasize everyday vocabulary teachers can strategically support its use.

4. **Encourage more oral production in your classes.** Students output is often limited to one or two works in the target language. Therefore teachers need to create an interactional environment that encourages the use of extended discourse among students. Well-structured cooperative communication activities such as jigsaw tasks and information gap tasks provide students with opportunities to engage in more language-rich situations.

5. **Encourage accurate oral production**. The use of focus-on-form techniques in the classroom allows the teacher to provide error corrections at the time the error occurs. An effective way to provide oral focus-on-form in the classroom is by providing linguistic feedback, which lets the learner know that something in the utterance is not entirely accurate or acceptable to a native speaker

Language acquisition theories

According to Gass, Susan M (2001) the following theories are the most important in the development of a second language:

It is important to note the difference between learning and acquiring a language. Learning is a conscious process which shows itself in terms of learning rules and structures, whereas acquiring a language is a subconscious process which leads to fluency. Language acquisition is "the processes by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive, produce and use words to understand and communicate" Gass, Susan M. (2001). Regarding the latter, two theories have emerged.

The first, proposed by Noam Chomsky that claims the following:

Universal grammar (**UG**)

Human beings are born with something he called LAD (Language Acquisition Device) this theory postulates principles of <u>grammar</u> shared by all languages, thought to be innate to humans. It attempts to explain <u>language acquisition</u> in general; it does not describe specific languages. Universal grammar proposes a set of rules intended to explain language acquisition in <u>child development</u>

Krashen's Input Hypothesis

This hypothesis by Stephen Krashen is one of the most controversial theoretical perspectives in Second Language Acquisition. It is based on a set of five interrelated hypotheses that are listed below:

1. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

As mentioned above, Krashen claims that there is a difference between acquisition and learning. Acquisition is 'a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language, not unlike the process used by a child to 'pick up' a language. Learning is a conscious process in which learners attend to form, figure out rules, and are generally aware of their own processes.

2. The Monitor Hypothesis

The monitor has nothing to do with acquisition but with learning. The learned system acts only as an editor or 'monitor', making minor changes and polishing what the acquired system has produced. According to Krashen, three conditions are necessary for monitor use: 1.sufficient time, 2. focus on form, 3. knowing the rules.

3. The Natural Order Hypothesis

This hypothesis states that we acquire the rules of a language in a certain order that is predictable. However, this does not mean that every acquirer will acquire grammatical structures in exactly the same order. It states rather that, in general, certain structures tend to be acquired early and others to be acquired late

4. The Input Hypothesis

This hypothesis states that it is important for the acquirer to understand language that is a bit beyond his or her current level of competence. This means, if a learner is on a level i the input he gets should be $i + 1$. This means that the language that learners are exposed to should be just far enough beyond their current competence so that they can understand most of it but are still challenged to make progress (Brown 2002: 278).

5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

This hypothesis states that it is easier for a learner to acquire a language when he/she is not tense, angry, anxious, or bored. According to Dulay and Burt, performers with optimal attitudes have a lower affective filter. A low filter means that the performer is more open to the input language.

Many psychologists like McLaughlin have criticized Krashen's unclear distinction between subconscious (acquisition) and conscious (learning) processes. According to Brown, second language learning is a process in which varying degrees of learning and of acquisition can both be beneficial, depending upon the learner's own styles and strategies. Furthermore, the $i + 1$ formula that is presented by Krashen raises the question how i and 1 should be defined. Moreover, what about the 'silent period'? Krashen states that after a certain time, the silent period, speech will 'emerge' to the learner, which means that the learner will start to speak as a result of comprehensible input. Nevertheless, there is no information about what will happen to the learners, for whom speech will not 'emerge' and 'for whom the silent period might last forever.

The Basic Components of Human Language

Linguists have identified five different components of language, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics Gass, Susan M. (2001). To be considered a successful speaker of the language, people should know how to use the language and interact with it in society, making use of it to cope appropriately with the achievement of their goals to convey and interpret ideas. Moreover, "the ultimate goal in the educational system is to effectively communicate with others through spoken and written language" Gass, Susan M. (2001).

Despite the fact that all the components of language are essential, one is our main objective, pragmatics, which studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning, in other words the system of patterns that determine how humans can use language in particular social settings for particular conversational purposes. This is related to the idea presented by Chomsky which deals with the knowledge of the language and the ability to use that knowledge to interpret and produce meaningful language appropriate to the situation in which it is used, and he called this language competence. To be competent in the language a speaker must develop proficiently in the four macro skills, which include reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

Even though all the skills are important, the emphasis for students who are carrying out their graduation work is in the accomplishment of an Advanced-Mid level of oral skills which refer to the ability to accomplish linguistic tasks in which speakers contribute to conversation in a variety of familiar topics dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity, and precision and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. In fact, they are readily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives (ACTFL).

III.   METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Questions

What is the real level of oral proficiency that the graduation process students achieve at the end of their major in Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador?

What factors interfere with the accomplishment of an advanced-mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students term I-2010 of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador?

3.2 Type and level of the research

The purpose of this project was to identify the main factors that interfere the accomplishment of an Advanced- Mid level of oral proficiency at the end of the major of Licenciatura en Inglés opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador by graduation process students, that is why in this investigation we used two types of investigations; the first one was the exploratory research. This research was used since the research team needed to investigate an area in which little information existed because no other investigation had been focused on the achievement of an Advanced-Mid level of oral proficiency, and the aim was to gain more information before more thorough research was done. After that, the research team used the descriptive research, also known as statistical research; this research describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. Descriptive research answers the questions who, what, where, when and how.

The reasons why the research team decided to use these two types of research were that they are the ones more suitable to this problem in the Foreign Language Department. First, the investigation was exploratory for the following reason: to assure what the level of oral proficiency is that students reach at the end of the major. Second, at the beginning of this investigation, the exploratory study allowed us to get familiar with the topic, but that was not enough because the team did not obtain the adequate results to carry out a more thorough research; that is why this investigation did not finish as explorative, and the descriptive research was used as a second step to find out what the factors are that interfere in the accomplishment of an advanced-mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students term I-2010 of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador, since this research describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied.

In order to obtain those results some steps were followed and they are:

The first step was to take some bibliographic sources such as books, magazines, web sites ,handouts ,and also to make use of techniques like oral tests for assessing the level of English oral proficiency of the Graduation process students , teachers interview for finding out their assumptions about why graduation process student do not accomplish an advanced-mid level of oral proficiency surveys for determining the factors that interfere in the accomplishment of an advanced-mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students term I-2010 of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University. The questions for students´ survey, and teacher were open and closed questions. Furthermore the research team elaborated a survey with twenty-four questions, which contained open and closed questions. Also, the researchers used an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) that was addressed to twenty-eight students. These were chosen by placing them alphabetically on a list, and then the first twenty eight odd numbers were selected. This process was done in order to place them in their corresponding level of oral proficiency, so it was necessary to use some extra technical sources such as cameras, tape recorder.

The second step was to evaluate the speaking level or rate competence in oral level of students carrying out the Graduation process term I-2010,that was taken through a recorded interview, in which the student performed a real conversation in front of the research team with the purpose of identifying the student´s mistakes using a proficiency scale of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL),called OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview).After that , in order to identify the students' level of oral proficiency the research team applied the Tester Evaluation Form of the ACTFL,OPI. And then, with the student's results, the researchers determined what was the level of English oral proficiency that each student had.

With the outcomes and findings of students' oral proficiency, the researchers analyzed the students' performance in their oral production using the student´s recorded conversations for analyzing and evaluating the rating of all the factors that interfere with the overall level of their English oral proficiency, e.g., pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, content, and comprehension (see annexes 5 and 6). So the aim of using the interviewing was to assess how well a student could speak his or her second language at a given point in time and with the goal of guiding students to perform their functions indicative of their speaking level and evaluate the rate competence in oral level of the students using a proficiency scale of the ACTFL.

The third one was to interview seven teachers who are in charge of the Advanced English area at the Foreign Language Department. The research team found out at the Foreign Language Department's office which professors were teaching advanced English classes in order to identify who they were. The instrument (see annex 7) was a structured interview with open question since the main objective was to find out the factors that they believe that could interfere in the accomplishment of an advanced-mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students term I-2010.

The fourth step was to administer a survey (see annex 8)to twenty-eight undergraduate students. The survey contained three demographic questions, nine closed content ones, and twelve open-closed questions. This instrument was designed in order to identify the factors that interfere in the accomplishment of an Advanced-Mid level of oral proficiency

The last step was the elaboration of the report of the investigation that was elaborated with the aim to reflect the findings and main factors that interfere in the accomplishment of an advanced-mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students term I-2010.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The process of collecting data techniques was very complex and it had to be very carefully structured for a good quality and usefulness of data. For that reason, the data collection techniques considered were:

As stated above this investigation was divided in two steps; the first one was the exploratory research that helped the research team to diagnose the Level of English oral proficiency of the Graduation process students and this step used the following data technique:

The first technique used was **Oral Proficiency Interview** (OPI) it is proper to state that the interviews were based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines and the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) in order to label undergraduate students' oral proficiency according to the established categories (novice, intermediate, advanced, etc.). To carry out the interview, the research team made used of role play cards (see Annex), such cards contained situations which demanded that students perform them. They were divided into three levels of proficiency: intermediate, advanced, and superior. The students´ level of oral proficiency were determined according to the situations they were able to role play appropriately. Besides, the interviews will took place over a period of time of one week, was divided as follows: four undergraduate students each day for the first six days and four on the sixth day. The interview lasted approximately twenty minutes each. At the beginning of it, the students were presented with the role play cards (for the intermediate level) and they had to chose three, which they had to role play with one of the members of the research team in the form of a conversation. Later on, the cards for the advanced level and the superior level were chosen by the student and the procedure mentioned above. At the same time, the other members of the research team were taking notes on the proficiency of the interviewee.

After having passed the students an oral interview that assessed the level of oral proficiency that is reached by them at the end of their major, the results that were found led the research team to the following three groups of English oral proficiency:

1. The first group that was identified represented an 8% (3 out of 28 students) of the students interviewed, and they were placed in the Intermediate-mid level of oral proficiency. Speakers at this level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture.

2. The second group that was found was the Intermediate-high level of oral proficiency in which an 88% (24 out of 28 students) of the students were placed. That means that students at this level are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information.

3. The last and smallest group, with a 4% (1 out of 28 students), is the Advanced-low level of oral Proficiency. At this level speakers are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations.

All of the above proves that, as stated by Landaverde (Graduation Work, 2005), graduation process students do not reach an Advanced mid level of oral proficiency, but the majority of them get an Intermediate high level of oral proficiency.

The results of the students' oral interview that assessed their level of oral proficiency led our research team to the second phase of investigation that consists in using the second technique and it was:

Structured interview it was administered to seven professors whose main aim was to find out their assumptions on why students do not achieve an Advanced-Mid level of oral proficiency and these were the results.

To begin with, the professors agreed with the results of the oral interviews that say that most students only reach an Intermediate-high level of oral proficiency at the end of their major.

Second, all of the professors said that some of the most important factors that they believe to interfere with the students' accomplishment of an Advanced-mid level of oral proficiency have to do with the syllabus since this does not include enough subjects for the proper development of an Advanced-mid level of oral proficiency. Another factor that came up was the lack of methodology in the classrooms because the only methodology being used is the one included in the textbooks.

Moreover, professors claimed that textbooks do not help students get the Advanced-mid level of oral proficiency since they just include every day topics and do not demand students to investigate complex topics that could help them increase their knowledge. A third factor, deals with the size of the groups of students being too large which does not allow professors to pay attention to each students in particular. The following factor is the students' self-motivation which prevents them from using English inside or outside the classroom, and expand their knowledge. One more factor is related to the lack of resources, such as technology, photocopies, and use of the lab. The last factor, as mentioned by one of the professors, is the absence of native speaker professors at the department.

Third, professors at the department claim that they try to help increase the students' level of oral proficiency in ways like reading to increase vocabulary, role playing every day situations, and using the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP). Besides, they use a variety of communicative activities to give students opportunities for practice, and these include pair work, role plays, and debates.

Fourth, professors were asked if they ever corrected mistakes if students were interacting with others to which they all agreed to respond that they do, indeed, but as general feedback once the activity was over.

Fifth, regarding students who do not have an appropriate level of oral proficiency for the class they take and are promoted to the next level, professors believe that it is because the correct assessment criteria is not being used, also the say that due to crowded classes, weak students are helped to be promoted by their own classmates, they also pointed out that students' level of English before entering the career is low.

Finally, when asked if there should be a new system to evaluate students' oral proficiency at the end of Advanced English II, professors stated that the staff was not prepared to do such oral evaluation, and they also claim that it would not be fair to students as some of them would get self-conscious about it.

In short, all the reasons mentioned above are pointed out by the professors as the main reasons why the graduation process students do not get an Advanced mid level of oral proficiency when they finish their major.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data analysis was based on the results gathered from the student´s survey whose main objective was to identify the main factors that interfere in the accomplishment of an advanced mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students term I-2010 and this technique led us to the following results.

After having placed students into their appropriate level of oral proficiency, the research team administered a survey to find out why the students do not reach an Advanced-mid level of oral proficiency, and the following were the results.

Intermediate-low which represents the 8% of the sample

The students in this group were 1 female and 2 male, and their ages range 25 to 29 years of age. When they were asked whether the Licenciatura was their first major option, 2 of them said it was, yet 1 of them alleged it was not; he mentioned his first option was computer science. Related to the year in which they started their major, they said that they began between 2003 and 2004, and two of the students decided to study this major because they wanted to become English teachers, and one student said she wanted to travel abroad. When they were asked about the amount of English they knew before studying the major two students told the research team they did not know much English, and one said he did not know anything. Related to when they began to learn the language. Two of them were between 20-25 years of age, the other one was between 10-15 years old.

Regarding the influence that the activities carried out in the classroom by the professors had on their oral proficiency, two of them said the influence was very high whereas the other one said it was very little. When asked about how the absence of a native speaker of English professor affected their oral proficiency, the three of them agreed that it affected them highly. The areas in which most of them believe the influence of a native speaker of English professor would have helped them; the three students interviewed agreed on pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary. Regarding to the resources that would have helped them improve their level of oral proficiency. All of them agreed that it was speaking outside the classroom. When they were asked about whether or not the Foreign Language Department provided them with the resources mentioned in question eleventh. Two of them said they were not provided with the resources, and the other one said he was. When asking about how much time did they devote to develop their oral proficiency in English in a day. One of the students said he devoted 15-30 minutes a day. The other student said he devoted 2-4 hours a day. The last one said he devoted no time to develop his oral proficiency in English.

Concerning the subjects offered subjects offered by the Foreign Language Department helped them develop their oral proficiency in English. Two said Readings and Conversations aided them in their oral proficiency, and one said he was helped by the English courses. In relation to the technological resources available for students at Foreign Language Department, All of the three mentioned a different issue. One mentioned it was the tape recorder, another said it was the language lab, and one said he did not use any. When they were asked whether they believed that it could have helped them to interact in English with their professors inside and outside the classroom. To this question all three students said that it could have been of help. When asked if they considered necessary a basic level of English at the beginning of the major, two of them said yes, and the other one said no. Besides, they consider the study plan of Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés should be revised because there are unnecessary subjects, and more subjects to develop their oral proficiency should be added.

Regarding whether students worked during their major, two of them did not work. One of them worked as a teacher. Concerning studying English before enrolling in the major, one of them said no. The other two said that they studied English in high school. When asking about the external factors that encourage them to study English. Their responses were: one was encouraged by job opportunities and the other two for traveling abroad. Referring to the textbooks used in their classes contain only every day topics and not more complex ones that could have helped them to develop their oral proficiency. Two of them say yes, and one   said no. Finally,regarding if they were surrounded with an adequate environment in the English classroom. All of them agreed it was not appropriate because there was no equipment in the classroom. Besides, when they were asked whether their English classes were crowded and how this affected them. All of them agreed they were affected by large classes because they were noisy. They did not have a chance to participate, and they were not corrected when they made a mistake. All of them agreed they were affected by large classes because they were noisy. They did not have a chance to participate, and they were not corrected when they made a mistake.

Intermediate high which corresponds to the 88% of the sample

The students in this group are 16 female and 8 male, and their ages range 16 of them from 22 to 25 years old and 8 from 26 to31 years of age. When they were asked whether the Licenciatura was their first major option, 16 of them said it was, yet 8 of them alleged it was not; they mentioned their first options were Modern Languages, Profesorado en Inglés, Business Administration, Dentistry, and Biology. Related to the year in which they started their major, they said four of them began between 2003 and 2004, and twenty started in 2005, and they decided to study this major because they wanted to become teachers of English, travel abroad, to learn the language, and work as interpreters. They also claimed that when they first started their career 38% knew only a little, a 29% did not know much, 25% of them knew nothing, and 8% knew a lot of English. When they started to study English five of them were between four and sixteen years old, twelve were between seventeen and nineteen, and seven were between twenty and twenty-three years old.

Regarding the influence that the activities carried out in the classroom by the professors had on their oral proficiency, sixteen of them said it influenced them a lot, whereas two smaller groups of four students each said it influenced them a little and poorly to each group. When asked about how the absence of a native speaker of English professor affected their oral proficiency, most of them agreed that it had a big impact on them, a few of them said it influenced them a little, and a small number replied it affected them poorly. The areas in which most of them believe the influence of a native speaker of English professor would have helped them are pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary. A smaller group of students say the areas are idiomatic expressions, fluency, and cultural aspects. Students used some resources, which according to most of the students these resources were not provided by the Foreign Language Department, to help them with their oral proficiency and they ranked them from the one they used the most to the least: movies, books, music, and speaking with friends. When they were asked about how much time did they devote to develop their oral proficiency when they were studying English   10 of them said they devoted from 15 to 30 minutes, 8 said from 1 to 2 hours, 3 said from 2 to 4 hours, only one of them said more than that time, and two of them said they did not devote any time to studying English.

Concerning the subjects offered by the Foreign Language Department to help them to develop their oral proficiency half of the student said it was the English classes, almost half of them said it was readings and conversations, and only one said phonology. In relation to the technological resources available for students at Foreign Language Department, 14 of them said there are not resources available, 9 of them said they used the language lab and tape recorders, and one said the computer lab. Most of the students believe it would have helped them if all the interaction inside and outside the classroom had been in English, only 2 students believe it would not. When asked if they considered necessary a basic level of English at the beginning of the major, more that half of the students think it would have been. Besides, they consider the study plan of Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés   should be revised because there are unnecessary subjects, and more subjects to develop their oral proficiency should be added.

Regarding whether students worked during their major, 16 of them said they did, in positions such as: English and physical education teachers, call center agents, and interpreters. Concerning studying English before enrolling in the major, 16 of the students said they did in academies such as: PROLINGUA, CENIUES, UCA, ITCA, and in their high schools. 10 of students expressed that they wanted to study the major in English because they liked the language, other 10 students because of better job opportunities, and 4 of them to learn a new culture. Referring to the texts books used in their English classes, 18 students think the topics did not help them develop in other areas other than every day language, the remaining six think the books were okay. Finally, almost all the students think the classrooms did not have an adequate environment during their English classes because there were not visual aids, they were messy. They also said that classes were overcrowded, which made them feel shy; they also think that classes were not personalized, the activities were not completed, and not everybody had the chance to participate

Advanced-low:

There is only one student placed in this level of oral proficiency which corresponds to 4%.

This student is female, and she is 25 years old. Also she chose the major in English at first, and started it in 2004. She decided to study this major because she wanted to teach English. She began to study English at age 18, but she did not know much English.

Concerning the influence of the activities that were carried out in the classroom, she says they influenced her a little. She thinks that the absence of a native speaker of English professor did not affect her much but believes that this kind of professor could have helped her develop her pronunciation and vocabulary. She says that she devoted from 1 to 2 hours a day to practice the language, and she could develop her English oral proficiency by watching movies in English.

Yet, the Foreign Language Department did not provide her with such means to develop her oral proficiency; the Foreign Language Department did provide her with a Language Lab that helped her in the development of her oral proficiency. She thinks the English courses given as part of the study plan helped her more than any other subject.

Besides, she thinks that if all interaction with professors had been in English that could have helped her, and believes that the Foreign Language Department should demand a basic level of English in order to be admitted. This student considers that the study plan of the English major does not need to be revised since she thinks that success is up to each student. Concerning a question dealing with whether or not she worked during her English major, she claims she worked as teacher of English. She felt that the most important factor for her to enroll in the English major was the fact that she likes the language. Talking about the textbook, she thinks it did not have adequate topics to develop her oral proficiency in different areas and not only every day topics. She claims that the English classrooms did not have an adequate environment because they were overcrowded, and noisy. They also lacked visual aids.

3.5 FINDINGS

The following tables and graphs show the results and main findings, which were found in the data analysis and interpretation about the main factors that interfere with the accomplishment of an Advanced-mid level of English oral proficiency by students carrying out their graduation process 2010. These students were divided into three different groups according to the level of English oral proficiency: Intermediate-low, which represents the 8%, Intermediate-high, 88%, and Advanced-low, 4% of the sample. Those results and findings helped the research team to arrive at the conclusions and facilitated the corresponding recommendations for the teachers and students at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. These results are shown in the following pages.

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Intermediate-Low	3	8%
Intermediate-High	24	88%
Advanced-Low	1	4%
Total	28	100%

1. **Did you study English before enrolling in Licenciatura en Idiomas opción Enseñanza?**

| Level of oral proficiency	Previous English knowledge	No previous English knowledge
Intermediate Low	67%	33%
Intermediate High	33%	67%
Advanced Low	100%	0%

Studied English before studying the Major
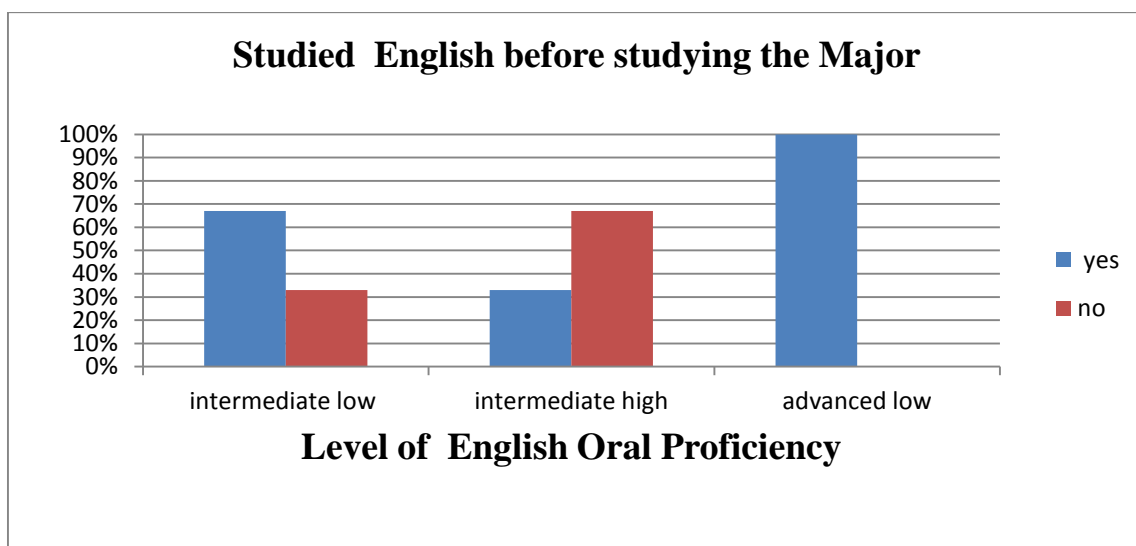
Analysis: The results of the students that got Intermediate-low showed that 67% of them had previous knowledge of English. While in the Intermediate-high only a 33% had previous knowledge. And the Advanced-low student had previous knowledge.

Interpretation: Most of the students interviewed already had knowledge of English before they entered their major at the university.

2. If you knew English before coming to the University, how much English did you know?

Level of oral proficiency	A lot	A little	Not much	Nothing
Intermediate Low			67%	33%
Intermediate High	8%	38%	29%	25%
Advanced Low			100%	
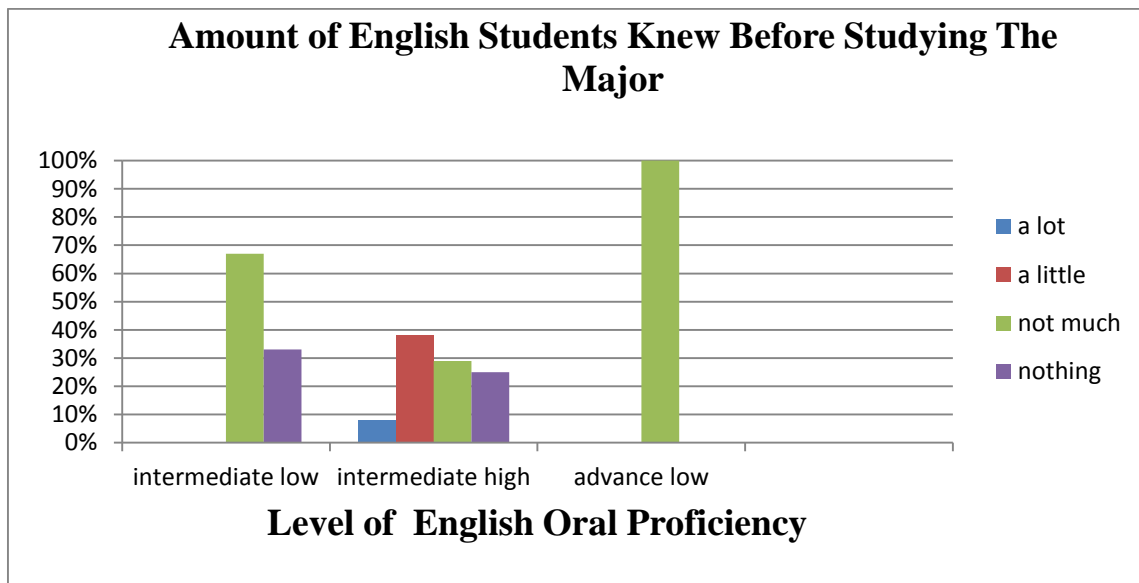
Analysis: According to the results, 67% of the students at the Intermediate-low level did not know much English, whereas 33% did not know anything. 38% of the Intermediate-low knew a little, while 25% knew nothing, and 100% of the Advanced-low did not know much.

Interpretation: The students at all levels who entered the major did not have a strong base of English to build up on.

3. **How old were you when you began to study English?**

Level of oral proficiency	4-16 years old	17-19 years old	20-23 years old
Intermediate Low	33%		67%
Intermediate High	21%	50%	29%
Advanced Low		100%	
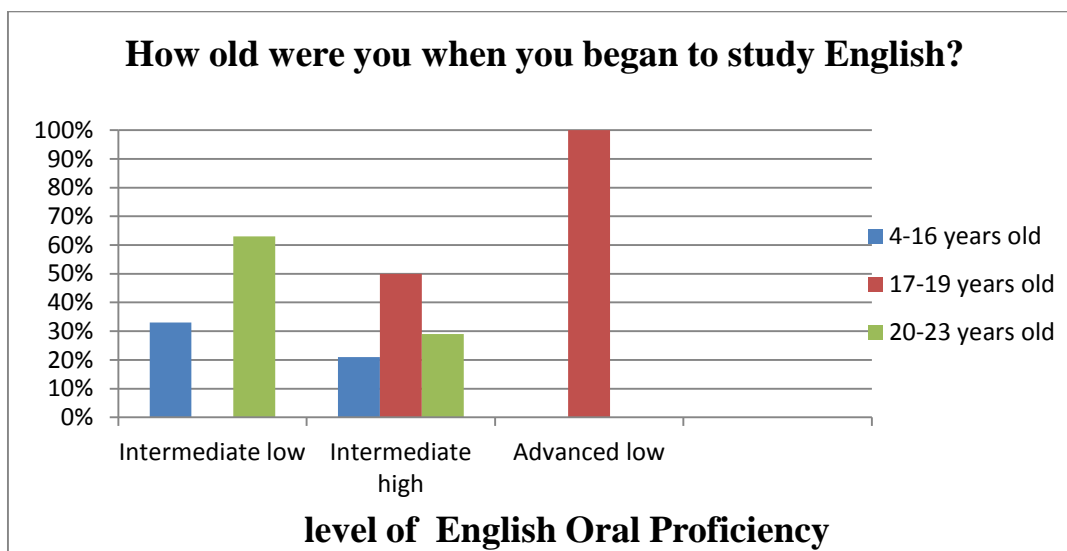
Analysis: The interviewed students revels that 67% of the students at the Intermediate-low level were between 20-23 years of age when they began to study English. 50% of the students at the Intermediate-high and 100% of the Advanced-low level of English oral proficiency were between 17-19 years old.

Interpretation: Most of the students interviewed started learning English when they were teens, which means they did not practice the language from an early age.

4. Was the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza your first major option? If not, which major did you choose first?

| Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate Low	67%	33%
Intermediate High	67%	33%
Advanced Low	100%	
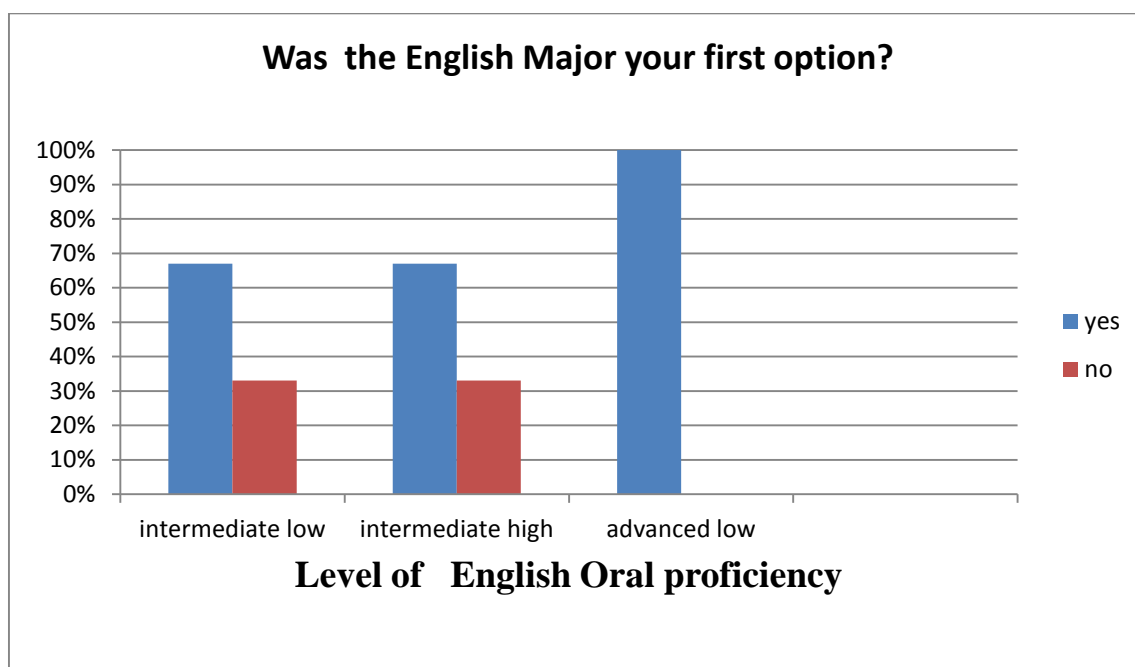
Analysis: According to the results, 67% of the Intermediate-low, 67% of the Intermediate-high, and 100% of the Advanced-low students interviewed chose the major in English as their first option.

Interpretation: Most students who studied the major in English had planned to take that major from the start of their university.

5. Mention some external factors that encouraged you to learn English.

| Level of oral proficiency	Learning English	Better job opportunities	Traveling and learning a new culture
Intermediate Low		33%	67%
Intermediate High	42%	42%	16%
Advanced Low	100%		
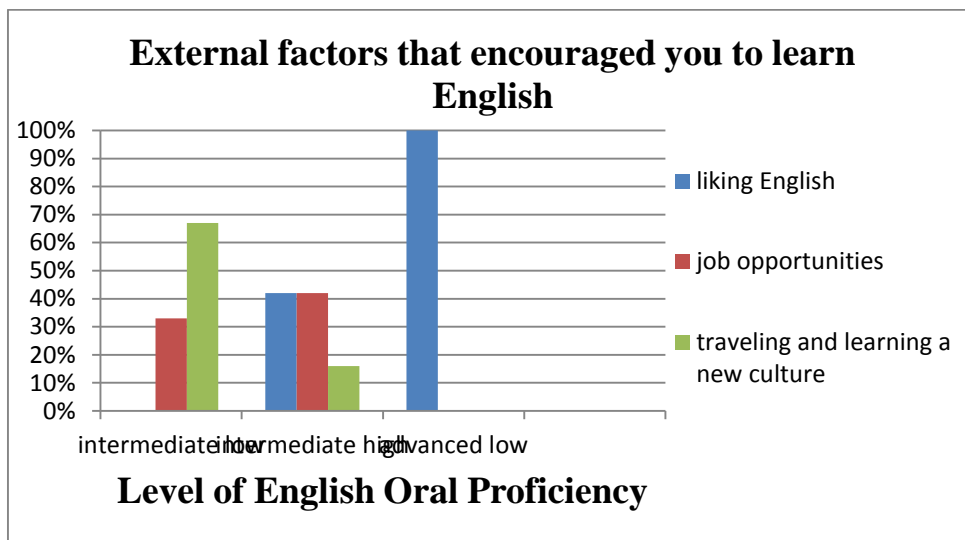
Analysis: The interview reveals that 67% of the Intermediate-low students think that traveling and learning a new culture encouraged the most to study the major in English. 84% of the Intermediate-high students said that Learning English and better job opportunities are the two most common factors that encouraged them. And 100% of the Advanced-low students think that factor was learning English.

Interpretation: Students that belong to Intermediate-high and Advanced-low had interest in the language whereas the Intermediate-low did not.

6. When did you start the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés?

Level of oral proficiency	2003	2004	2005
Intermediate-Low	33.3%	33.3%	33.4%
Intermediate-High	8.33%	8.33%	83.33%
Advanced-Low		100%	

When did you start the English Major?
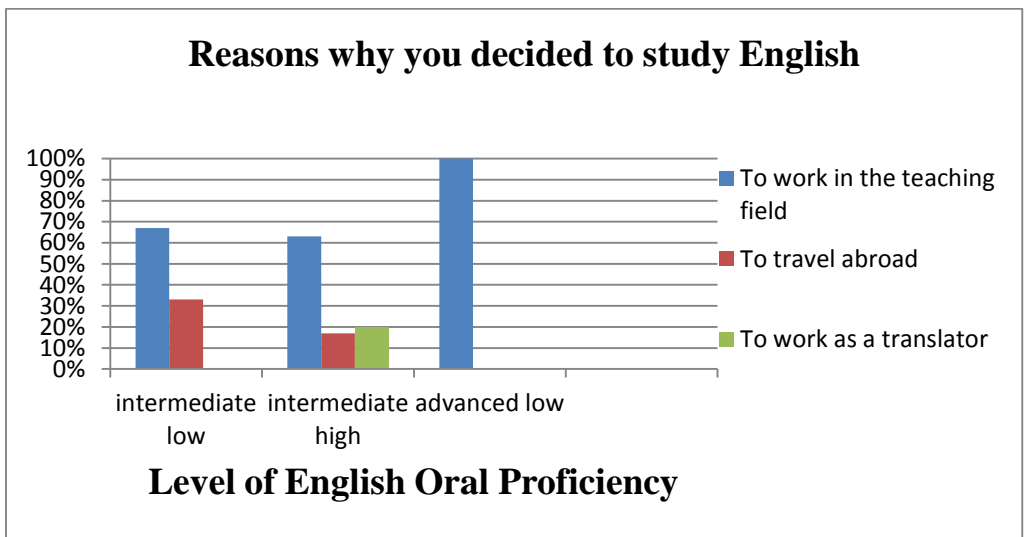
Level of English Oral Proficiency
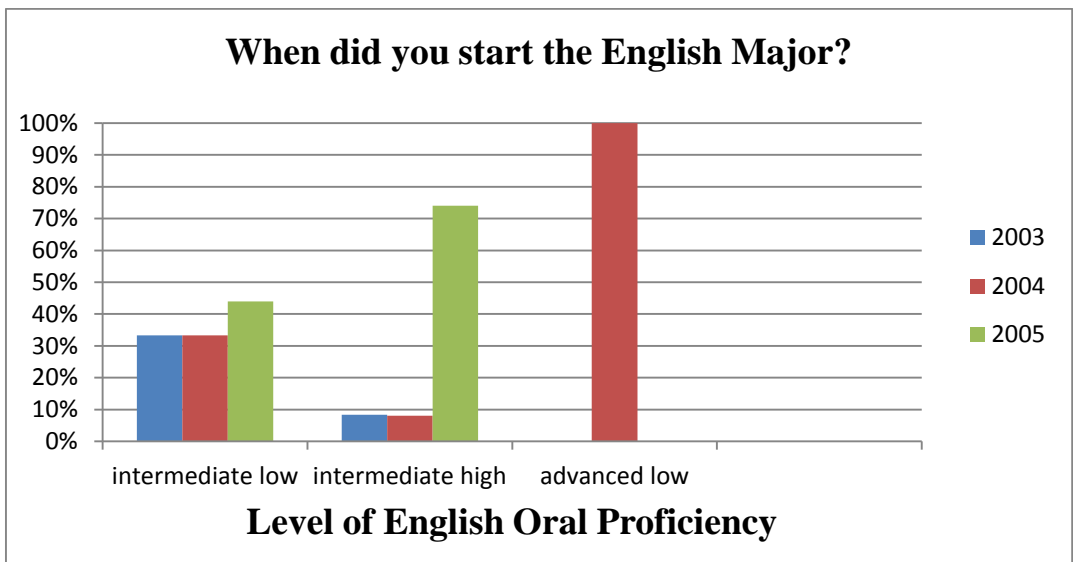
Analysis: 33% of the Intermediate-low students started their major in 2003, another 33% in 2004, and 33% in 2005. In the Intermediate-high group, an 8% began in 2003, another 8% in 2004, and 83% in 2005. 100% of the Advanced-low students started in 2004.

Interpretation: It took most students of the sample five years to end their studies.

7. Why did you decide to study Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés?

| Level of oral proficiency	To work in the teaching field	To work in a call center	To travel abroad	To work as a flight attendant	To work as tourist guide	To work as a translator
Intermediate-Low	67%		33%			
Intermediate-High	63%		17%			20%
Advanced-Low	100%					

Analysis: According to the findings, 67% of the Intermediate-low students decided to study the major in English to work in the teaching field. 63% of the Intermediate-high also studied the major to work in the teaching field, as well as the 100% of the Advanced-low students.

Interpretation: Most students in all the levels decided to study the English major to work on the teaching field.

8. How did the activities carried out by the teachers in the classroom influence your English oral proficiency?

Level of oral proficiency	Influenced me highly	Influenced me a little	Influenced me poorly	Didn't influence me
Intermediate Low	67%		33%	
Intermediate High	67%	16.6%	16.6%	
Advanced Low		100%		
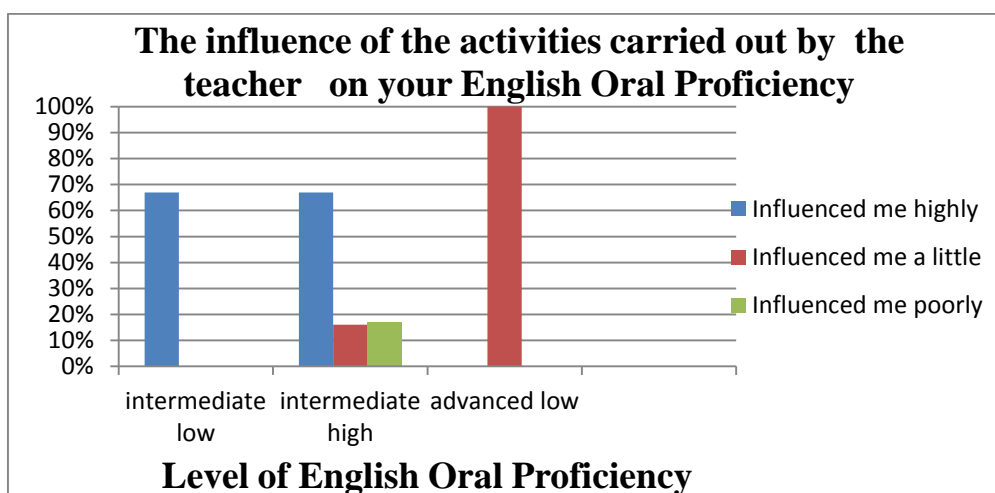
Analysis: According to the results, 67% of the Intermediate-low students were highly influenced by the activities carried out by the professor in the classroom. 67% of the Intermediate-high students were also highly influenced. And 100% of the Advanced-low students were a little influenced by such activities.

Interpretation: Most students in the sample were influenced whether highly or a little by the activities carried out by the professor in the classroom. This means that the activities used have an effect on students

9. How much does the absence of a native speaker of English professor influence you in the accomplishment of an advanced level of oral proficiency?

Level of oral proficiency	Influences me highly	It influences me a little	It influences me poorly	It doesn't influence me
Intermediate low	100%			
Intermediate high	50%	37.5%	12.5%	
Advanced low			100%	
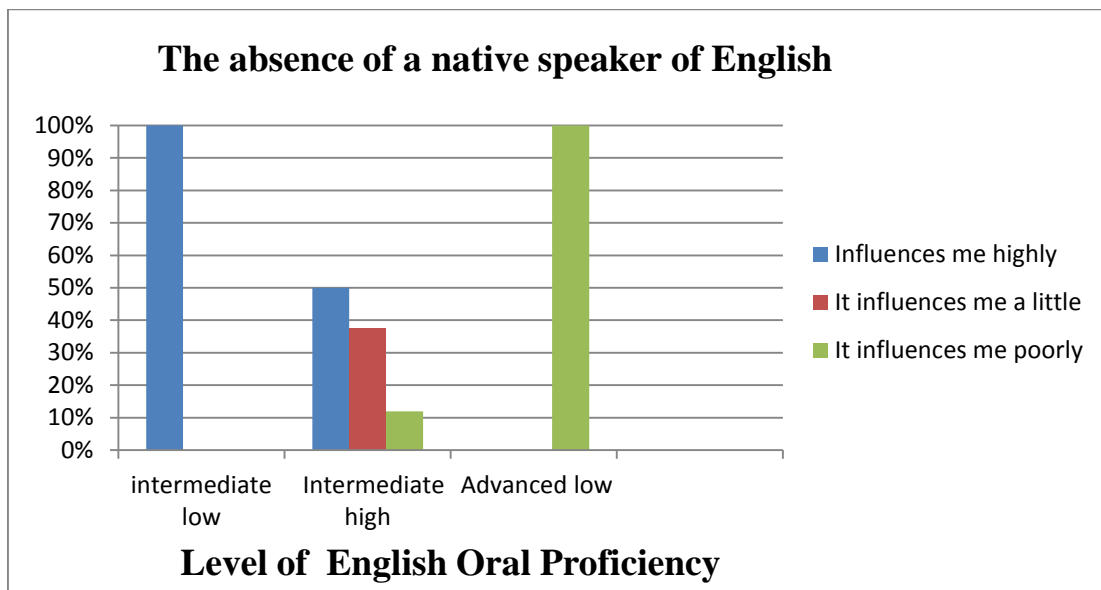
Analysis: According to the results, 100% of the Intermediate-low students and 50% of the Intermediate-high students were highly influenced by the absence of a native speaker of English, whereas 100% of the Advanced-low student says the absence of a native speaker of English influenced her poorly.

Interpretation: Most students believe that it is important to have a native speaker of English professor.

10. In which aspects a native speaker of English professor could have helped you to accomplish an Advanced-mid level of oral proficiency?

Level of oral proficiency	Pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary	Idiomatic expressions, fluency, cultural aspects
Intermediate low	100%	
Intermediate high	87.5%	12.5%
Advanced low	100%	
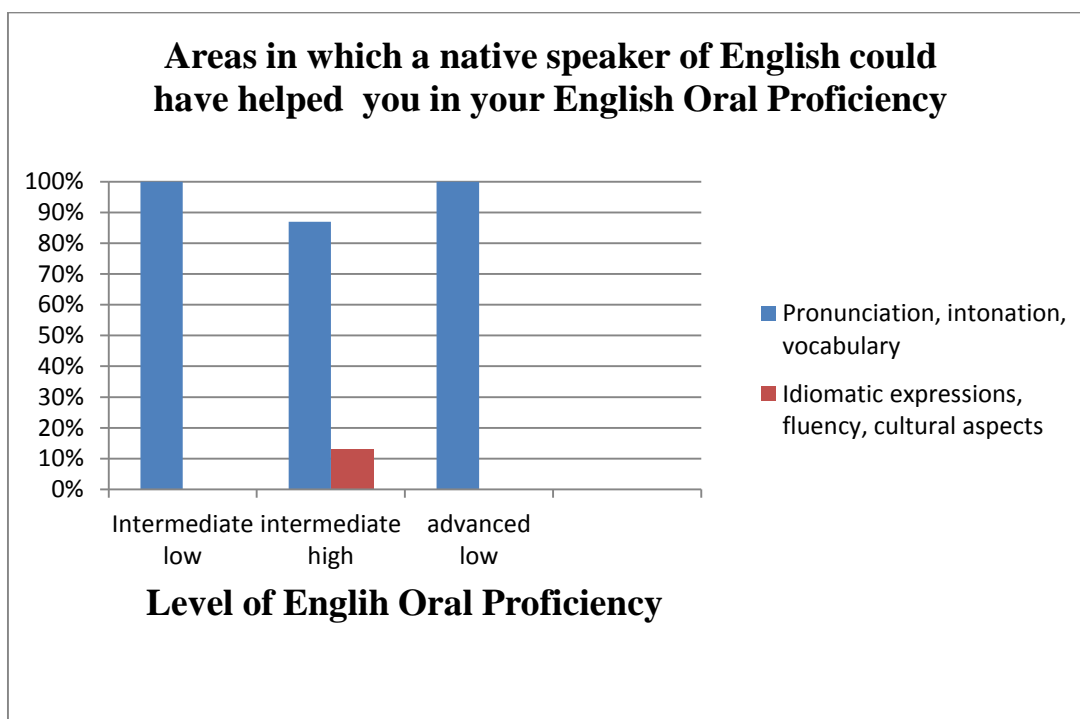
Analysis: The survey reveals that 100% of the Intermediate-low, 87% of the Intermediate-high, and 100% of the Advanced-low students think that a native speaker of English professor would have helped them develop pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary to develop their English oral proficiency.

Interpretation: Students believe they do not get the appropriate input in the areas, pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary

11. Which of the following resources would have helped you to improve your oral English proficiency?

Level of oral proficiency	Reading books in English	Watching movies in English	Listening to music in English	Speaking outside the classroom
Intermediate low				100%
Intermediate high	25%	37.5%	21%	16.5%
Advanced low		100%		
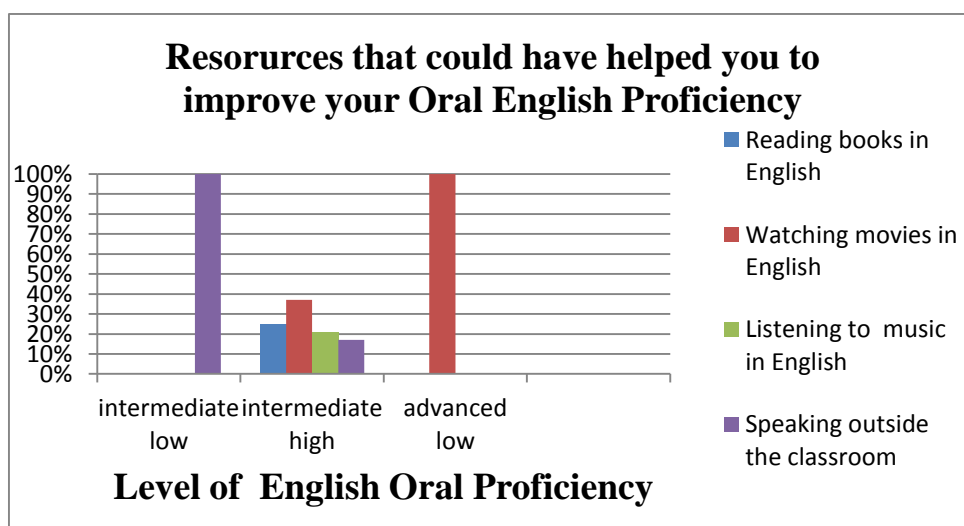
Analysis: According to the results, 100% of the Intermediate-low students think that speaking outside the classroom would have helped them improve their oral proficiency, whereas reading books in English, watching movies, listening to music, and speaking outside the classroom were divided almost equally among the students in the Intermediate-high level. 100% of the Advanced-low student believes it was watching movies in English.

Interpretation: Students believe that speaking English outside the classroom and watching movies in English could have helped them develop their English oral proficiency

12. Has the Language Department provided you with the resources mentioned in the previous question to improve your oral proficiency?

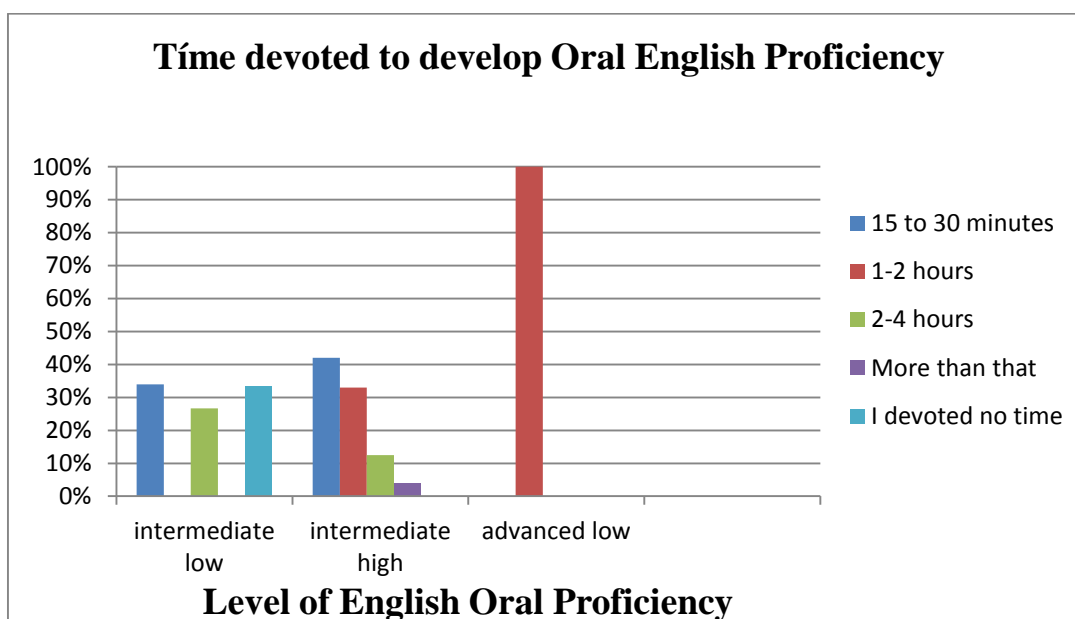| Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate low	33%	67%
Intermediate high	33%	67%
Advanced low		100%
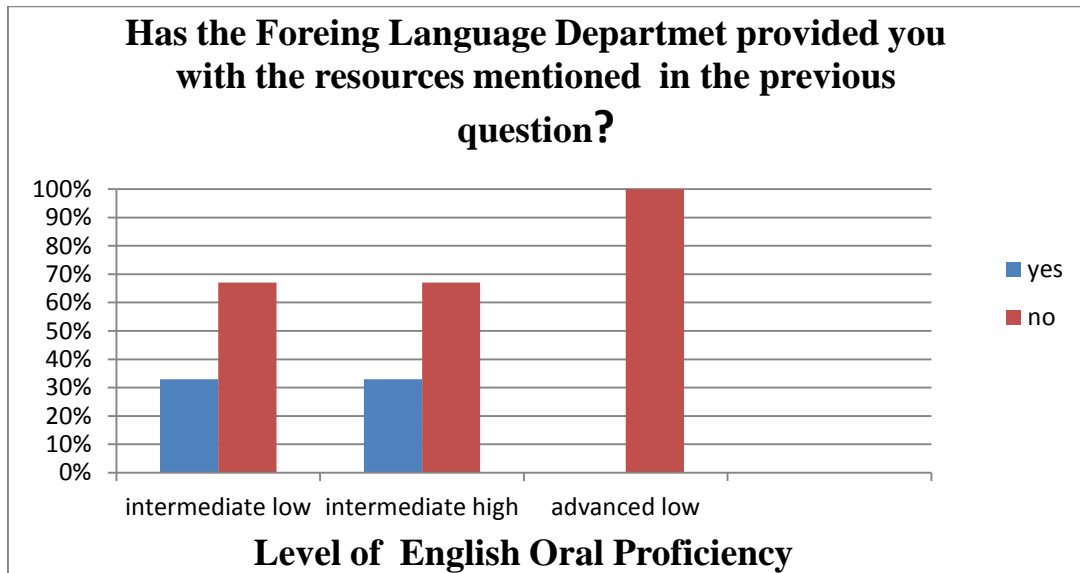
Analysis: 67% of the Intermediate-low, 67% of the Intermediate-high, and 100% of the Advanced-low students claim that they were not provided with the resources mentioned in the previous question by the Foreign Language Department.

Interpretation: Most students agreed that the Foreign Language Department did not provide all the resources they needed to develop their English oral proficiency.

13. How much time did you devote to developing English oral proficiency while you were studying English daily?

| Level of oral proficiency	15 to 30 minutes	1-2 hours	2-4 hours	More than that	I devoted no time
Intermediate low	34%		26.7%		33.3%
Intermediate high	42%	33%	12.5%	4%	8.5%
Advanced low		100%			

Analysis: 34% of the Intermediate-low students devoted 15-30 minutes a day to developing English oral proficiency. 42% of the Intermediate-low also dedicated 15-30 minutes, and 100% of the Advanced-low devoted 1-2 hours a day to their development of English oral proficiency.

Interpretation: Intermediate-low and Intermediate-high students do not devote enough time to developing oral proficiency, while the Advanced-low student did devote a moderate amount of time

14. Which of the following subjects offered at the Foreign Language Department helped you improve your English oral Proficiency?

Level of oral proficiency	English Pronunciation	Phonology and Morphology	Readings and Conversations I and II	English courses
Intermediate low			67%	33%
Intermediate high		4%	46%	50%
Advanced low				100%

Subjects that helped you to developed your English Oral Proficiency


Level of English Oral Proficiency
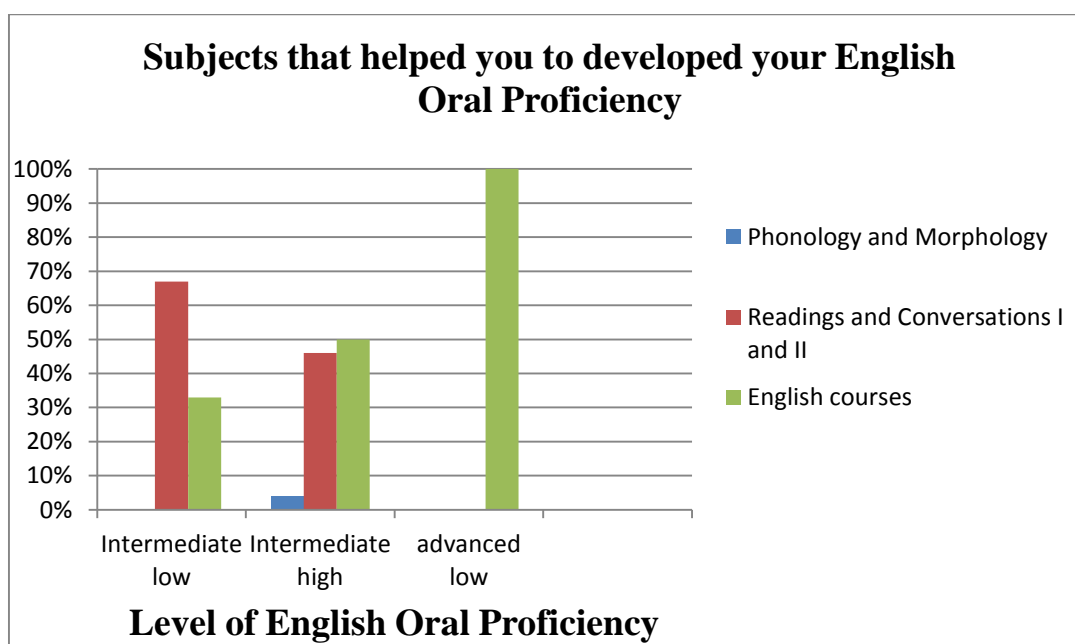
Analysis: According to the results, 67% of the Intermediate-low students claim that Readings and Conversations helped them develop their English oral proficiency. 50% of the Intermediate-high say it was the English courses as well as 100% of the Advanced-low students.

Interpretation: There are not enough subjects to help students develop their English oral proficiency

15. What technological resources did you use in the Foreign Language Department to improve your English oral proficiency?

| Level of oral proficiency	Computers	Language Lab	Tape recorders	None
Intermediate low		33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
Intermediate high	4%		37.6%	58.4%
Advanced low		100%		
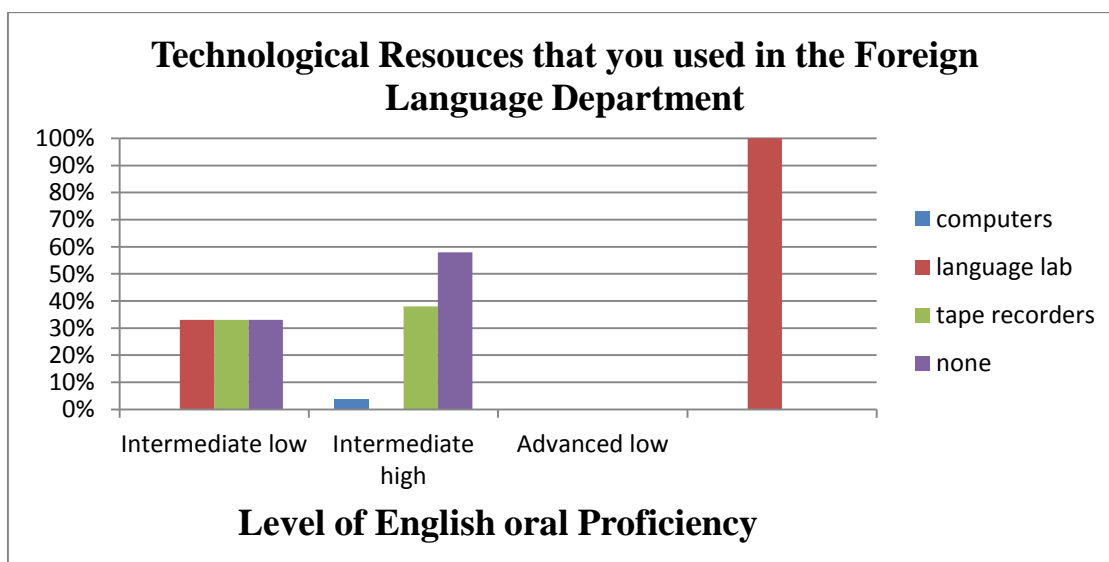
Analysis: 66% of the Intermediate-low students mention that the technological resources they used in the Foreign Language Department were the language lab and tape recorders. The remaining 44% claim that they did not use any. Almost 60% of the Intermediate-high students say they did not use any technological resource. 100% of the Advanced-low students say it was the language lab.

Interpretation: The Foreign Language Department did not provide students with enough technological resources to develop their English oral proficiency.

16. Do you believe it could have helped you if all interaction with your professors inside and outside the classroom had been in English?

Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate low	100%	
Intermediate high	92%	8%
Advanced low	100%	

Could it have helped you if all the interaction with your professors had been in English?
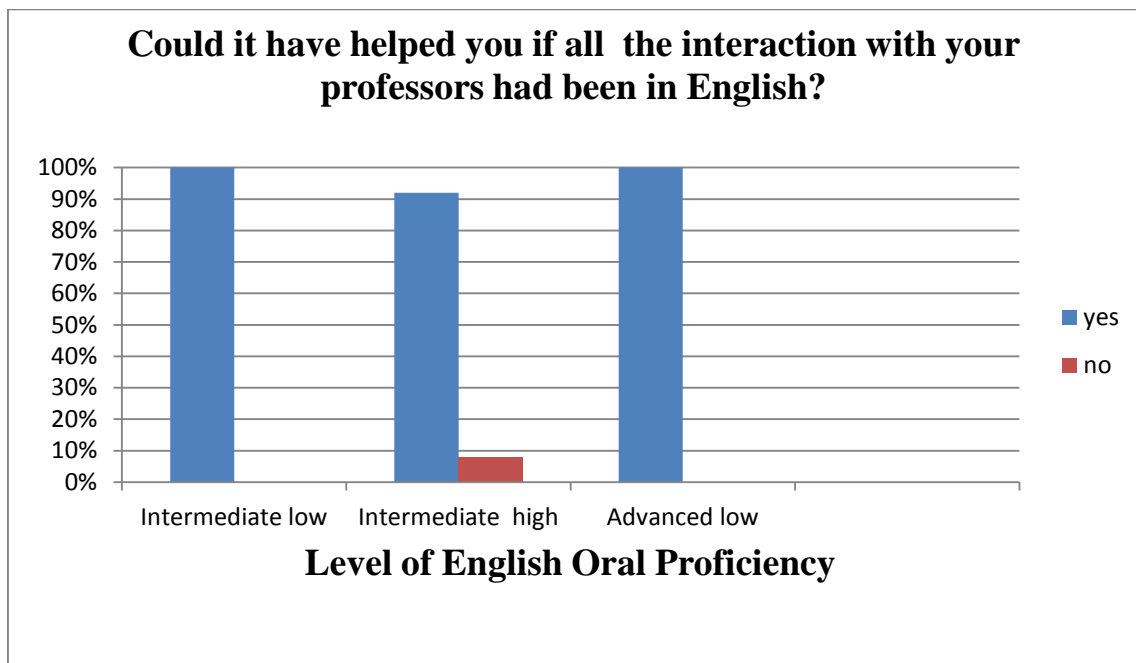
Analysis: 92% of all the students surveyed agree that it could have helped them if their interaction with professors outside the classroom had been in English.

Interpretation: Students expressed that they did not have a full English interaction with their professors while they were studying their major.

17. Do you think a basic level of English should be required for students to be admitted in the career?

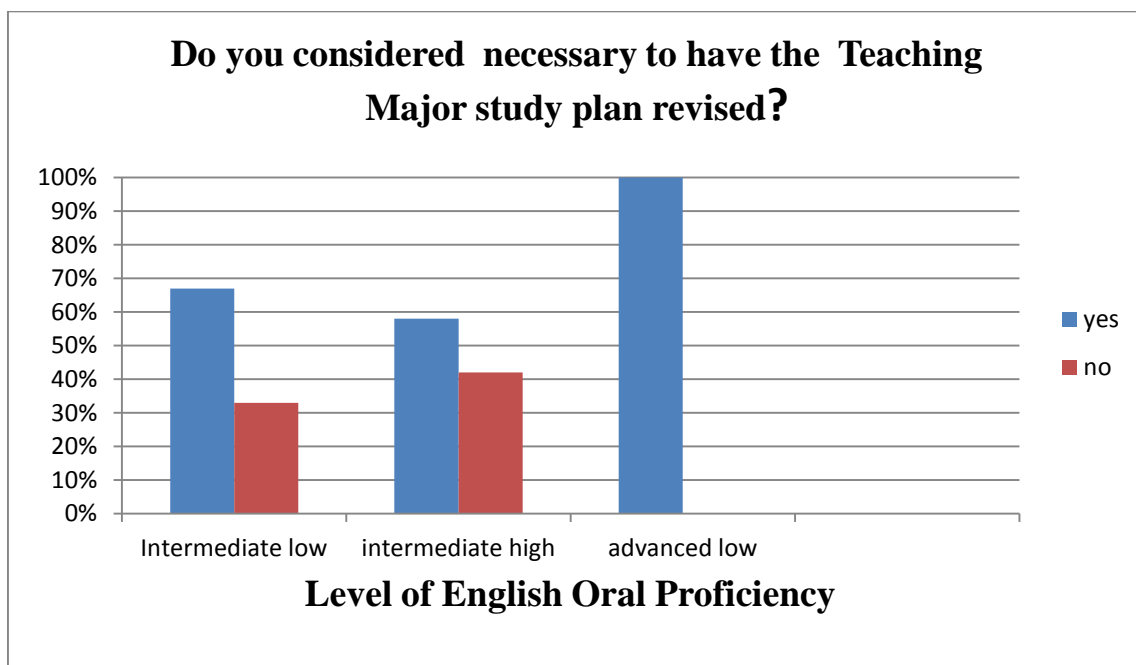| Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate low	67%	33%
Intermediate high	58%	42%
Advanced low	100%	
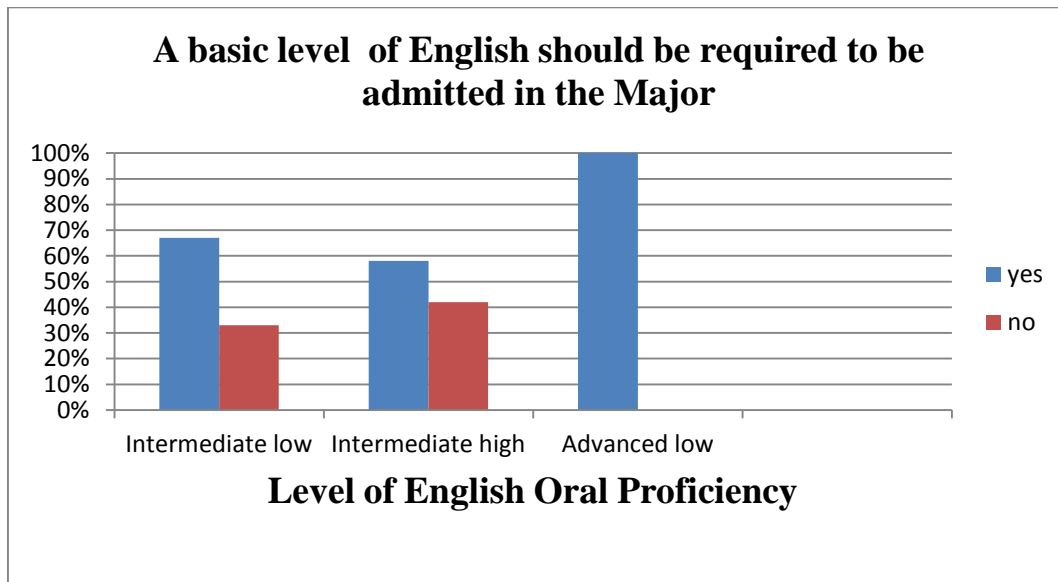
Analysis: The survey reveals that almost 65% of all students surveyed think that a basic level of English should be required to be admitted in the major.

Interpretation: Students believe in the importance of having a basic level of English to succeed in the development of their English oral proficiency.

18. Do you consider necessary to have the study plan of Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés revised in order to improve English oral proficiency?

| Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate low	67%	33%
Intermediate high	58%	42%
Advanced low	100%	

Analysis: 65% of all students say that the study plan of the English Teaching major should be revised.

Interpretation: Students consider that the study plan does not help them to develop an Advanced-mid level of English oral proficiency.

19. Did you work when you were studying the major?

| Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate low	33%	67%
Intermediate high	67%	33%
Advanced low	100%	
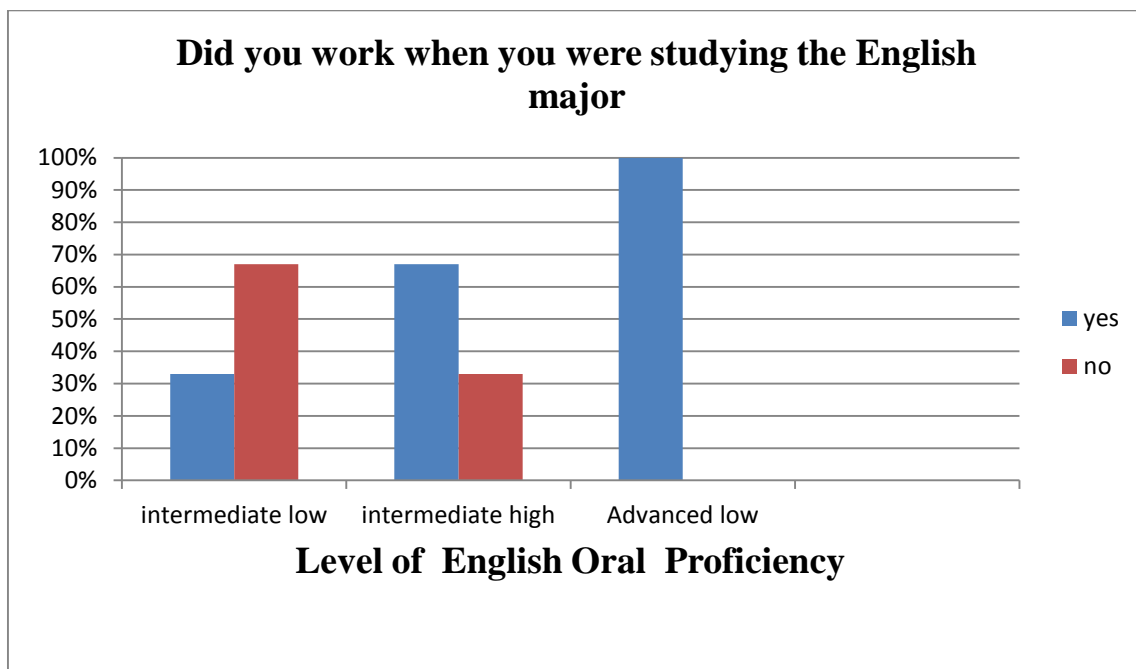
Analysis: 67% of the Intermediate-low students did not work during their major, whereas 67% of the Intermediate-high had a job during their major. 100% of the Advanced-low student worked during the major.

Interpretation: Students who worked, worked in English related areas, reason why they might have developed a better level of English oral proficiency.

20. Did your classrooms have an adequate English Environment?

| Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate low		100%
Intermediate high		100%
Advanced low		100%
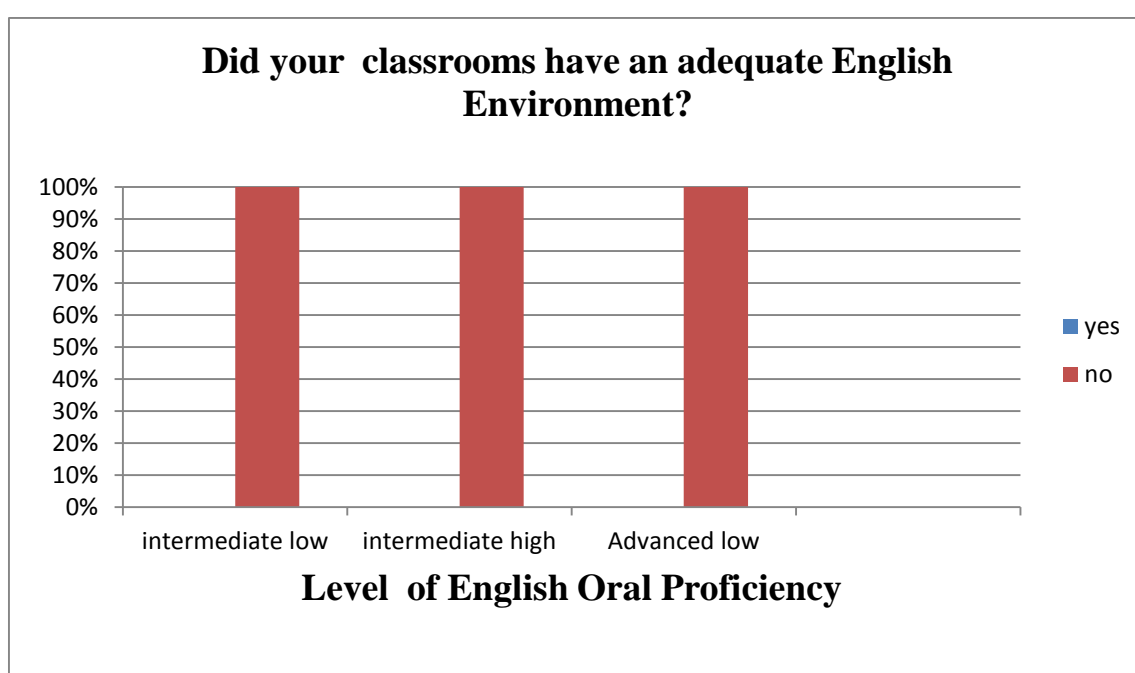
Analysis: 100% of all students surveyed agreed that the classrooms at the Foreign language Department did not have an adequate English environment.

Interpretation: The inadequate environment in the classrooms might have influenced the development of the students' English oral proficiency.

21. Do you believe that the textbooks only contain everyday topics but do not have more complex topics that could help the development of your oral language proficiency?

| Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate low	67%	33%
Intermediate high	75%	25%
Advanced low		100%
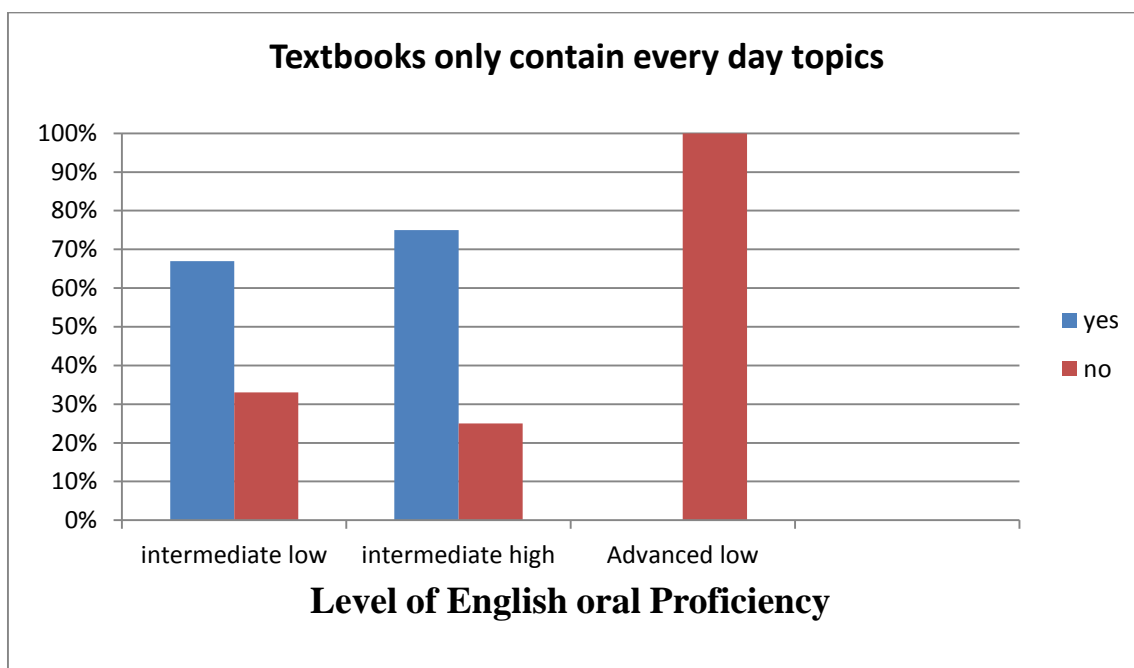
Analysis: 67% of the Intermediate-low students and 75% of the Intermediate-high claim that the textbooks they used included only every day topics.

Interpretation: Since the books contained only every day topics, students at the Intermediate-low and Intermediate-high levels were not exposed to more complex topics that could have helped them develop their English oral proficiency.

22. Were your English classes crowded? If so, how did they affect you?

Level of oral proficiency	Yes	No
Intermediate low	100%	
Intermediate high	92%	8%
Advanced low	100%	

Were your classrooms overcrowded

Level of English Oral Proficiency
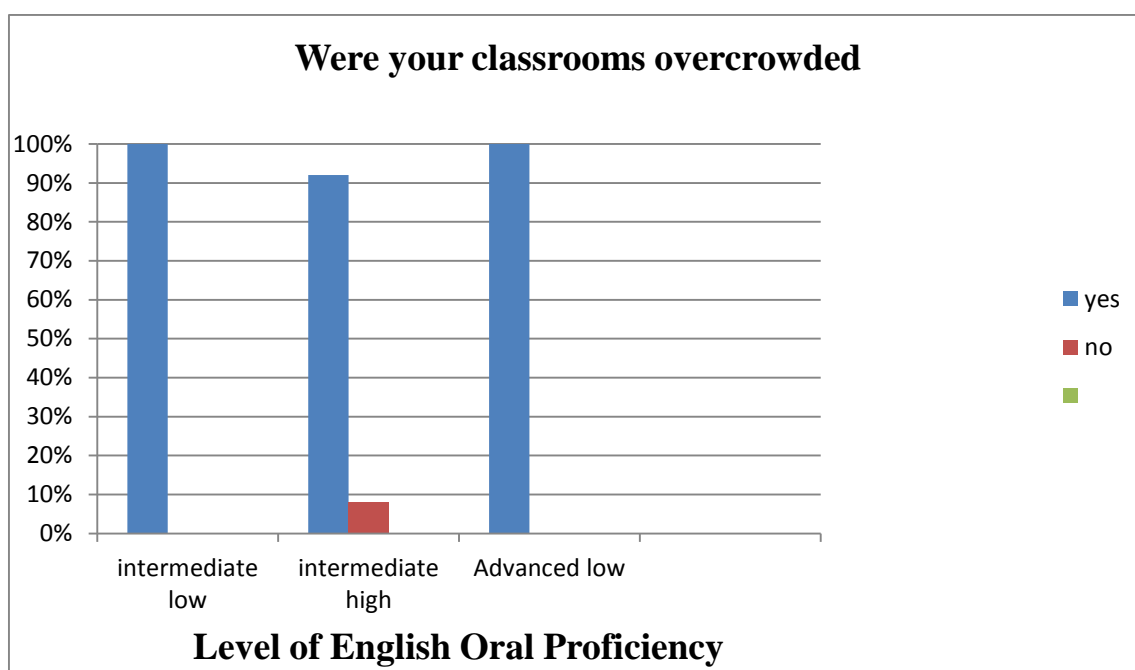
Analysis: According to the results, 92% of all students think they were affected by their overcrowded classrooms.

Interpretation: Most of the students did not have the chance to develop their English oral proficiency due to overcrowded classrooms. Since they were ashamed to speak in public, their professor did not have enough time to personalize the teaching.

3.7 CONCLUSIONS

According to the results obtained from the teachers' view point, as well as own experience as foreign language learners. There are many factors that interfere with the achievement of an Advanced-Mid level of oral proficiency, but the most important factors were the following:

As a first conclusion and recalling the research methodology, this research was divided into two types of research, and each of them had a question to answer. The first one was:

What is the real level of oral proficiency that the graduation process students achieve at the end of their major in Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador?

After assessing the students' English oral proficiency level, the research team concluded that 88% of the students reached an Intermediate-High level of English oral proficiency, which means more than three quarters of the graduate process students did not achieve the Advanced-Mid level required by the study plan.

Since with the only use of the previous question our research team could not get concrete answers, the research team went on to the second question to be answered in our research which was:

What factors interfere with the accomplishment of an advanced-mid level of oral proficiency by the graduation process students term I-2010 of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés opción Enseñanza at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador?

The first factor to be mentioned will be the students' background knowledge, which refers to how much the students knew about the language before they entered the major. It could not be expected that those students who did not have contact or not much contact with the language would have appropriately performed the tasks required for Advanced-mid students.

The second factor to mention has to do with students' lack of practice. This means the interest that students showed to learn a second language and the effort they made to achieve an Advanced-Mid level of English oral proficiency. From the results found the research team has concluded that students did not make enough effort to develop their English oral proficiency since they did not devote enough time to practicing the language.

The third factor is related to the study plan. The research team concluded that the study plan does not contain enough subjects aimed to develop an Advanced-Mid level of oral proficiency, and there are some subjects that could be omitted in order to include others that could develop the students' oral proficiency.

The fourth factor refers to the staff at the Foreign Language Department. There were not any native speakers of English professors who could have helped students with areas such as fluency, intonation, pronunciation, and vocabulary so as to develop their English oral proficiency.

A fifth factor was the environment surrounding students in the English classroom. Classrooms lacked in English learning related visual aids, enough space for students to move around or professors to develop more activities. Besides, classrooms were overcrowded which led students to be shy. Also due to that professors could not complete all the activities carried out in the classroom. Not all students had a chance to participate.

The sixth factor was the technological resources at the Foreign Language Department. Even though the Foreign Language Department has those resources, students did not use them because they were damaged or the students were not given the time to use those resources.

The seventh factor has to do with the professors' interaction with students inside and outside the classroom. Having an all English interaction inside and outside the classroom could have helped students develop a more advanced level of English oral proficiency, but this was not the case since students were addressed in their mother tongue outside the classroom.

The eighth factor refers to the textbooks and activities used in the classroom. Professors developed mainly activities found in the textbooks which contained only everyday language and were not challenging enough.

As a manner of conclusion, the research team has identified that the students still do not achieve an Advanced-mid level of oral proficiency, as stated by Landaverde (Graduation Work 2005). Furthermore, the research team has identified some of the reasons why students developing their graduation process do not reach an Advanced-Mid level of English oral proficiency which are: the students' background knowledge, the students' lack of practice, the study plan, the staff at the Foreign Language Department, the environment surrounding students in the English classroom, the technological resources at the Foreign Language Department, the professors' interaction with students inside and outside the classroom, the textbooks and activities used in the classroom, level of English students had when they entered the major in English. In short, in order to achieve the Advanced-Mid level of English oral proficiency demanded by the study plan at the Foreign Language Department, professors and students need to reflect on their weaknesses and strengths and possibly take into consideration the recommendations that are presented on this work.

3.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering all factors that interfere with the achievement of an Advanced-Mid level of English oral proficiency by graduation process students, the research team suggests the following recommendations to develop the students' level of English oral proficiency:

a) The Foreign Language Department should require at least a basic level of English oral proficiency when students enter the major in English.

b) The professors should encourage students to practice English whether inside or outside the classroom, as well as develop activities which challenge students to work on their own outside the classroom.

c) The study plan should be revised as demanded by MINED every five years in order to update it with the demands of society and also to help students develop the demanded level of English oral proficiency.

d) The Foreign Language Department should work on a "Visiting Native Speaker of English Professor Program" to expose students to native speakers or hire some staff native speakers of English professors.

e) The Foreign Language Department should encourage, promote, and aid professors and students to create an appropriate English learning environment in the classroom with the use of posters, visual aids, etc., as well as reduce the number of students in each English course so that all students can get personalized classes.

f) The Foreign Language Department should ask the authorities to provide it with material necessary to develop students' English oral proficiency by means of language labs, computers, CD players, etc., and the Foreign Language Department should make arrangements so that all students can have access to them.

g) The Foreign Language Department should administer a test at the end of every semester in order to assess the students´ level of English oral proficiency so as not to promote any students who do not achieve the required level for each English course students have taken.

h) The Foreign Language Department should require students to mandatorily attend Conversation Clubs so that students can practice and enhance their knowledge of the language.

IV. REFERENCES

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ANNEXES

BUDGET

Activities	Expenses
Photocopies	$ 4.00
Access to internet	$ 50.00
Prints	$ 10.00
Rent of recording equipment	$ 20.00
Presentation	$ 30.00
Total	**$ 115.00**

GLOSSARY

- **PROFICIENCY:** Mastery of a specific behavior or skill demonstrated by consistently superior performance, measured against established or popular standards.

- **ESL (English as a second language):** refer to the use or study of English by speakers with a different native language.

- **EFL (English as a foreign Language):** This term is most commonly used in relation to teaching and learning English, but they may also be used in relation to demographic information.

- **The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines:** The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages is an academic analog to the government language proficiency level descriptions. The guidelines represent a hierarchy of global characterizations of integrated performance in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

- **Intermediate high level:** able to handle successfully most uncomplicated communicative tasks and social situations. Can initiate, sustain, and close a general conversation with a number of strategies appropriate to a range of circumstances and topics, but errors are evident. Limited vocabulary still necessitates hesitation and may bring about slightly unexpected circumlocution. There is emerging evidence of connected discourse, particularly for simple narration and/or description. The intermediate –high speaker can generally be understood even by interlocutors not accustomed to dealing with speakers at this level, but repetition may still be required.

- **Advanced or high proficiency level:** Able to understand the main ideas of most speech in a standard dialect; however, the listener may not be able to sustain comprehension in extended discourse which is propositionally and linguistically complex. Listener shows an emerging awareness of culturally implied meanings beyond the surface meanings of the text but may fail to grasp socio cultural nuances of the massage.

- **OPI:** It is a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability, or oral proficiency. It is a standardized instrument since to assure reliability in assessing different speech samples, a prescribed procedure must be observed.