

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT



RESEARCH TOPIC

“THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHING PRACTICE I AND TEACHING PRACTICE II ON STUDENTS’ ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AT THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR, ACADEMIC YEAR 2015.”

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INTRODUCTION

The University of El Salvador has always been recognized for preparing high quality of graduates in all majors. However, there is an issue taking place with most students from the English Teaching Major at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador. Those students take five intensive English courses for the first two years and a half of the major, after which they are expected to reach an advanced level of English. Yet according to the results obtained from a version of the TOEFL test, which students from Advanced II -2013 took in order to be placed in their Practice Teaching, the reached level was a high elementary level (A2) based on the CEF. Those results were verified by means of an equivalency table (see annexes) and also confirmed by Master Grace Gómez and Master Ricardo Cabrera, who are the professors in charge of that evaluation and the Practice Teaching courses. It is necessary to mentioned that previous researches related on this regard, English proficiency, have been done. For example, “Correlation between personality types and English proficiency” published in 2013, based on students who just finished the course advanced II-2012, which results established that 38% students reached a B2 level, 42% reached B1, and 5% reached a C1 level. In that research oral proficiency was not measured since the results were obtained from a practice TOEFL test. Besides, there is a second research called: “How personality and motivation affects oral proficiency”, also carried out with students from advanced II-2012. In this occasion, students went under an oral interview and the results were: 33% reached a B2 level, 21% a B1 level and 44% reached an A2 level. The results from the last research tend to agree more to the ones found

in this particular research since after administering the practice TOEFL test and an oral interview, the majority of students reached an A2 level.

This research was based on that interrogative: “How do Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II influence students’ English language proficiency level at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, academic year 2015?” This research was carried out with students of Seminar II, semester II, 2015 since they took the last teaching practice courses. Those students were bound to take a version of Paper Based TOEFL Test (pBT TOEFL) in order to be placed in different subjects and departments at the University where would do their Teaching Practice. By doing so, students took a version of TOEFL to be placed in their teaching practice but they were also placed in the levels established by the CEF, using an equivalence table.

I. RESEARCH TOPIC

“The influence of Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II on students’ English language proficiency level at the department of foreign languages of the University of El Salvador, academic year 2015.”

KEY WORDS: Proficiency, Common European Framework, Learning strategies and background.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A) HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

The noted linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir wrote this work to show language in “relation to other fundamental interests—the problem of thought, the nature of the historical process, race, culture, art.” *Language* is not only a study of language and culture, but ultimately on the world of relations and influence. Additionally, ACTFL's (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) definition of proficiency is derived from mandates issued by the US government, declaring that a limited English proficient student is one who comes from a non-English background and "who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such an individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in our society."

ACTFL views "performance" as being the combined effect of all three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational.

More than a quarter of a century ago researchers such as Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) explored the possibility that success in language learning might be related to how students go about the task. More recently, writers such as O'Malley (1987), Oxford (1990), Wenden (1991), Cohen (1998) and Chamot (2001) have suggested that learners might be able to learn language more effectively by the use of language learning strategies.

The general concept of using strategies to enhance learning is not new. Generations of us must have used the first-letter mnemonic strategy to remember information such as the colours of the rainbow (Roy G. Biv = red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet)

and the order of the elements in chemistry. Gage and Berliner (1992) discuss a number of general learning strategies, such as highlighting important ideas and summarizing. These strategies are often so simple that it is easy for experienced students to take them for granted, but it must be remembered that the strategies themselves had to be learnt initially before they could be used to enhance other learning, and some students never manage to acquire this kind of procedural knowledge.

Talking of learning strategies in general (rather than language learning strategies specifically), Gage and Berliner (1992, p.302) suggest that a possible reason for the effectiveness of such strategies is that they require the learner to be “more active cognitively” than a learner who is less strategically engaged in the task. According to O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, and Russo (1985) language learning strategies have the potential to be “an extremely powerful learning tool”. However, as a result of their study they concluded that many students used language learning strategies “inefficiently”

Although used by many prominent writers in the field (such as O'Malley et al, 1985; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975) the term strategy is not uncontroversial. Consensus is not assisted by some writers' use of conflicting terminology such as learning behaviours (Poltzer and McGroarty, 1985; Wesche, 1977), tactics (Seliger, 1984) and techniques (Stern, 1992).

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment is a psychometric questionnaire designed to measure psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. These preferences were extrapolated by Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel

Briggs Myers from the typological theories proposed by Carl Gustav Jung, and first published in his 1921 book *Psychological Types* (English edition, 1923). Jung theorized that there are four principal psychological functions by which we experience the world: sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking. One of these four functions is dominant most of the time.

Students are constantly confronted with new information, particularly once they progress to the upper elementary grades and transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” (Chall, 1983). To read to learn effectively students need to integrate new material into their existing knowledge base, construct new understanding, and adapt existing conceptions and beliefs as needed. Proficiency at these tasks is essential to literacy (Davis & Winek, 1989; Squire, 1983; Weisberg, 1988). However, students who lack sufficient background knowledge or are unable to activate this knowledge may struggle to access, participate, and progress throughout the general curriculum, where reading to learn is a prerequisite for success.

There is an extensive terminology to describe different kinds of knowledge. Consistency in the use of these terms is a recognized problem; subtle and dramatic differences exist between different people’s definitions of the same term (Alexander, Schallert, & Hare, 1991; Dochy & Alexander, 1995). The terms background knowledge and prior knowledge are generally used interchangeably. For example, Stevens (1980) defines background knowledge quite simply as “...what one already knows about a subject... (p.151).” Biemans and Simons’ (1996) definition of background knowledge is slightly more complex, “...(background knowledge is) all knowledge learners have when entering a learning environment that is potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge (p.6).” Dochy &

Alexander (1995) provide a more elaborate definition, describing prior knowledge as the whole of a person's knowledge, including explicit and tacit knowledge, metacognitive and conceptual knowledge. This definition is quite similar to Schallert's (1982) definition. Thus, while scholars' definitions of these two terms are often worded differently, they typically describe the same basic concept.

Moreover, in their last edition of the TOEFL Test and Score Data summary, tests scores means are presented from different countries around the world. El Salvador has a mean of 86 points in their iBT (Internet Based TOEFL Test) which gets students into a C1 level according to the CEF (Common European Framework)

B) DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

This research took place at the Foreign Language Department specifically with students from Seminar II semester II 2015 from the English Teaching Major. This research intended to figure out the influence of Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II on students' English language proficiency level at the department of foreign languages of the University of El Salvador, academic year 2015.

The aspects taken into account in this research were students' learning strategies and previous English background.

During this research the 96 students taking advanced English II semester 2013 (now taking seminar II) were placed in proficiency levels established by the Common European Framework (CEFR), A1-A2-B1-B2-C1-C-2, depending on their scores in the Paper Based

TOEFL Test, those results were used to know the level of proficiency students had reached after finishing all their English intensive courses at the Foreign Language Department.

This research was conducted under the standards established by the **Common European Framework (CEF)**, which is described as “an important document published by the Council of Europe that has had a lot of influence over syllabus design in Europe”.(The practice of English Language Teaching) by Harmer, Jeremy, Longman (2001). It provides a wider idea about the course content in terms of what learners need to do with the language they are learning in the real world, to face different situations in real life that allow them to become users of the language.

Besides that, knowing **students’ background** is a priority to get students to the desired level. Therefore, it is necessary to know that students are not only intellectual but also social and emotional beings, and all these dimensions interact to impact learning and performance. To plan an effective course, it is important to consider who our students are, taking into account their:

- Prior knowledge.
- Intellectual development.
- Cultural background.
- Generational experiences and expectations.

"We may exhibit an admirable command of content, and possess a dazzling variety of pedagogical skills, but without knowing what's going on in our students’ heads, that knowledge may be presented and that skill exercised in a vacuum of misunderstanding."

– Stephen D. Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher* (2006)

C. OBJECTIVES

General objective:

- Determine the influence Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II have on students' level of proficiency when they finish their teaching practice courses.

Specific objectives:

- Analyse how Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II affect the level of proficiency they reach when they increase their English language.
- Relate students' learning strategy with the proficiency level they reach.
- Conclude if Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II influence students' English proficiency level.

D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION

“How do Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II influence students’ English language proficiency level at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, academic year 2015?”

SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

1. Do Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II influence students’ proficiency in the language?
2. Does the students’ academic background have a deal with the level reached?
3. Does the learning strategy of the students have anything to do with their proficiency level?

E. JUSTIFICATION/RATIONALE

This research was significant because it presented factors that might be influencing students' English proficiency and how all those were correlated. It was expected for this research to provide a wider idea on how Practice Teaching I and Practice Teaching II influenced the sample of students to move from an A2 level, when taking the first test back in 2013, to a B2 level after coursing the practicum. Consequently, it is expected with this research to present which factors have helped them to improve, a year after. Presenting every aspect involved in their performance starting with their background knowledge, their learning strategies, their jobs and most importantly to verify the influence Practice Teaching I and Practice Teaching have on students' process of becoming proficient speakers of the language.

F. DELIMITATION OF THE PROBLEM

This research was conducted based on the level of proficiency students' from advanced II, semester II-2013, reached at Foreign Language Department. The materials used were the results obtained in the TOEFL test that helped us, by means of an equivalence table, to measure the level students got in that certification test. After we determined they got an A2 level according to the standards established by the CEF (Common European Framework), we analysed the way factors like their learning strategies and English background influenced their performances. To do so, we used a series of instruments. The first one, as established before, were the results of the TOEFL test. Then, a questionnaire to get information on the students' learning strategies was administered. Additionally, an oral test (based on the CEF standards) was administered among the sample to verify the level of

proficiency they got on the TOEFL test. Finally, a previous background knowledge survey was administered among students taken as a sample in order to know how many of them were somehow exposed to the language before entering the intensive English courses in the Foreign Language Department.

Since this is a longitudinal study, the progress of those students was followed a year after to research on how Practice Teaching I and Practice Teaching II influence those students and their proficiency level. To verify whether the practicum influenced them or not; it was necessary to administer the same instruments again. As a starter, the same 24 students, who were the original sample, were asked to take another practice of the Paper Based TOEFL test to check if their level of proficiency changed after coursing the two practicum. Furthermore, a professional in the area was hired to administer oral interviews (based on the CEF) to evaluate students' oral proficiency so that an overall proficiency level could be obtained. After that, the sample of students took a learning strategy test to check if they had the same learning strategies from a year ago or if they were different. As part of the questionnaire, the sample of students were asked information on where they did their practicum, the level they did it with and the population they had; in order to get extra information on their development and to establish how their experiences when teaching a class helped them to become more efficient speakers of the language.

After gathering and analysing the results from the administered questionnaire and tests of current Seminar II, Semester II students at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, it was concluded that they improved their level to a B2 and their learning strategies had a slight positive change after coursing Practice Teaching I and Practice Teaching II.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout this research it was observable that there are several studies about the application of the CEF in other countries; its regulations, standards, among others. However, a study that related an oral performance test, and learning styles test to identify if there was a relationship among them that let us know if they affected the level of English that students reach we did not find.

Nowadays, there are several ways of measuring students' level of proficiency in English, but the one used in this research was the Common European Framework (CEF). Moreover, according to the definition found in "The practice of English Language Teaching" by Harmer, Jeremy, Longman (2001), that it is "an important document published by the Council of Europe that has had a lot of influence over syllabus design in Europe". It provides a wider idea about the course content in terms of what learners need to do with the language they are learning in the real world, to face different situations in real life that allow them to become users of the language.

This document has led to a radical departure from many syllabuses that describe what people or learners need to know. The CEF is the framework of reference that organizes the content in a defined level system. Therefore, the purpose of the CEF is to generalize a level of qualification that can be shared within country to country, which will let learners to have a general qualification that can be presented either in El Salvador or in England and it will have the same value.

According to the Council of Europe website the CEF has 6 levels of foreign language proficiency which are: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. It also defines three 'plus'

levels (A2+, B1+, B2+). The schema provides basis for recognizing language qualifications and therefore, facilitating educational and occupational ability.

The 'can do' statements below were developed by [ALTE](#) (The Association of Language Testers in Europe) of which Cambridge English Language Assessment is a founding member.

CEFR Level	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
C2	CAN advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understanding colloquial references and dealing confidently with hostile questions.	CAN understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts.	CAN write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and accuracy.
C1	CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work or keep up a casual conversation with a good degree of fluency, coping with abstract expressions.	CAN read quickly enough to cope with an academic course, to read the media for information or to understand non-standard correspondence.	CAN prepare/draft professional correspondence, take reasonably accurate notes in meetings or write an essay which shows an ability to communicate.
B2	CAN follow or give a talk on a familiar topic or keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics.	CAN scan texts for relevant information, and understand detailed instructions or advice.	CAN make notes while someone is talking or write a letter including non-standard requests.
B1	CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area, and understand instructions or public	CAN understand routine information and articles, and the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area.	CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.

	announcements.		
A2	CAN express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context.	CAN understand straightforward information within a known area, such as on products and signs and simple textbooks or reports on familiar matters.	CAN complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information.
A1	CAN understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic.	CAN understand basic notices, instructions or information.	CAN complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

O'Malley et al. (1986) suggested that learning strategies can be thought of as declarative knowledge that may become procedural knowledge through practice. Learning strategies are conscious and deliberate if they are in the cognitive and associative stages of learning but may not be "strategic" in the autonomous stage since the strategies are applied automatically and perhaps without awareness (Rabinowitz & Chi, in press). As with other complex cognitive skills, strategies that have become automatic are acquired only with extensive opportunities for application.

Deep and **Surface** are two approaches to study, derived from original empirical research by Marton and Säljö (1976) and since elaborated by Ramsden (1992), Biggs (1987, 1993) and Entwistle (1981), among others.

It is important to clarify what they are *not*.

- Although learners may be classified as “deep” or “surface”, they are **not attributes of individuals**: one person may use both approaches at different times, although she or he may have a preference for one or the other.
- They correlate fairly closely with motivation: “deep” with intrinsic motivation and “surface” with extrinsic, but they are not necessarily the same thing. Either approach can be adopted by a person with either motivation.

There is a third form, known as the “Achieving” or **strategic** approach, which can be summarised as a very well-organised form of Surface approach, and in which the motivation is to get good marks. The exercise of learning is construed as a game, so that acquisition of technique improves performance. It works as well as the analogy: insofar as learning is not a game, it breaks down.

The features of Deep and Surface approaches can be summarized thus:

DEEP	SURFACE
Focus is on “what is signified”	Focus is on the “signs” (or on the learning as a signifier of something else)
Relates previous knowledge to new knowledge	Focus on unrelated parts of the task
Relates knowledge from different courses	Information for assessment is simply memorised

Relates theoretical ideas to everyday experience	Facts and concepts are associated unreflectively
Relates and distinguishes evidence and argument	Principles are not distinguished from examples
Organises and structures content into coherent whole	Task is treated as an external imposition
Emphasis is internal, from within the student	Emphasis is external, from demands of assessment

(based on Ramsden, 1988)

The Surface learner is trying to “suss out” what the teacher wants and to provide it, and is likely to be motivated primarily by **fear of failure**. One interesting study has suggested that efforts by teachers to convey that what they want is Deep learning only succeeds in getting Surface learners to engage in ever more complex contextualizing exercises, trying to use Surface strategies to reproduce the features of the Deep approach. (Ramsden, Beswick and Bowden, 1986)

Surface learning tends to be experienced as an uphill struggle, characterized by fighting against boredom and depressive feelings. Deep learning is experienced as exciting and a gratifying challenge (more often, at least!)

TOEFL TEST

The *TOEFL*® test is the most widely respected English-language test in the world, recognized by more than 9,000 colleges, universities and agencies in more than 130 countries, including Australia, Canada, the U.K. and the United States. Wherever you want to study, the TOEFL test can help you get there.

The test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is developed and administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), a non-profit organization located in New Jersey, USA. The TOEFL test is design to measure “the ability of non-native speakers of English to use and understand English as it is spoken, written and heard in college and university settings” (TOEFL, n.d.) For decades, the TOEFL has been a major English proficiency test for international students intending to study in North American universities. In addition to American and Canadian colleges and universities which require TOEFL test scores from their international students intending to study in North American universities.

Research into and development of the TOEFL test have been ongoing ever since the inception of the test in 1963. In 2008, the TOEFL test celebrated its 45th anniversary of existence. Over the last 45 years, the test has experienced a number of changes in its structure, format, and delivery mode. In terms of delivery mode, the test has gone through three main changes: paper based testing (pBT) introduced in 1964, computer based testing (cBT) introduced in 1998, and Internet based (iBT) introduced in 2005.

Although this test is widely recognized and approved by many countries and institutions, there is certain controversy about it.

According to the book *English Language Assessment and the Chinese Learner* (Edited by Liying Cheng and Andy Curtis, 2010), over the past decades, there has been a great volume of research on various aspects of this high-stakes test. How learner variables affect individual performances on the test has been one of the main topics studied by researcher. Within the area of learner variables and characteristics, one variable is particularly relevant, the learner's first language (L1) background. ETS (Educational Testing Service) was clearly aware of this issue when they conducted a study to determine whether prompts in the TOEFL cBT (Computer-based testing) writing caused significant differences in the performances of candidates from three Asian and three European language backgrounds (Lee, Breland, & Muraki, 2004). The language groups involved in the comparisons were Chinese, Japanese, and Korean on the Asian side and Spanish, German, and French on the European side. The study indicated that about one-third of the writing prompts were flagged with significant differences during the comparisons of the group means, but because of the small effect sizes derived based on those significant differences, the study waved aside the suggestion that the differences should matter and concluded that the raw score differences detected "might be largely ascribable to the difference in mean ELA (English Language Ability) scores between the two groups" (p.20). However, the study stopped short of directly comparing individual L1 groups and no conclusion could thus be drawn about whether L1 background is a critical variable that can influence a candidate's test performance significantly. This study appears to be a very few ETS studies comparing in some way performances of test candidates from different L1 groups.

Aside considering L1 as an influential factor for TOEFL test scores, the authors mentioned the well-known fact of Chinese people getting high scores in TOEFL tests regardless of

their management of the language. It is fact that Chinese people are very good test takers; thus, this help them to get high scores even when their level of English proficiency is not the best.

PRACTICE TEACHING

As we know, perfection comes along practice. Therefore, this research is based on the belief that Practice Teaching strongly influences students' English level of proficiency. This fact has been long studied now and there has been a recent increase in studies using the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005) to investigate language teachers' engagement (or lack thereof) in professional development (e.g., Hiver, 2013; Kubanyiova 2009; Kumazava, 2013) shows the increasing interest in bridging the research gap between language teacher education and teacher motivation.

Research in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) has long prioritized adult learners' capacity to attain advanced L2 proficiency (or lack thereof) over the description of advanced L2 performance abilities and the necessary engagement to maintain them (Byrnes, 2012). Language learning is a life-long process and foreign language (FL) teachers are often considered one of the best examples of successful committed advanced learners. Arguably, their language proficiency and its improvement over time is crucial for them to be effective FL teachers (Banno, 2003; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Vélez-Rendón, 2002) as the language is both the means and the objective of their teaching. Moreover, language proficiency development is important for building FL teachers' identity because "their experiences as teachers are often situated on the same trajectory as their linguistic development" (Miller & Kubota, 2013, p. 246). The growing literature on language teacher education (see Schulz, 2000 and Vélez-Rendón, 2002 for overviews) has also shown that

FL proficiency is interrelated with many other factors such as previous experiences, pre-service programs, teachers' beliefs, and teachers' reflection and collaboration, which together contribute to language teachers' FL development. In her historical overview of FL teacher development, Schulz (2000) highlighted that "[t]he preparation of ...FL teachers has been a frequently discussed topic during the past century" (p.495). However, to better understand how FL teachers manage their dual role as both life-long FL learners and FL teachers as well as grapple with what motivates them to continue their development; empirical research should also address the more neglected area of in-service teachers' development.

In his discussion of teachers' language ability, Banno (2003) cited several studies (e.g., Brown, 1994; Hadley & Yoshioka-Hadley, 1996; Harmer, 1998; Shimizu, 1995) that identified sufficient oral proficiency, standard accent, clear pronunciation, and good grammar knowledge as essential characteristics of a good language teacher. Arguably, the concept of FL teachers' proficiency is multifaceted and needs to be defined and contextualized in its relationship with teaching experience and teaching approaches.

Arguably, FL teachers should master the language they teach; however, their proficiency level can vary and be specific to their teaching context. Such command of the FL is essential because, as explained in Chambless (2012), there is a possible causal connection between teachers' target language (TL) proficiency and the teaching and learning that take place in the classroom.

Native and Non-native Speaker Teachers

A survey of over 200 EFL teachers (Reves & Medgyes, 1994) showed that many non-native speaker teachers felt insecure about their FL proficiency, with negative consequences on their self-efficacy. The discrepancy between the high expectations on FL teachers' proficiency and their insecurity about it can undermine teachers' confidence and motivation.

According to one research called: "MSU Working Papers in SLS 2014, Vol. 5 *How do Foreign Language Teachers Maintain their Proficiency*" where several teachers were interviewed on how they believe their proficiency level helped to develop good classes and feel confident when teaching. All teachers acknowledged that FL proficiency was a precondition for their job. This common ground is summarized by Lucy's statement: "If I don't know the language, what am I doing there? I mean...it is obvious." As noted by Stephanie, her FL proficiency is "a matter of personal pride", "gives [her] confidence and authority", and "is a guarantee for the students". In spite of her high FL proficiency, Tanya admitted that in her vocational school "[she] speak[s] in English in class only when there is a picture in the book and [she] ask[s] questions to describe it." This is allegedly due to students' low level, but can also have other reasons as similar situations are also described by teachers in other types of schools.

Therefore, there is close relationship between students' proficiency level and their practicum when it comes to their performance and their self-confidence when teaching. Another aspect important to highlight, those students under study, have been for over a year under tutoring on expert English teachers who presumably should both guide on their teaching

path but also correct and encourage them to improve their proficiency level when being observed in classes.

III. TYPE OF STUDY

The following research follows a correlation study since the level of English proficiency of students from Seminar II, semester II, 2014 was correlated to the one they had before coursing their practicum in order to investigate whether those two courses helped them to improve their level of English proficiency or they remained in the same level. As well as their proficiency level, their learning strategies were correlated to analyze if they had the same learning strategies as the year before coursing the practicum or they improved them while teaching. Therefore, a correlational study was conducted because it was intended to conclude how those factors correlated each other as influencing students' performance. As stated Dankhe (1986): "Correlational studies measure two or more variables which are pretended to be determined as related or no related to the same subjects and afterwards analyse the correlation."

IV. HYPOTHESIS

HYPOTHESIS

The level of English proficiency of students from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador increased after coursing Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II.

NULL HYPOTHESIS

The level of English proficiency of students from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador did not increase after coursing Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II.

A. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

Students level of proficiency from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador increased after coursing Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II.

B. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

Variable 1:

English Level Proficiency

- Operational variables
- English level of proficiency before and after coursing the Practicum.

Variable 2:

Learning strategy

- Operational variables
- Deep learning and surface learning.

V. RESEARCH DESIGN

The following research was a non-experimental research; therefore, we any type of variable was manipulated, but just the influence and relation among them was studied. As it is known, when working with non-experimental research designs, those are carried without manipulating intentionally the variables. The phenomenon was observed in its natural context, the information was gathered throughout the used instruments, and finally the information was analyzed. The participants were observed and interviewed in their real context. As mentioned before, any treatment or stimulus condition was applied under any circumstances in order to analyze the effects. The situations were real ones and that already existed. Finally, it is important to say that the independent variable had already occurred and could not be manipulated; in this case this variable was the level of proficiency students had reached before and after taking the Teaching Practice courses.

VI. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

A) POPULATION

The population selected for this research was three Advanced II classes, Semester II 2013 from the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador from a total of 96 students (42 male and 54 female) registered as for the first results in their language proficiency level. A year after, the same sample of students was gathered when taking Seminar II since they had already finished Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II.

B) SAMPLE

A sample of 24 students was taken in 2014 from students of Advanced II, semester II, 2013 by means of “cross multiply”, twelve students per class. Those students took all their intensive English courses already. Therefore, they were expected to reach at least a high intermediate level of English according to the standards established by the Common European Framework. A year after, the same sample of students was taken during the semester II, 2014 in order to prove the hypothesis that the practicum help students improving their level of English proficiency. Being extremely important to highlight that the students whom the tests and instruments were administered to were the exact same students from a year ago, keeping in mind that an important aspect of a research study it is its reliability.

$$\begin{array}{rcccccc} 96 - 100 & = & \frac{96 \times 25}{100} & = & \frac{2400}{100} & = & 24 \\ X - 25 & & & & & & \end{array}$$

VII. DATA GATHERING PROCESS

A. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT.

Instruments

- 1. Learning strategy test**
- 2. Oral proficiency test**
- 3. Practice TOEFL test**

ACADEMIC INFORMATION (PRACTICE TEACHING I)

INSTRUCTIONS: SELECT THE ONES THAT BEST APPLY TO YOU.

1. WHERE DID YOU DO YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE I?

- A. AT FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT
- B. AT CENJUES
- C. AT OTHER ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS AT UES
- D. OTHERS: _____

2. AT WHAT LEVEL DID YOU DO YOUR PRACTICUM?

- A. INTRO
- B. BASIC
- C. PRE-INTERMEDIATE
- D. INTERMEDIATE
- E. HIGH-INTERMEDIATE
- F. ADVANCED

3. WHAT WAS THE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC LEVEL?

- A. ELEMENTARY
- B. JUNIOR HIGH
- C. HIGH SCHOOL
- D. UNIVERSITY
- E. PROFESSIONALS

ACADEMIC INFORMATION (PRACTICE TEACHING II)

INSTRUCTIONS: SELECT THE ONES THAT BEST APPLY TO YOU.

1. WHERE DID YOU DO YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE II?

- A. AT FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT
- B. CENJUES
- C. OTHER ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS AT UES
- D. OTHERS: _____

2. AT WHAT LEVEL DID YOU DO YOUR PRACTICUM?

- A. INTRO
- B. BASIC
- C. PRE-INTERMEDIATE
- D. INTERMEDIATE
- E. HIGH-INTERMEDIATE
- F. ADVANCED

3. WHAT WAS THE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC LEVEL?

- A. ELEMENTARY
- B. JUNIOR HIGH
- C. HIGH SCHOOL
- D. UNIVERSITY
- E. PROFESSIONALS

**ARE YOU A DEEP LEARNER? TEST YOUR
LEARNING STRATEGY**

FOR EACH OF THE 20 STATEMENTS BELOW MARK THE NUMBER THAT INDICATES HOW WELL THE
STATEMENT FITS YOU:

5: ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE

2: SOMETIMES TRUE

4: OFTEN TRUE

1: HARDLY EVER/NEVER TRUE

3: TRUE APPROXIMATELY HALF THE TIME

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I try to relate what I learn in one subject to what I have learned in other Subjects					
2	I have to learn certain things by heart by repeating over and over until it sticks					
3	I limit my studies to whatever is specified because I find it unnecessary to do extra work					
4	I find almost any topic interesting once I get deeper into it					
5	I think it best to accept ideas and statements from my teachers and I hardly ever question what they say					
6	I find it personally satisfying to study					
7	I think that it is a waste of time to browse around, therefore I only study what is in the course description and the course overviews					
8	I have chosen my study because it will lead to a good job rather than because I find it interesting					
9	While I am studying I often think of situations from real life that relate to what I am studying					
10	I try to relate new material I am reading to what I already know about the topic under study					
11	I spend a good deal of leisure time finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in class					
12	I try to understand the topic I am studying, even if it may be tough in the beginning					
13	I am aware that the teachers know more than me, therefore I focus on what they say, rather than on my own knowledge and/or opinion					
14	I prefer subjects with much factual knowledge rather than theoretical subjects					
15	The teachers should not expect students to spend time studying something that will not be examined					
16	I read and summarise the proposed literature and include the summary as part of my material about the topic					
17	I learn best from teachers who make good PowerPoint presentations and have a neat order on the blackboard					
18	I get more and more engaged and involved in my study the more I work with it					
19	I am in the university because I believe that a university education is the road to a good job					
20	I have a need for working with a topic long enough to be able to formulate my own view before I am satisfied					

Source: Eng. For determining deep and surface learning.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP!



4 Intermediate		B1 to B2
	Question	Goals (with coursebook unit)
16	What sort of television programmes do you like?	Talk about TV and radio (1) Express preferences (1)
17	How do you keep in touch with your friends and family (by phone/email)? How do you think communication might change in the future?	Talk about methods of communication (2) Speculate about the future (2)
18	Tell me about the last film you saw at the cinema (or the last book you read). Would you recommend it?	Describe a book [or film] (1) Make recommendations (1)
19	Think about an interesting person you have met. What is he/she like?	Describe personality (7)
20	Have you ever been on a journey where something went wrong?	Talk about unexpected travel situations (8) Talk about something that went wrong (5)

5 Upper Intermediate		B2
	Question	Goals (with coursebook unit)
21	Tell me about something you are good at.	Talk about things you're good at (1)
22	Can you tell me about a famous landmark/person in your country? What do you know about it/them?	Talk about landmarks where you live (4) Talk about well-known people where you live (4)
23	What do you use the internet for? Do you think it will ever replace books and newspapers? Why / why not?	Talk about media and the internet (6) Justify your point of view (6)
24	If an English person wanted to learn your language, how should they do this and why?	Make and justify recommendations (12)
25	Where do you see yourself in five years' time?	Talk about the future (14) Describe personal hopes and expectations (14)

Source: Cambridge University Press, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

ORAL INTERVIEW RUBRIC

Procedure

1. Check the student's written test score.
2. Ask the students the introductory questions and note the information on the score sheet.
3. Ask a minimum of four questions from the bank question that corresponds to the level of the provisional placement test.
4. Award a score for each question, using the band descriptors below.

BAND DESCRIPTORS	0	1	2	3
Insufficient sample of spoken language. Student fails to understand question, even when repeated.				
Evidence of understanding at a basic level, but frequent inaccuracies in grammar and vocabulary may obscure the message. Significant hesitation and inaccuracies in pronunciation impede understanding. Utterances left unextended.				
Clear evidence of comprehension. Grammar and vocabulary sufficient to convey intended meaning and extend answers effectively. Utterances are reasonably relevant and coherent with only occasional hesitation. However, complex vocabulary and grammatical structures are avoided (except in obviously well-rehearsed utterances).				
Questions fully understood. Accurate and appropriate use of range of simple and complex grammatical forms and vocabulary to develop responses fully. Utterances intelligible and linked coherently and logically without undue hesitation.				
TOTAL SCORE				
MOSTLY _____				

5. Place the student as follows:

Oral score	Level
Mainly 1s	One level below written score
Mainly 2s	At same level as written score
Mainly 3s	One level above written score

B. DATA GATHERING PLAN

After gathering the same sample of students used in the first part of this research, the time to collect data began. Those students were asked to take a proficiency test, an oral interview and a learning strategy test (which were administered both before and after taking Practice Teaching I and Practice Teaching II in order to correlate the results). Students from Seminar II, semester II, 2014 took a practice TOEFL test to measure their level of English proficiency. When having the scores ready those were converted into the levels established by the Common European Framework by means of an equivalency table (see annex 1). Then, two pre-existing instruments were used to collect the rest of the needed information. The first instrument, a learning strategy test, consisted on a 20-question test for students to know the way they learned and the things that might work for them. After taking the learning strategy test, an expert in administering placement tests at Escuela America Extension and teacher in charge of giving TOEFL test preparation courses, Federico Castro, administered a CEF oral proficiency test, which consisted on a 10-question interview to check their speaking level. The bank questions used during the interview was taken from the bank of questions provided by the Common European level for a B1 level and a B2 level respectively.

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

A. DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

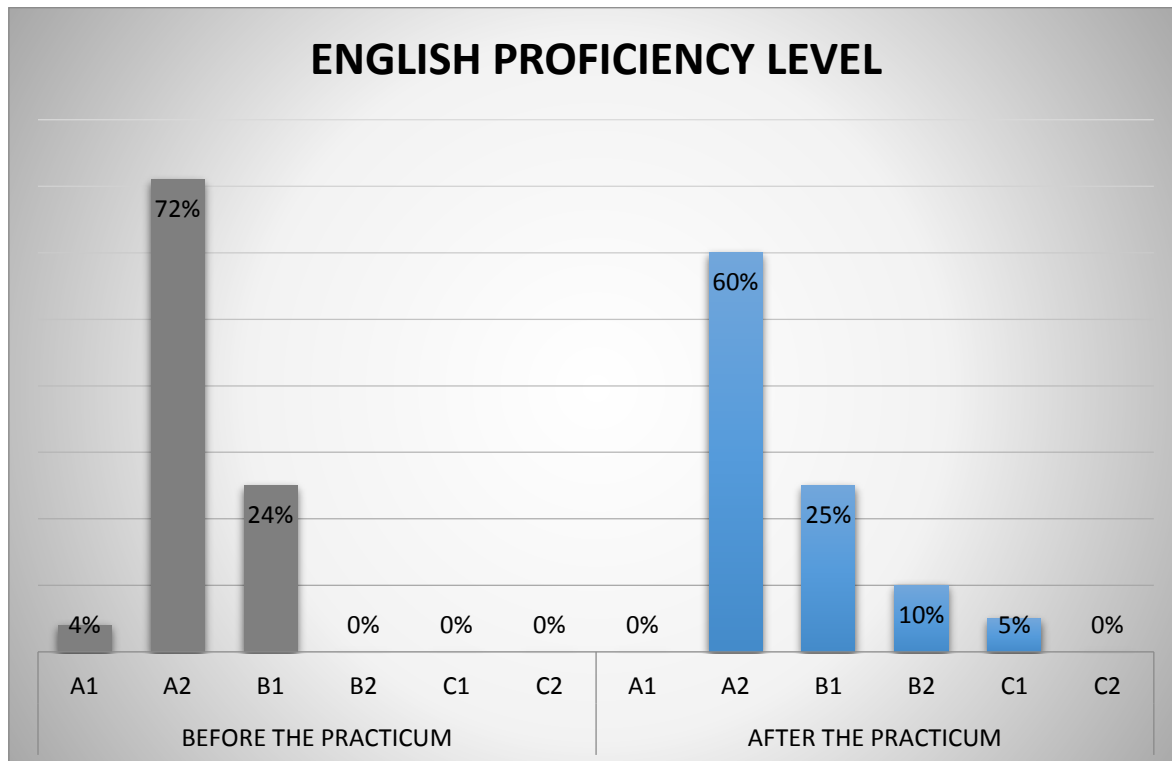
A mixed- method was used to answer the general research question and the specific ones within this research. In order to answer the general research question regarding students' level, a quantitative analysis was addressed. Since this method is primarily based in numbers and looks mostly for outcomes, being a pre- established method, this one was applied to set students' levels based on their TOEFL results. The first step was to take results obtained from the sample before they coursed Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II to correlate them to the ones obtained after administering a practice TOEFL test to the same sample of students when they were in Seminar II, semester II, 2014. All this, while making sure they had already coursed Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II so that it is clearly stated if those two courses influence their proficiency level or not. In order for those students to be placed into the levels established by the Common European Framework an equivalency table was used to convert the scores obtained in the practice TOEFL test to the levels into this framework of reference (see annex 1).

The specific questions regarding students' learning strategies and background were analyzed by means of a qualitative method. As we know, this method deals more with words and with participants' viewpoints and the way they construct their realities rather than with numbers per se. Therefore, a qualitative method was used to discover students' learning styles and backgrounds.

A mixed method provided the research with more detailed information to back the research question and subsidiary ones.

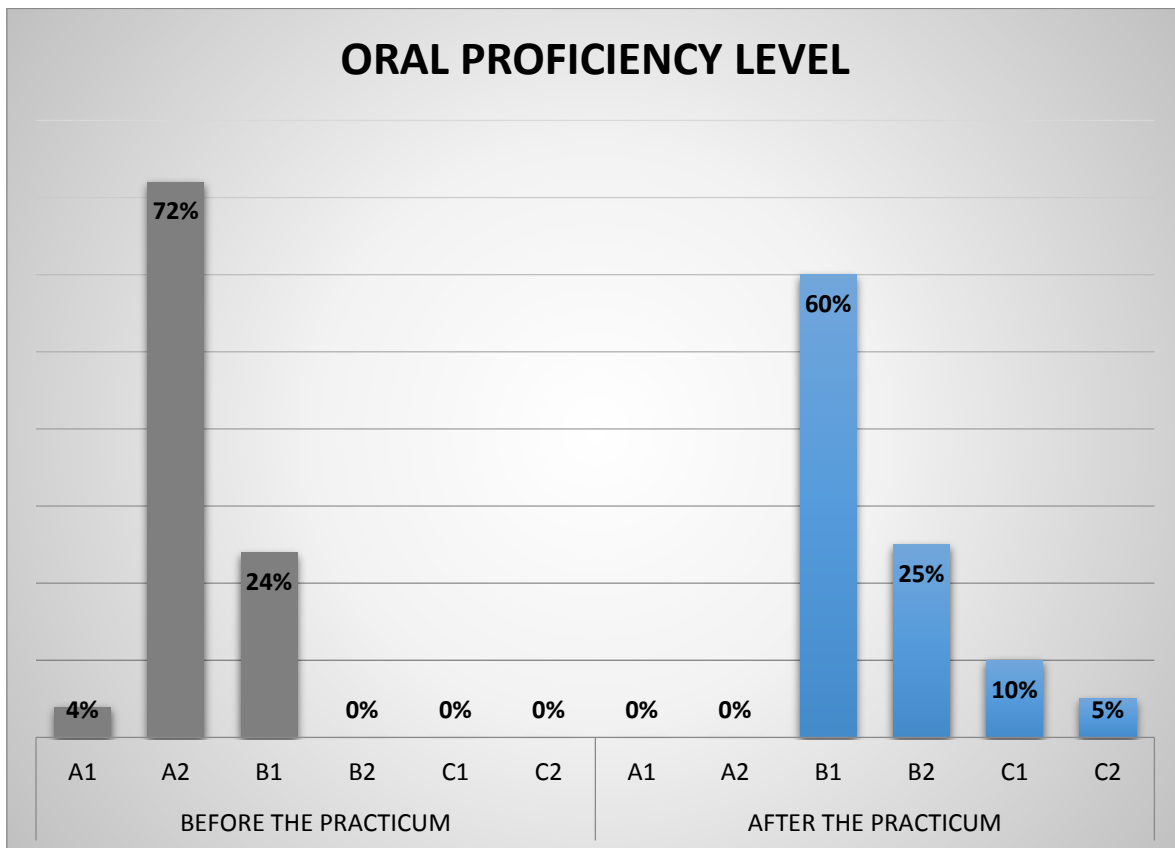
The statistical procedure that was used to analyze the data collected was the application of simple statistical formulas. The levels of the hypothesis were measured and the results are presented in linear graphics. In order to carry out this procedure, “Microsoft Excel” which is a computer program used for survey authoring and deployment, data mining, and statistical analysis was used. This program was useful during the complete analytical process. The data analysis process was divided into three parts; the first part was the univariate analysis that evaluated the results of each question separately. The second part was the bivariate analysis which analyzed the relation between two questions. Finally, an analysis of the research questions and hypotheses was presented.

ANALYSIS

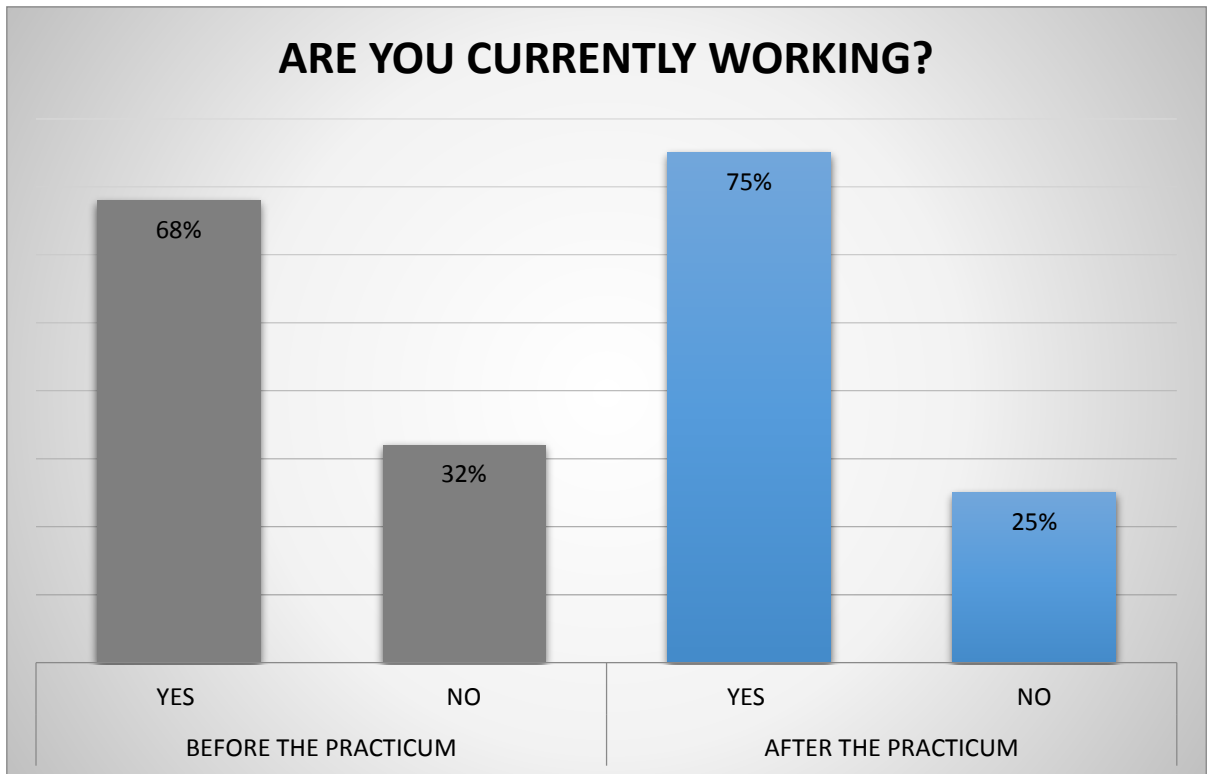


This graph shows the proficiency results that were gotten by both samples; the previous research with 24 students and 20 of the same students (except for 4, because they dropped out) for the follow up research. The scale that was used to measure the level of proficiency students have was The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF or CEFR). As it has been mentioned before, it standardizes levels of language exams in different regions. It is very widely used internationally and all important exams are mapped to the CEFR. There are six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The aim was to identify the level in which students are and classify students according to their results in each category. In the first research, we had a 4% of students that got the level A1. A 72% of students that got an A1 level of proficiency and a 24% of students that got a B1 level. Nonetheless, a notably improvement is seen in the follow-up research. A 60% of the students got an A2

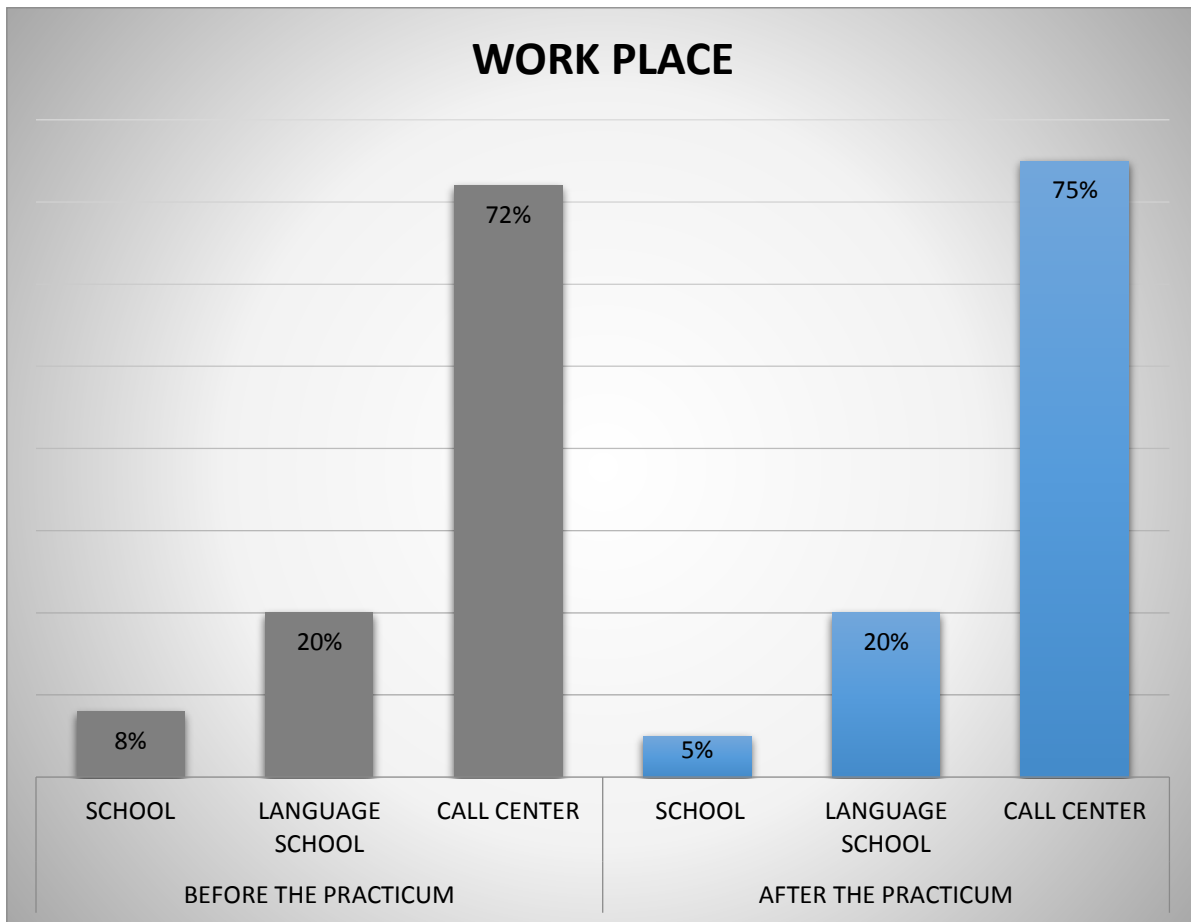
level, a 25% of the got the B1 level, a 10% got the B2 level, and 5% went up to the C1 level.



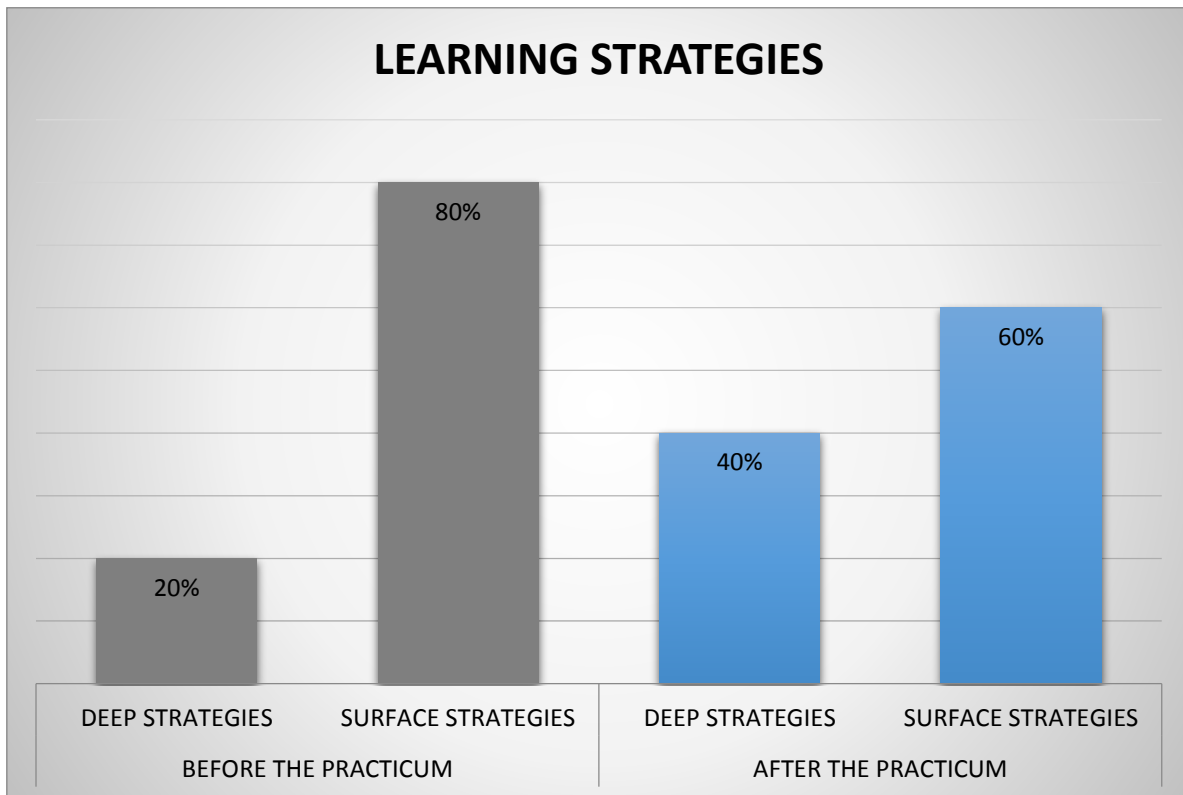
This graph shows the oral proficiency results that were gotten by both samples; before the practicum with 24 students and 20 of the same students (except for 4, because they dropped out) after the practicum. There is a big difference between the results since in the first research; students got a lower level than in the second one where scores went up. Before the practicum, there were a 4% of students who reached A1 level. A 72% of students who reached an A2 level of proficiency and a 24% of students who reach a B1 level. However, a considerable improvement was observed after the practicum. A 60% of the students reached a B1 level, a 25% of students reached a B2 level, a 10% a C1 one, and 5% went up to a C2 level.



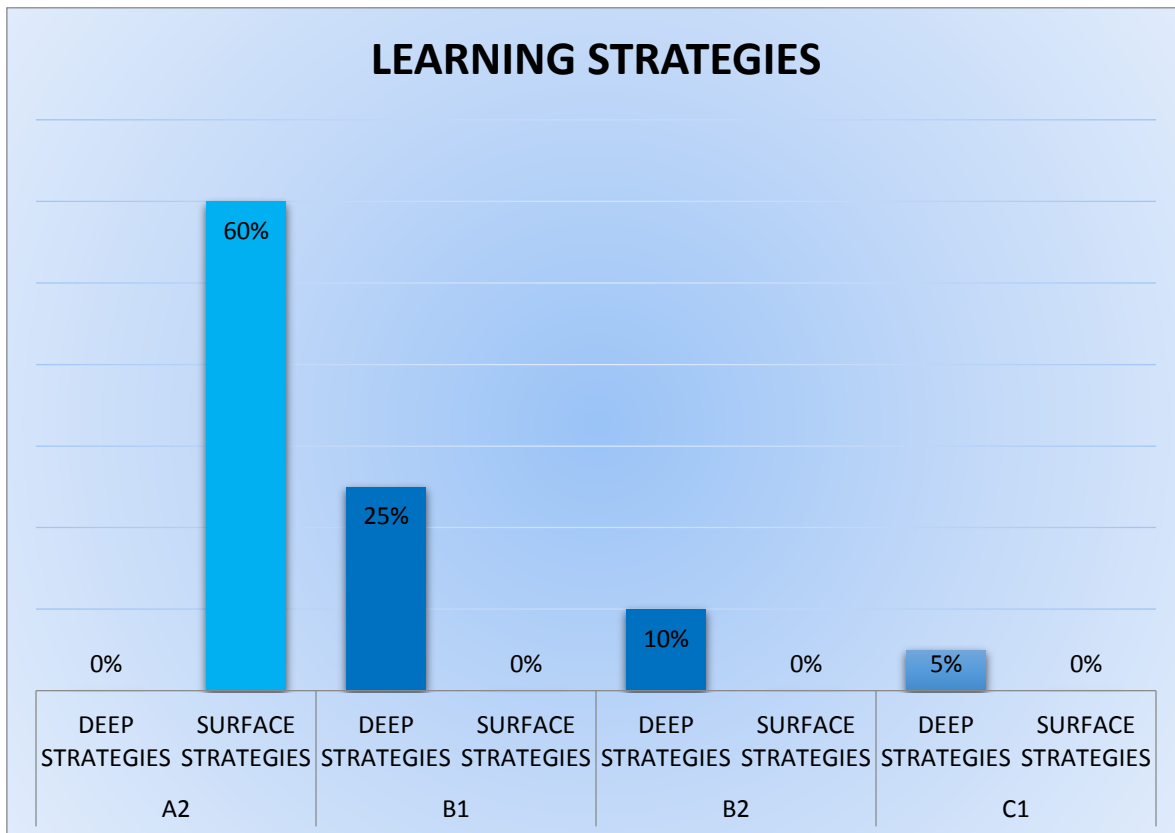
This graph shows the students who work and those who do not; results obtained by both samples, which are students before and after the practicum; before the practicum with 24 students and 20 of the same students (except for 4, because they dropped out) after the practicum. First, 68% of the students were working and a 32% were not. After the practicum only a slight increase was observed, a 75% of the students were working while a 25% were not. Based on the results obtained from our survey, all the students worked full time, which also lead to the theory that their jobs could have also influenced their improvement in the level reached.



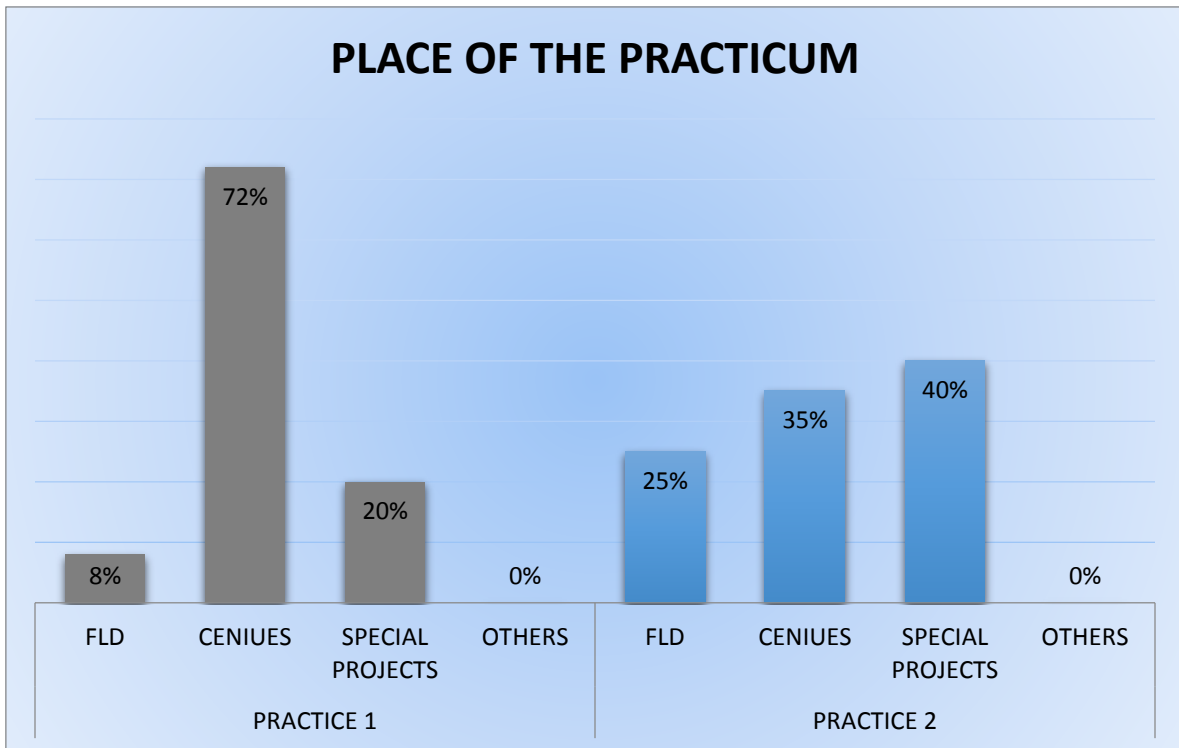
This graph shows the work place results that were gotten by both samples; before the practicum with 24 students and 20 of the same students (except for 4, because they dropped out) after the practicum. Before the practicum, it was observed a high percentage for the call centre getting a 72%, language schools with 20% and schools just an 8%. Consequently, the high percentage continued in the call centre that this time got 75%, the language school remained the same 20% and the school went down with a 5%. As stated before, it is important to remark that their working experience could have also influenced their improvement in the language.



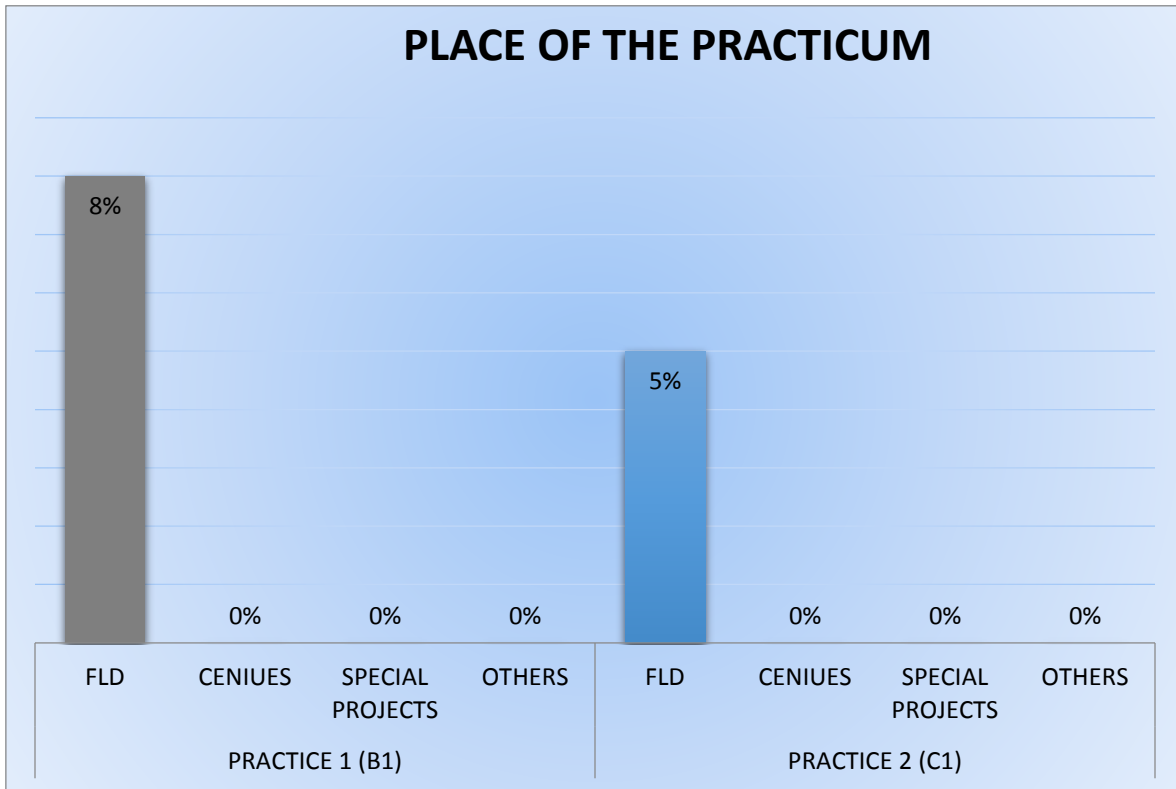
This graph shows the learning strategies results that were gotten by both samples (students before and after the practicum); before the practicum with 24 students and 20 of the same students (except for 4, because they dropped out) after the practicum. Before the practicum, a high percentage for the surface strategies was observed getting an 80% and the deep strategies with just a 20%. However, after the practicum the surface strategies went down getting a 60% whereas the deep strategies went up getting a 40%. Based on these results, it can be inferred that students do improve their learning strategies by the end of the practicum since they become more aware of their learning process and they develop a sense of responsibility while teaching.



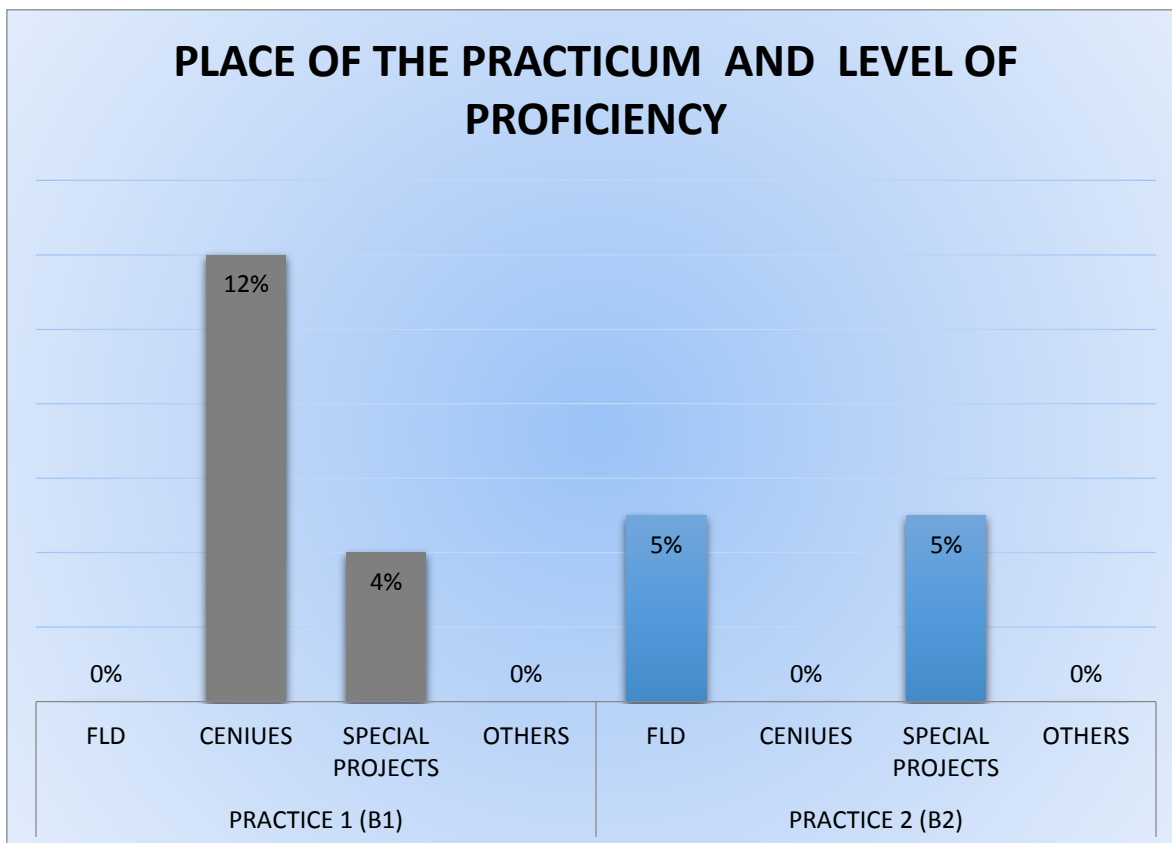
This graph shows the learning strategies results that were gotten by levels of proficiency after the practicum; A2, B1, B2 and C1 levels respectively. From those A2 level, it can be observed that 60% used surface strategies and none of them used the deep ones. From those B1 level, it can be observed that none of them used surface strategies and only 25% used the deep ones. Then, from the B2 level it was observed no surface strategies but a 10% for the deep ones. Finally, the C1 level got no surface strategies either; it only got just a 5% for deep strategies. Based on the results, it can be said that the lower the level students get the lower their learning strategies are. As it can be seen in the graphic above, students with lowest level (A2) are the ones with the highest percentage of surface strategies, which as it has been stated before are not the best one when it comes to learning languages.



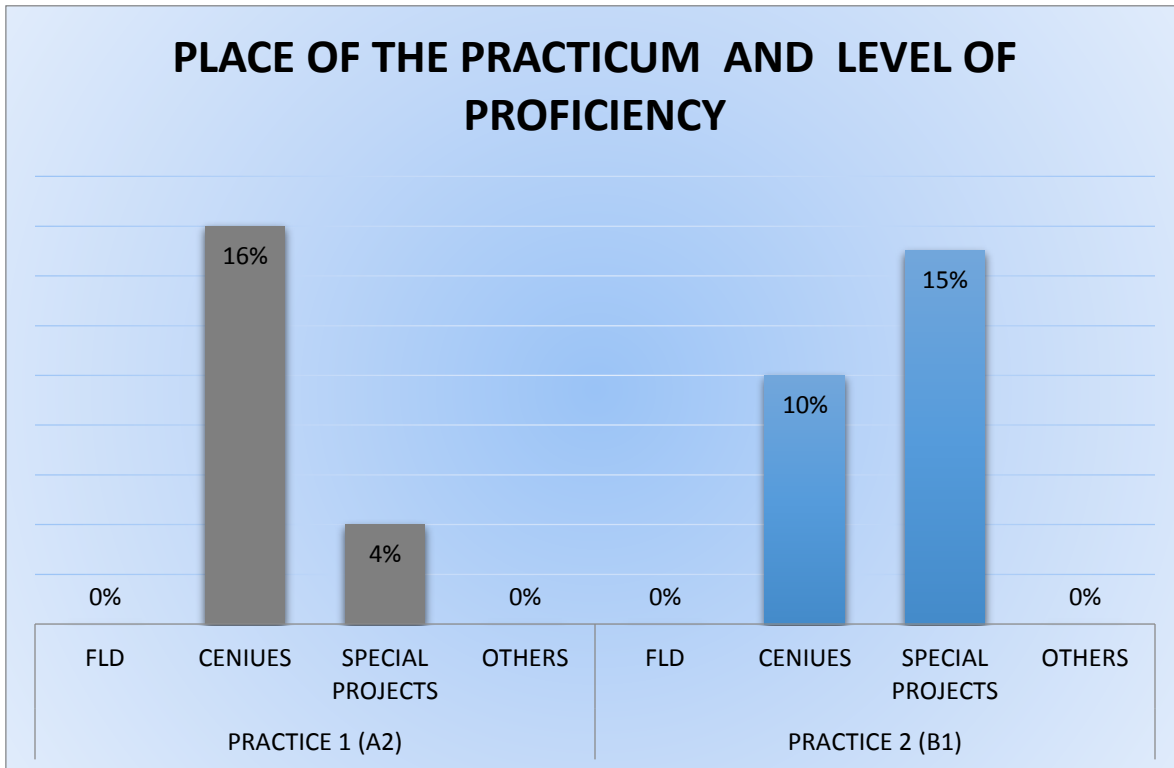
This graph represents the different places where the practicum were done: Foreign Language Department, CENIUES, and special projects (Saturday school classes, empower and PNC) and other departments respectively. For the practice one, it was observed a 8% of the students who did their practicum at the foreign language department, 72% did it at CENIUES, other 20% of the students did it in the special projects and no percentage was observed for other Departments. The same scenario was not observed for the practice two due to it is observed a 25% of the students who did their practicum at the foreign language department, 35% did it at CENIUES, other 40% of the students did it in the special projects and no percentage was observed for other Departments. It can be analysed that the place where students work the most at were CENIUES and special projects. Assuming they have good tutors who advised them all the time; it can be said these places help them to improve their proficiency level.



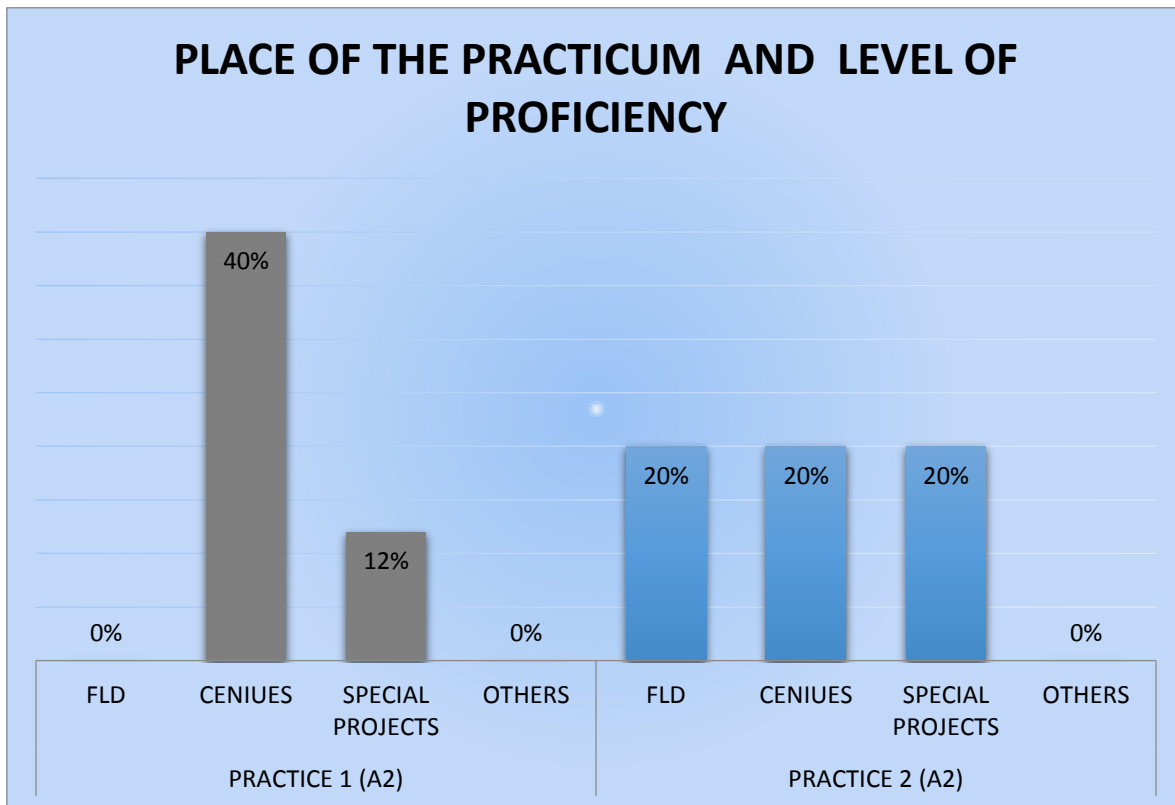
This graph represents the relationship between the level acquired and the place where the practicum were carried out. As observed, an 8% percentage of students (2 students out of 24) did their practicum at the Foreign Language Department while no percentage of students was observed at CENIUES, neither special projects nor other departments at the university. The same scenario was not observed during the Teaching Practice II. Only 5% of students (1 student out of 20) remained at the Foreign Language Department, what can lead to think students are being better advised there and have more chances to improve than in the other places.



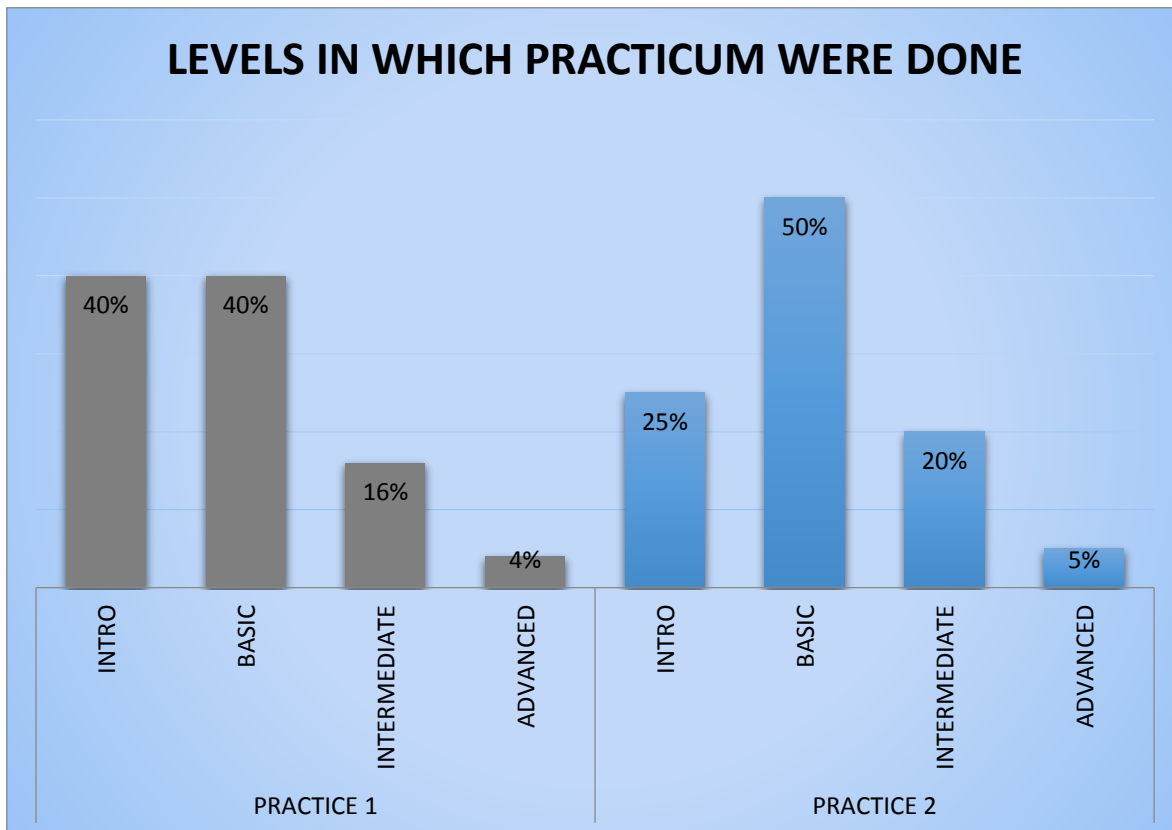
This graph represents the relationship between the level acquired and the place where the practicum were carried out. During the Teaching Practice I, a 12% of students (3 students out of 24) were at CENIUES. There were no students with a B1 level doing their practicum at the Foreign Language Department and others. On the other hand, a 4% of students (1 students out of 24) who were doing their practicum at special projects (Saturday school classes, empower and PNC) reached a B2 level. When it came to Teaching Practice II, results were not pretty much the same. The 5% of students who reached a B2 level continued working at the Foreign Language Department and special projects while there were no B2 level students at CENIUES and Others. Which means, the minority of students who reached higher levels remained at the FLD and special projects.



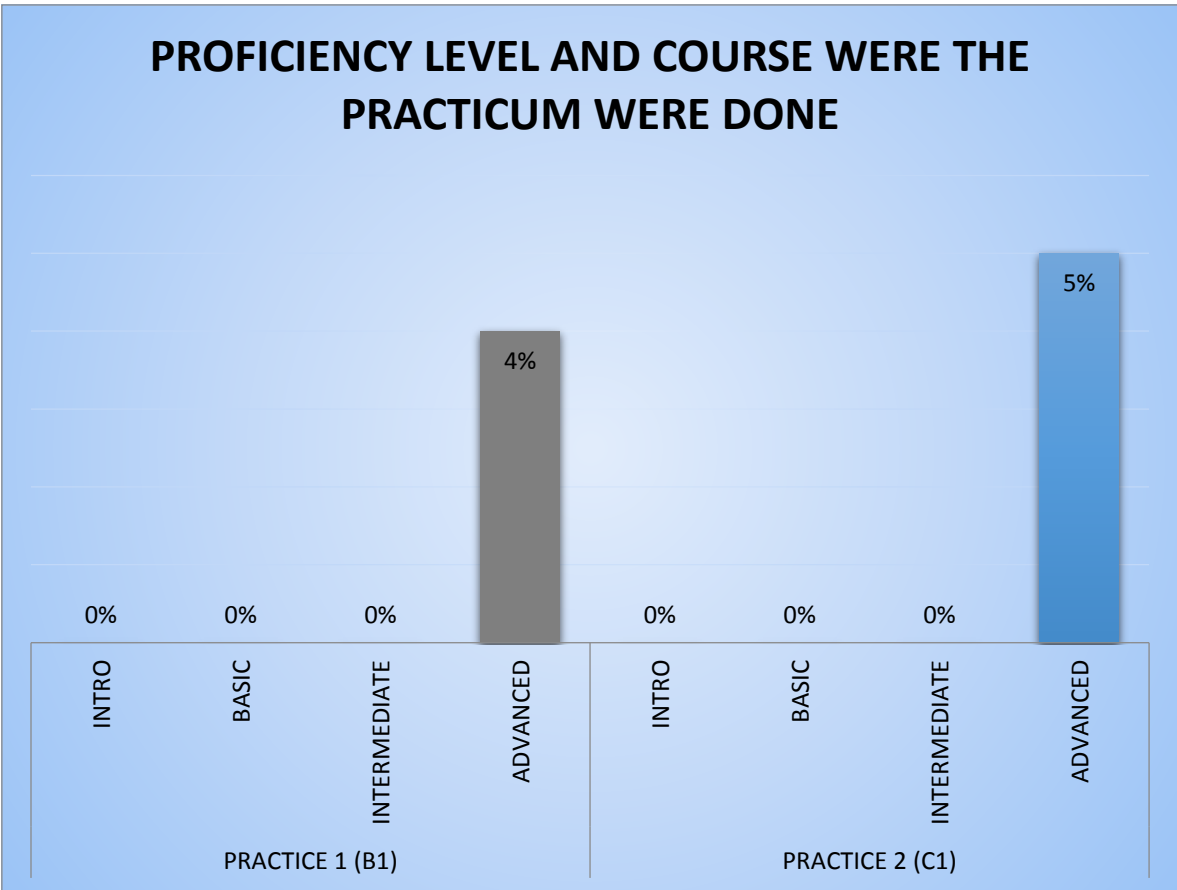
This graph represents the relationship between the level acquired and the place where the practicum were carried out. When it comes to Teaching Practice I, a 16% of students with a A2 level (4 students out of 24) were at CENIUES; a 4% of students (1 students out of 24) did their practice at the special projects while no A2 students were in other departments of the University. During the Teaching Practice II, results did not remain the same; a 10% (2 students out of 20) continued at CENIUES; a 15% (3 students out of 20) were at special projects while no student was found at other departments of the University. It is important to notice that students with the lowest levels remained at CENIUES and special projects were there is little supervision, based on the information gathered from students.



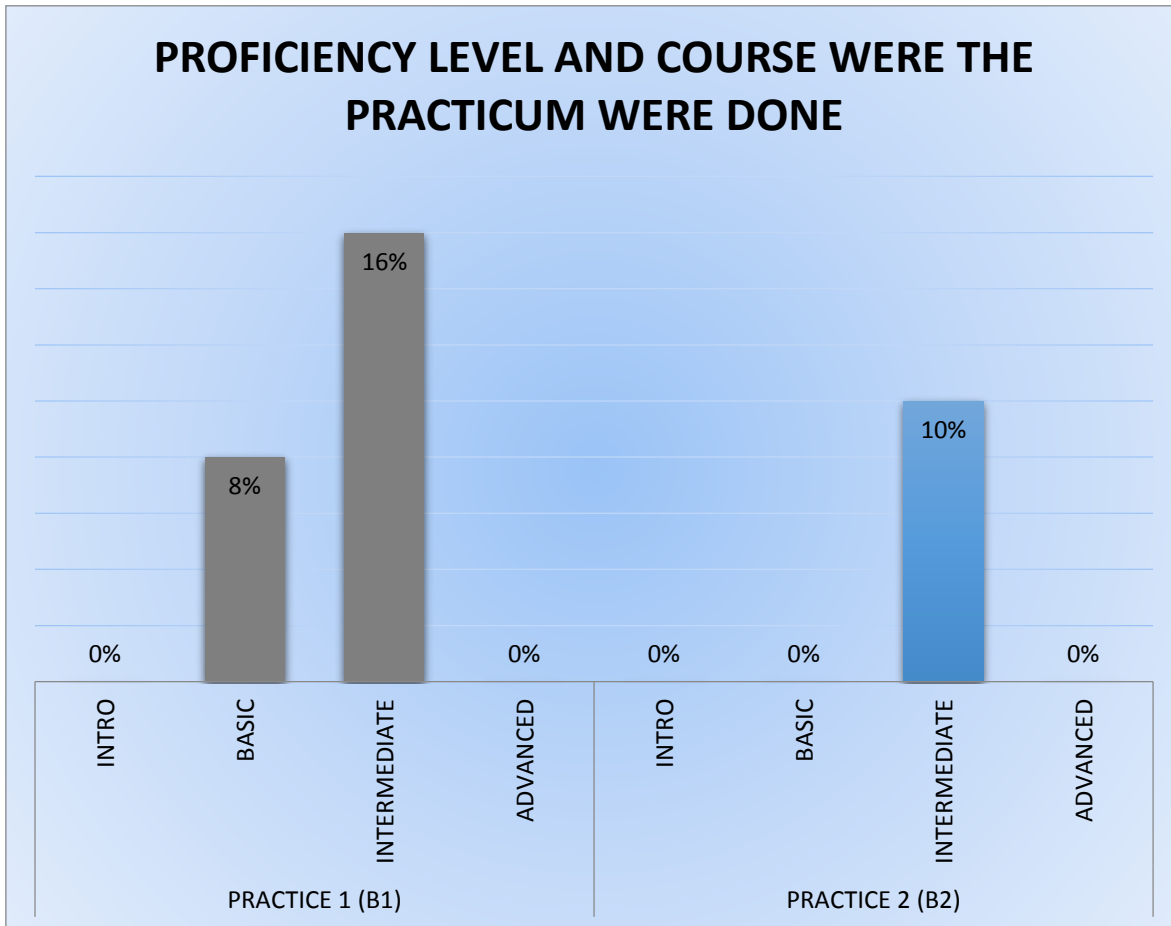
This graph represents the relationship between the level acquired and the place where the practicum were carried out. When it comes to Teaching Practice I, no students with an A2 level were at the Foreign Language. A 40% of students with an A2 level were at CENIUES; only a 12% of students did their practice at the special projects while no A2 students were in other departments of the University. During the Teaching Practice II, results were not the same. A 20% of students (4 students out of 20) remained at the Foreign Language Department; another 20% (4 students out of 20) continued at CENIUES; and finally the same 20% (4 students out of 20) were at special projects while no student was found at other departments of the University.



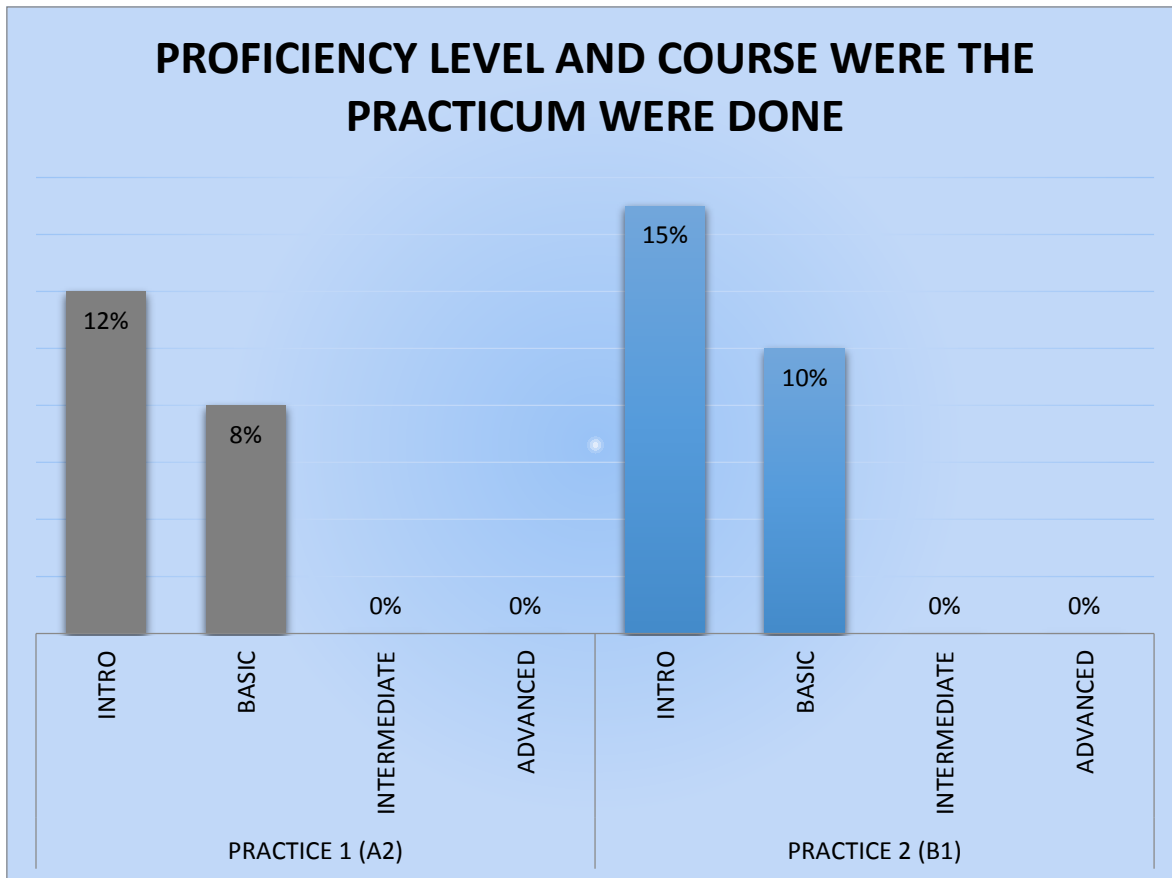
This graph shows the level in which the practicum were done and the results were gotten from both courses; intro, basic, intermediate and advanced respectively. For the practice one, it was observed a 40% of the students did their practice in an intro level, 40% were in a basic level, 16% in intermediate and only 4% did it in an advanced level. The same scenario was not observed for the practice two. It was observed a 25% of the students did their practice in an intro level, 50% were in a basic level, 20% in intermediate and only 5% did it in an advanced level. Based on the results, it can be said that students might not be improving their level since the majority of them were place in levels were they were not making much of an effort as if they were placed in an advanced level where they would be forced to study and get better. Therefore, making students go for the extra mile might be a good way to get them to develop better skills.



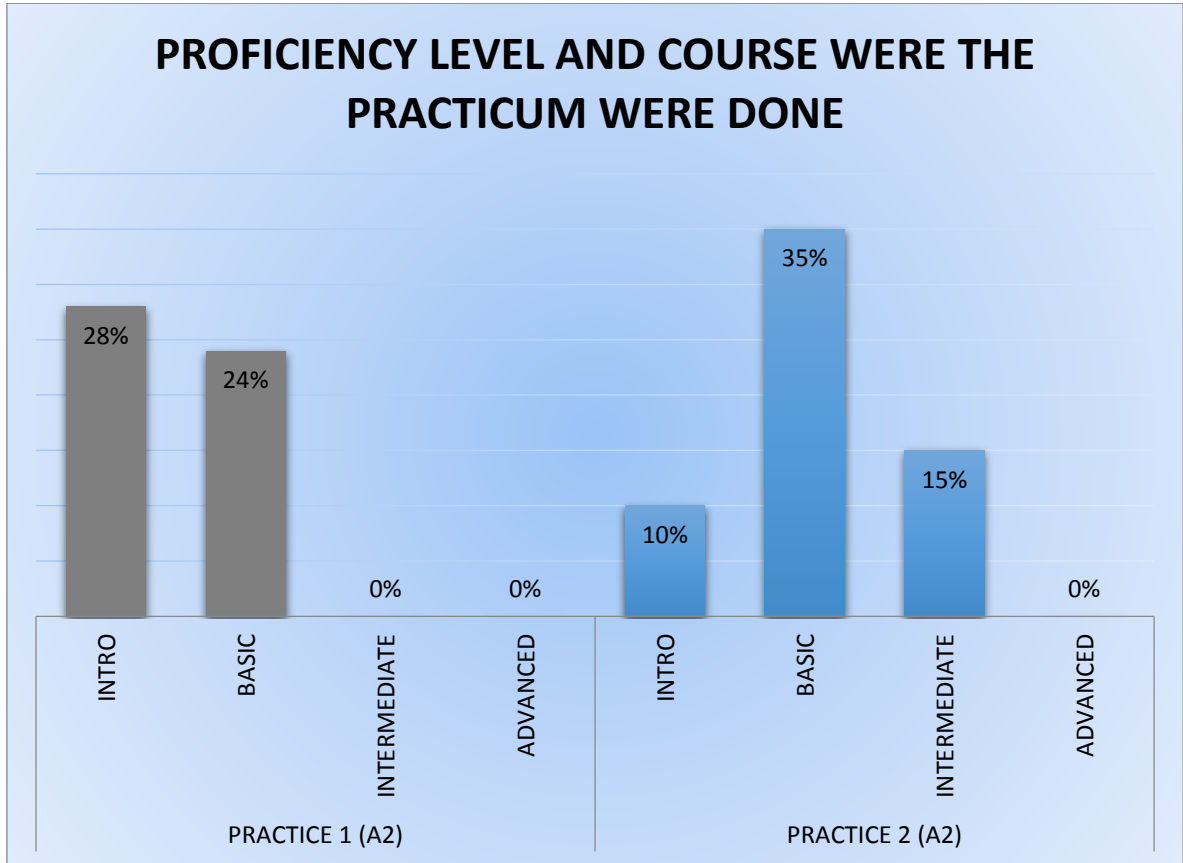
This graph shows the comparison between the students level of proficiency and the course where they did their practicum. Based on the results obtained, the only student with a B1 level (5% out of the whole population analysed) did his/her practicum in an advanced level at the Foreign Language Department, which will definitely help to improve the level of proficiency since it matches the needs and skills the student had so reaching a C1 level at the end of the practicum.



This graph shows the comparison between the students level of proficiency and the course where they did their practicum. According to the results obtained from the survey, a 16% of students with a B1 level did their practicum in an intermediate class and 8% in basic classes while doing their Teaching Practice I. Meanwhile, during the second practice, only a percentage of students (10%) remained teaching in an intermediate level. It is important to detail that students at least in this level are being placed in the correct level where they can improve their level of proficiency.



This graph shows the comparison between the students level of proficiency and the course where they did their practicum. As stated above, 12% of students with a A2 level were doing their practice in an intro level, an 8% were in a basic level and none of them in an intermediate or advanced level. Results remained almost the same while coursing Teaching Practice II. 15% of students with a B1 level were doing their practice in an intro level, a 10% were in a basic level and none of them in an intermediate or advanced level. These results can be observed from two sides; it was acceptable for students to be placed in these levels since they hadn't reached an advanced level yet; however, the more they remained teaching lower levels the more they would struggle to improve their level of proficiency since they were not being challenged to learn new things.



This graph shows the comparison between the students level of proficiency and the course where they did their practicum. As stated above, 28% of students with an A2 level were doing their practice in an intro level, a 24% were in a basic level and none of them in an intermediate or advanced level. Teaching Practice II results were not the same. A 10% of students with an A2 level were doing their practice in an intro level, a 35% were in a basic level, a 15% in an intermediate and none of them in an advanced level. These results can be observed from both sides; there was an acceptable par for students to be placed in these levels since they had not gained a higher level yet; nonetheless, if continue teaching lower levels they will not improve their level of proficiency due to they were not being challenged to learn something new.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS' ANSWERS AND VALIDATION OF THE HYPOTHESIS

1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

a) “How do Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II influence students’ English language proficiency level at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, academic year 2015?”

Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II have a great positive influence (according to the results obtained after administering all the instruments) on students from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, academic year 2015. It influenced both their learning strategies and the level of proficiency students reached positively since there was a considerable improvement on their English proficiency after coursing the practicum.

b) Do Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II influence students’ proficiency in the language?

Based on the obtained results, 4% of students reached an A1 level, 72% reached an A2 level, and 24% reached a B1 level while nobody reached a higher level than that. However, after coursing the practicum, there were no students in an A1 level, 60% of students remained in an A2 level, while 25% of students continued on a B1 level, but 10% reached a B2 and a 5% got a C1 level. Therefore, it can be said Practice Teaching I and Practice Teaching II help students to improve their language proficiency level.

c) Does the students' academic background have a deal with the level reached?

The students' academic background has definitely influenced, negatively, students' proficiency level. It is important to remark, that this was not the primordial reason why students were getting such a low level. Indeed, most of the students who reached only an A2 level, before coursing the practicum, stated in the administered instrument that they did not have any previous knowledge before starting classes at the Foreign Language Department from the University of El Salvador. As expected, this could have made their learning process more difficult than those who already had previous knowledge. However, they received intensive English classes for three years in the Department and that should have been enough for them to catch up with the ones who entered with a bit of advantage. Maybe at this point the other factors, personality type and learning strategy, had a lot to do with it as well.

d) Does the learning strategy of the students have anything to do with their proficiency level?

Learning strategies have to do with students' academic performance. In this particular case, it had relation with their proficiency level. Based on the results obtained from our Learning Strategy Test, most of the students with an A2 level had a surface learning strategy. This means that this type of student tries to accommodate requirements; focus on the symbol; remember unrelated details. Remembers information for the exam; does not differentiate between factual knowledge and arguments and or opinions; and finally, this type of student does not differentiate between general principles and examples. Therefore, those students

do not have good learning habits nor strategies and this was definitely influencing their proficiency level.

2. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The level of English proficiency of students from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador increased after coursing Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II.

After carrying out the research and analyzing the results of the instruments administrated, it was possible to conclude that the hypothesis proposed was proven right. After coursing the practicum, students increased their English proficiency level. Being that increase, as detailed: Before the practicum 4% of students reached an A1 level, 72% reached an A2 level, and 24% reached a B1 level while nobody reached a higher level than that. However, after coursing the practicum, there were no students in an A1 level, 60% of students remained in an A2 level, while 25% of students continued in a B1 level, 10% reached a B2 and a 5% got a C1 level proving the hypothesis that the practicum together with other factors such as subjects they coursed in the major such as Advanced Grammar and Readings and conversations; as well as their jobs do influence students' level of proficiency.

MOST OUTSTANDING FINDINGS

After administering the instruments and analyzing the data as well as putting every single detail together it was possible to arrive to the following findings:

- The results of the level of proficiency. Students' level of proficiency improved after taking the practicum. Before them, 4% of students got an A1 level according to the CEF, while after the practicum, there were no students in that level; 72 % got an A2 level of proficiency before the practicum and after taking there was a 60% of students in it; a 24% got a B1 level of proficiency before the practicum and this particular level remained with the same percentage of students after the practicum. However, it is important to remark that before the practicum there were no students in a B2 level nor a C1, but after taking them, a 10% of students got a B2 level while a 5% got a C1 level. This is very important due to the fact that since the beginning of the research it was expected students will go higher than a B1 level.
- When it comes to their learning strategies, it is necessary to highlight that students improve them after coursing the practicum. Based on the gathered data, 80% of students had surface learning strategies and the other 20% had deep learning strategies before the practicum. After taking them, a 60% had surface learning strategies and a 40% had deep learning strategies. This means, they also improved their learning strategies.
- Students who were doing their Teaching Practicum at the Foreign Language Department got the higher level of proficiency (C1), which means students are better observed and guided there than in other places.

- Students who were at special projects and CENIUES, where there was little or no supervision, remained in the same levels or have little improvement.
- Based on the results of both tests, students' oral proficiency is higher than their written test result which means it is necessary to make emphasis on skills such as grammar, listening and reading (according to the graph of proficiency level).
- Based on the results obtained from the learning strategy test, students admitted that they do not do extra work, which lead to the lack of interest and the attitude they have when reaching a certain level of proficiency.
- Moreover, based on the learning strategy test, it is interesting to see that some students do not take initiative in their learning process. They seem to be receptors of what is said in class. Students are unable to question what they are being taught.
- Also, based on the results obtained from the learning strategy test, we have students that are not willing to participate actively during their learning process; students that do not relate what they study with real life as well as students that admit to study only for passing subjects not for learning. These factors, of course, will affect in a negative way in reaching a high level of proficiency and performance in English.
- The importance of the previous knowledge of the language before entering the major. We could conclude that even though some students had previous knowledge, not all of them reached a high level of proficiency. However, the other portion had better levels comparing those who were true beginners in the major.

It is possible to say, based on the results of this research, that Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II do help students improving their level of English proficiency as well as their learning strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

When starting a project, it is necessary to set the goals we want to reach. Therefore, it happens the same when starting a major in English. The main goal is to get a high level of proficiency in the use of the language that is being study in order to become teachers that will be in charge of transmitting that knowledge to others. Throughout this research the following conclusions were reached:

- It was observed that a great percentage of students at the Foreign Language Department are not reaching a high level of proficiency in the English language.
- The practicum are very important subjects not only to develop students as future professional teachers but also to get them to the desire level.
- Students' level of proficiency improved significantly in most of the cases after taking the practicum.
- Learning strategies improved after taking the practicum; there were fewer students with surface learning strategies and more with deep learning strategies.
- Students who did their practicum at the Foreign Language Department had a higher level and improved more comparing to the others who did their practicum at the special projects and CENIUES.
- Based on the results of both the written and oral test, students' oral proficiency is higher than their other skills being grammar the lowest one.
- Throughout the process of carrying out this research project, it was possible to identify several factors that as students and teachers as well as a department as a whole should consider in order to get the main goal: To reach the desired level of proficiency by the students of the English major. Those factors were carried since

the beginning of the research: The learning strategies students practice; and the background knowledge students have when entering the major and how the practicum helped to improve their level of proficiency.

- It was interesting to find out that the estimated level of proficiency that apparently students have at the Foreign Language Department is even lower than the one we considered at the beginning of the research but they have a great increase after the practicum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After finishing this research project the following recommendations were presented:

To the teachers:

- It is necessary to provide students with the opportunity of doing their practicum in places where they will be challenged to grow more and improve their level of proficiency.
- Make sure students are being corrected and advised properly while doing their practicum in the different institutions they are sent so that the experience is more productive and beneficial.
- Prepare students from the English Teaching Major to take certified tests, especially the TOEFL test.
- It is necessary to provide students with more information about how to improve their learning strategies in order to be more efficient in their learning process.
- It is recommended to provide students with the tools in order to help them to reach the level of proficiency that is required.
- Students need to know about the different levels they need to reach, so that students are aware about where they need to get

To the students:

- It's important to take fully advantage of their practicum and take it as the learning and growing experience it is since they will need that experience for any future job position as English teachers.

- Make sure they are putting in practice good learning strategies which allow them to get better results when acquiring the language.
- Try to be informed about the different stages they need to move on to reach the level of proficiency required for them to become proficient speakers of the language and great English teachers.
- Get involved with everything related to their major by attending to courses or trainings which will keep them updated on the Teaching field and be better professionals.
- Show interest and to have a positive attitude towards the language and/or subjects that are being studied to get better results.
- Participate actively in the learning process along with the teacher and avoid just receptors; it is important for them to remember that people learn more by doing than by just receiving knowledge and not put it into practice.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

CONCORDANCE TABLE

TOPIC: “The influence of Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II on students’ English language proficiency level at the department of foreign languages of the University of El Salvador, academic year 2015.”

Research question(s)	Objectives	Hypothesis	Variables	Constructs	Indicators	Questions (instruments)	Technique
<p>“The influence of Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II on students’ English language proficiency level at the department of foreign languages of the University of El Salvador, academic year 2015.”</p>	<p>General Objective: Determine the influence Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II have on students’ level of proficiency when they finish their teaching practice courses.</p> <p>Specific objectives: - Analyse how Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II affect the level of proficiency they reach when they increase their English language. -Relate students’ learning strategy with the proficiency level they reach. -Conclude if</p>	<p>The level of English proficiency of students from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador increased after coursing Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II.</p>	<p>Variable 1: Learning strategy <u>Operational variables</u> Deep learning and surface learning.</p> <p>Variable 2: Place of practicum <u>Operational variables:</u> -Foreign Language Department. -CENIUES. -Especial Projects. -Others.</p> <p>Variable 3: Level of English in which practicum were done. <u>Operational variables:</u></p>	<p>The influence, either positive or negative, of the development of students who just finished the practicum English courses whose in the past reach only an “A2” or “B1” level according to Common European Framework (CEF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning strategy. - Place of practicum. - Level in which practicum were done. 	<p>The level of proficiency students that students from Practicum courses reach in of the target language.</p> <p>The results in the level of proficiency test that students have in the use of the target language.</p> <p>The influence of the Practicum in the level of proficiency that students reach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive. - Negative. - Neutral. 	<p>There are three types of instruments that will be used to collect the data throughout this research.</p> <p>The first one is a learning strategy test that will help to identify students’ learning strategies.</p> <p>The second instrument is a written placement test that will help us to identify the level reached by the students according to the CEF.</p> <p>The third instrument is an oral placement test that will help us to identify the level reached by the students according to the CEF.</p>	<p>In this study we are going to use two different methods:</p> <p>Interview Method: This will help us at the time of administering the oral placement test. Students will be asked open questions in order to identify the level of proficiency they have.</p> <p>Survey Method: Also we use the survey method research. For this, participants answer questions administered through questionnaires. After participants answer the questions, researchers will describe the given responses. We will make sure</p>

	Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II influence students' English proficiency level.		-Intro. -Basic. -Intermediate. -Advanced.				questions are in a proper way so they are clear and easy to comprehend and analyse as well.
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ANNEX 2

TIME TABLE

ACTIVITIES	February				March				April				May				June			
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
Week Number																				
Preparation of the I. Research Topic				X	X															
1 st . Group Meeting						X														
Preparation of the statement of the problem						X														
2 nd . Group Meeting							X	X	X											
A. Historical framework.							X	X	X											
B. Description of the problem.							X	X	X											
C. Objectives.							X	X	X											
D. Research questions.							X	X	X											
E. Justification/rationale.							X	X	X											
F. Delimitation of the problem.							X	X	X											
Preparation of the III. Theoretical framework									X	X	X	X								
3 rd . Group Meeting										X		X								
IV. TYPE OF STUDY												X								
V. HYPOTHESES												X	X							
4 th . Group Meeting													X							
Hypotheses													X							
Conceptual definition of variables													X	X	X					
Operational definition of variables													X	X	X					
VI. RESEARCH DESIGN																X	X	X	X	X
VII. POPULATION AND SAMPLE																X	X	X	X	X
A. Population																X	X	X	X	X
B. Sample																X	X	X	X	X
VIII. DATA GATHERING PROCESS																				
5 th . Group Meeting																				
Research Instrument(s)																				
Data gathering plan																				
IX. DATA ANALYSIS																				
6 th Group Meeting																				
A. Statistical procedures																				
B. Data analysis plan																				
X. THE RESEARCH REPORT																				
7 th . Group Meeting																				
Format of research report																				
ANNEXES																				
8 th . Group Meeting																				
Annex A. Timetable																				
Annex B. Concordance table																				
Hand In of the Final Report																				

Due date: January 25th – February 5th/2016

ACTIVITIES	July				August				September				October				November			
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
Week Number																				
Preparation of the I. Research Topic																				
1 st . Group Meeting																				
Preparation of the statement of the problem																				
2 nd . Group Meeting																				
A. Historical framework.																				
B. Description of the problem.																				
C. Objectives.																				
D. Research questions.																				
E. Justification/rationale.																				
F. Delimitation of the problem.																				
Preparation of the III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK																				
3 rd . Group Meeting																				
IV. TYPE OF STUDY																				
V. HYPOTHESES																				
4 th . Group Meeting																				
Hypotheses																				
Conceptual definition of variables																				
Operational definition of variables																				
VI. RESEARCH DESIGN																				
VII. POPULATION AND SAMPLE																				
A. Population																				
B. Sample																				
VIII. DATA GATHERING PROCESS	X	X	X	X																
5 th . Group Meeting						X	X	X												
Research Instrument(s)								X	X	X	X									
Data gathering plan										X	X	X	X							
IX. DATA ANALYSIS														X	X	X				
6 th Group Meeting																		X		
A. Statistical procedures																	X	X		
B. Data analysis plan																	X	X	X	X
X. THE RESEARCH REPORT																	X	X	X	X
7 th . Group Meeting																				
Format of research report																				
ANNEXES																				
8 th . Group Meeting																				
Annex A. Timetable																				
Annex B. Concordance table																				
Hand In of the Final Report																				

Due date: January 25th – February 5th/2016

ACTIVITIES	December				January				February				March				April			
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
Week Number																				
Preparation of the I. Research Topic																				
1 st . Group Meeting																				
Preparation of the statement of the problem																				
2 nd . Group Meeting																				
A. Historical framework.																				
B. Description of the problem.																				
C. Objectives.																				
D. Research questions.																				
E. Justification/rationale.																				
F. Delimitation of the problem.																				
Preparation of the III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK																				
3 rd . Group Meeting																				
IV. TYPE OF STUDY																				
V. HYPOTHESES																				
4 th . Group Meeting																				
Hypotheses																				
Conceptual definition of variables																				
Operational definition of variables																				
VI. RESEARCH DESIGN																				
VII. POPULATION AND SAMPLE																				
A. Population																				
B. Sample																				
VIII. DATA GATHERING PROCESS																				
5 th . Group Meeting																				
Research Instrument(s)																				
Data gathering plan																				
IX. DATA ANALYSIS																				
6 th Group Meeting																				
A. Statistical procedures																				
B. Data analysis plan																				
X. THE RESEARCH REPORT																				
7 th . Group Meeting	X																			
Format of research report						X														
ANNEXES						X	X													
8 th . Group Meeting							X	X												
Annex A. Timetable							X	X												
Annex B. Concordance table							X	X												
Hand in of the Final Report									X	X										

Due date: January 29th – February 5th/2016

ANNEX 3

EQUIVALENCE TABLE

TOEIC	TOEFL Paper	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL IBT	IELTS	Cambridge Exam	CEFR	VEC Online Score	Approximate VEC Level
0 - 250	0 - 310	0 - 30	0 - 8	0 - 1.0			0 - 34	<u>2</u>
	310 - 343	33 - 60	9 - 18	1.0 - 1.5		A1	35 - 38	<u>3</u>
255 - 400	347 - 393	63 - 90	19 - 29	2.0 - 2.5		A1	39 - 45	<u>4 - 5</u>
	397 - 433	93 - 120	30 - 40	3.0 - 3.5	KET (IELTS 3.0)	A2	46 - 53	<u>6 - 7</u>
					PET (IELTS 3.5)	B1 (IELTS 3.5)		
405 - 600	437 - 473	123 - 150	41 - 52	4.0	PET	B1	54 - 57	<u>8</u>
	477 - 510	153 - 180	53 - 64	4.5 - 5.0	PET (IELTS 4.5)	B1 (IELTS 4.5)	58 - 65	<u>9 - 10</u>
					FCE (IELTS 5.0)	B2 (IELTS 5.0)		
605 - 780	513 - 547	183 - 210	65 - 78	5.5 - 6.0	FCE	B2	66 - 73	<u>11 - 12</u>
	550 - 587	213 - 240	79 - 95	6.5 - 7.0	CAE	C1	74 - 81	<u>13 - 14</u>
785 - 990	590 - 677	243 - 300	96 - 120	7.5 - 9.0	CPE	C2	82 - 100	<u>15</u>
Top Score	Top Score	Top Score	Top Score	Top Score	Top Score	Top Level	Top Score	Top Level
990	677	300	120	9	100	C2	100	<u>15</u>

Common European Framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment – Cambridge University Press. 2001

ANNEX 4

INSTRUMENTS' ANSWER KEYS

ORAL PLACEMENT TEST

Oral test procedure

- 1 Check the student's written test score and provisional placement.
- 2 Ask the student the introductory questions and note the information on the score sheet.
- 3 Ask a minimum of four questions from the question bank that corresponds to the level of the provisional placement.
- 4 Encourage the student to give full answers, by means of prompts rather than direct questions. Allow 5–10 minutes per question, depending on level.
- 5 Award a score for each question, using the band descriptors below, *interpreted at the relevant level*.

Band descriptors	Score
Insufficient sample of spoken language. Student fails to understand question, even when repeated.	0
Evidence of understanding at a basic level, but frequent inaccuracies in grammar and vocabulary may obscure the message. Significant hesitation and inaccuracies in pronunciation impede understanding. Utterances left unextended.	1
Clear evidence of comprehension. Grammar and vocabulary sufficient to convey intended meaning and extend answers effectively. Utterances are reasonably relevant and coherent with only occasional hesitation. However, complex vocabulary and grammatical structures are avoided (except in obviously well-rehearsed utterances).	2
Questions fully understood. Accurate and appropriate use of a range of simple and complex grammatical forms and vocabulary to develop responses fully. Utterances intelligible and linked coherently and logically without undue hesitation.	3

- 6 Place the student as follows:

Oral score	Level
Mainly 1s	One level below written score
Mainly 2s	At same level as written score
Mainly 3s	One level above written score

- 7 Where there is a significant discrepancy between the student's written score and oral performance, teachers should use their professional judgement to place the student at the correct level.
- 8 Teachers may like to ask students for their own assessment of their level of English, bearing in mind, however, that this judgement is likely to be very subjective.

Common European Framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment – Cambridge University Press. 2001

LEARNING STRATEGY TEST

Scoring table

Statement no.	Surface Learning	Deep Learning
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
SUM =		

Deep Learning	Surface Learning
Tries to understand	Tries to accommodate requirements
Focus on the message, i.e. the argument or the problem solution	Focus on the symbol, i.e. the words of the text or the formula
Relates new knowledge to known knowledge	Remembers unrelated details
Compares and contrasts knowledge from different subjects	Remembers information for the exam
Relates theoretical ideas to real life experiences	Does not differentiate between factual knowledge and arguments/opinions
Organises and structures the contents of the study into a coherent 'world view'	Does not differentiate between general principles and examples

Eng. For determining deep and surface learning.