

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT**



**UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH**

**DIAGNOSIS OF TEACHING METHODOLOGY WHEN DEALING WITH LARGE  
CLASSES  
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## I. Introduction

Over the past 5 years people in our country, and in other countries, have become more interested in Learning English for different reasons. Many People look for suitable institutions such as academies, schools and universities to learn the language. The courses that those institutions offer have shown an increase in the number of students attending their classes, which means more students in every classroom.

Having large classes represents a problem because students have fewer opportunities to participate actively in every class session. This situation seems to be affecting classrooms around the world. Therefore, there seems to be a concern among educators who teach English on how to work with large classes with the minimum effort and doing it efficiently and effectively since English has become an essential tool of communication.

Based on this, and to find out how to deal with large groups, the researcher group decided to carry out a diagnosis on how professors at the Foreign Languages Department (FLD) handle large groups, the techniques they use with these kinds of groups, and to find out how effective those techniques are to help students learn the language easily and effectively. The sample used was taken from students taking the BA in English emphasis in Teaching, and the BA in Modern Languages.

It is expected for this project to provide necessary information to determine how effectively teaching techniques are being used at the FLD, and also provide information to future generations of teachers on how to deal with large groups.

This report is divided in the following parts: First, there is a general introduction in which there is a description of the whole work. Second, there are the general and specific objectives that have guided the project. Third, the justification describes the importance

of this project and who can be benefited with it. Fourth, the theoretical framework includes the information from the different sources such as books, internet and handouts used to find out experts' suggestions related to the researched topic. Fifth, The Methodology includes the steps followed to carry out this project and instruments that were used to collect the information. And finally, the analysis of the results and the final recommendations from the diagnosis are included.

## **II. Objectives**

### **General objective**

- To make a diagnosis on how professors at the Foreign Language Department (FLD), School of Arts and Sciences, University of El Salvador (UES) deal with large classes and the teaching techniques used with large classes taking the Intermediate Intensive English level I, and to find out how effective those techniques are for students to reach the expected level of English at the end of the course.

### **Specific objectives**

- To identify the teaching techniques applied in large classes among the English Intermediate level I courses to reach the expected oral proficiency Intermediate level.
- To find out which of the techniques used in large classes by FLD professors are the most effective to help students ease their learning process.

- To find out if teaching techniques used by professors at the FLD are similar to the ones suggested by experts in the teaching field.

### **III. Statement of the Problem**

The Foreign Languages Department (from now on referred to as FLD) of the University of El Salvador offers three undergraduate programs, which are: a B.A in English Language: Emphasis on Teaching and a B.A in Modern Language emphasis on English and French and Professorship in English for Secondary. The student population at the FLD registered in these undergraduate programs increases year after year. Some of the reasons why this may happen are because they are interested in getting scholarships, getting better job opportunities, going abroad to an English speaking country, among others. This has contributed to the increase of the population studying at the FLD in the different levels.

The interest among people in learning a foreign language at the FLD has brought as a consequence that class groups are overcrowded, specially the basic level courses. When learning a foreign or a second language, it is important to participate actively of classes and to participate as much as possible. However, in crowded classrooms as the ones that we have now at the FLD, it is difficult for students to do that. Nonetheless, professors have to deal with more than 40 students in each of their classes. It is, then, important to find out how they handle these groups, the kind of techniques they use to help their students learn the target language easily and successfully.

Consequently, there is a need to find out how teachers are handling large groups and it is of a great importance to know if the teaching techniques are effective to successfully develop the four macro skills: speaking, listening, writing and reading in students.

#### **IV-Justification**

In recent years the number of interested individuals in learning English has increased due to several reasons. One of the most influential ones seems to be that during the last 5 years many Outsourcing companies such as Stream, Sykes, Benson, Transactel, Teleperformance among others have established their businesses in El Salvador. These businesses carry out their transactions mostly in English. Another reason for people to learn English is because in addition to outsourcing companies, National Small Businesses in El Salvador continue growing and they are now distributing their services and products abroad. As a result, such companies require their personnel to be competent in the English Language.

Since English is not the mother tongue in El Salvador, people need to find specialized institutions where to learn it. One of those institutions is the Foreign Language Department (FLD) of the University of El Salvador, which offers three majors: BA English emphasis on teaching, BA in Modern languages emphasis on English and French and Professorship in English for Secondary. Classes, at the FLD as has been mentioned before have increased in a considerable number; that fact seems to have influenced the way professors teach their classes and probably the results learners may have at the end of



their studies. Therefore, we decided to carry out a diagnosis in order to find out the teaching techniques that are being used at the FLD to deal with large groups and to determine how effective they are to help learners learn the target language.

Innovative teaching techniques are necessary to effectively teach English. By developing this diagnosis, the researchers expected to find out if the teaching learning process was successfully accomplished at the end of the semester. To do that, it was necessary to observe teachers and students to get necessary information related to techniques used by professors and the way students participated in class. In that way, researchers could have evidence of the teaching techniques applied to large groups, and how professors at the FLD handle this type of groups. This research was carried out among groups at the intermediate intensive I level.

With this research, it is expected to have information that can show how professors at the FLD work with large groups, the kinds of techniques used with these groups and also to find out about the progress of students when exposed to the techniques used by professors. But the importance of this research lies in the fact that future generations of professors can have an insight on how to deal with large groups. Also students can be benefited because they can be more conscious on how to participate actively in their classes even when groups are overcrowded.

Also, this research has been enriched with information related to this matter taken from different available sources. Experts abroad have written their ideas on how to deal with these kinds of groups on the teaching field; we consider that information important to compare what is being done in other countries and what is being done in the FLD. In this way professors at the Foreign Languages Department can probably find here some useful techniques not being used by them yet.

## **V- Theoretical Framework**

### **1. Dealing with large classes.**

Over the past five years, the number of students in every group of classes at the Foreign Language Department of University of El Salvador did not exceed the 25, and this was already considered a high number considering that when studying any language it is better to have small classes so that learners can have the chance to participate more, and teachers can offer them more personalized attention. However, the past years the number of students in every class at the FLD has increased in a great manner. As a result, English courses offered as part of BA's programs are overcrowded.

Having overcrowded classes represents a difficult challenge for professors specially in two aspects: First, it represents more effort for educators to plan and deliver their classes effectively; and second, since students need to participate more actively in their classes, it is necessary for professors to find ways how to deliver their classes in such a

way that all students can participate actively and effectively to reach their goals. Experts in the field suggest a variety of techniques to manage and deal with English large classes to succeed in learning the target language.

According to Zakia Sarwar (1994, Aga Khan University Karachi, Pakistan, in her book: *Innovations in Large Classes in Pakistan*) there are four problems faced by teachers of large classes: Firstly, “they feel self-conscious, nervous, and uncomfortable it is indeed tiring to be a constant focus of 100+ pairs of eyes for 3 to 4 periods a day. Secondly, large classes pose disciplinary and class-management problems, in which the noise level must be kept down so as not to disturb others. Thirdly, it is difficult to evaluate the oral or written work of so many learners; teachers of large classes seem to be buried under an endless pile of homework. And finally, teachers feel that because individual attention cannot be given, very little learning takes place.”

Dealing with large classes is not only challenging to teachers but also to students attending those large classes. Jeremy Harmer (1992) talks about the different disadvantages that students face attending large classes: “Individual students do not have much of a chance to say anything on their own. Many students are disinclined to participate in front of the whole class since to do so brings with it the risk of failure. Communication between individuals is more difficult in a group of twenty or thirty than it is in groups of four or five. In smaller groups it is easier to share material, speak quietly and less formally, and make good eye contact.”

When delivering a class it is important to consider how activities are developed and which approach is used. Grouping large classes effectively is advised by experts to successfully achieve the course objectives. Jeremy Harmer (1992) states that pair work dramatically increases the amount of speaking time that every student gets in the class. Therefore, it allows students to work and interact independently without the necessary guidance of the teacher, thus promoting learner independence. Pair work also allows teacher time to work with one or two pairs while the other students continue working. It is relatively quick and easy to organize.

Zakia Sarwar (1994) also contributes that grouping is crucial when managing this type of classes. During her research students were asked to make groups of 3 or 4 with their friends so they could feel comfortable, and also to seat together in class so they could share their group activities; instead of moving them around they had permanent groups, with this technique, teachers can manage the class in an organized way and it also enables students to learn from each other and enhance cooperative learning.

Both Penny Ur (1991) talks about Individualization. "It allows learners choice in what tasks or materials they use and how. Personalize: whenever possible design or adapt tasks in order to allow for different individual responses based on learners' own experience opinions or imagination and Zakia Sarwar (1994) emphasizes about individualizing learning tasks. Self-learning programs aimed at improving students' language input as well as encouraging them to become independent learners. The best chance that a learner in a large class has is to take responsibility for his/her own learning. During her research students were given guidelines to monitor their own scoring, do peer correction, and work independently on group projects.

In large groups of students, teachers find a variety of learners. It is important to vary activities in the class. Penny Ur (1991) explains: Vary your topics, methods, texts; thus, if one day the material is not of the right level for, or does not interest certain members of the class, maybe the next day it will. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has carried out researches on Teaching English on Large Groups. UNESCO states that providing a variety of experiences for students and changing activities will make classes more interesting. By varying activities in large classes will make students feel engaged and they will be looking forward to the next activity since the class environment is unpredictable and interesting to all learners.

In order to successfully vary the activities in the class, teachers need to be prepared. UNESCO suggests to be organized, plan your class in advance so you are ready

to develop effectively the topics everyday because large classes require more advance preparation and structure than small classes. Planning ahead for large classes is important because there is a good chance you will need to vary your activities and in some cases change your approach depending on students' needs.

In addition to the variety in large classes, having the organized control of the class is important to lead students to success. Zakia Sarwar (1994 in her book: Innovations in Large Classes in Pakistan) suggests the use of name tags: Learners should be requested to make name tags for themselves by writing their names with a thick marker to be visible to everybody in the class. Sue Wharton et al (1999, 500 TIPS for TESOL, Teaching English to speakers of other languages) provide this tip: Teacher should address learners by name whenever they can; moreover, it is useful to call on learners randomly but equally. UNESCO also states that teachers should learn students' names so they can get familiar and gain confidence when participating in all activities carried out throughout the class.

With the aim of promoting participation in the class teacher should encourage collaboration Penny Ur (1991) mentions that it is relevant to get learners to work cooperatively and peer-teach, as to maintain engagement with the language material even when you cannot directly interact with every individual yourself. The use of collaborative and individual work drastically increases the number of students who can be actively participating at any time; this is particularly noticeable in contrast to teacher-led verbal interaction in the full class, where only one student at a time (if any) can make a spoken contribution.

When participation has been achieved in the class, it is crucial to monitor how students are responding and performing while the activity is taking place. Sue Wharton et al (1999) mention the importance of monitoring group work selectively and take selective feedback on groups' activities. A high degree of teacher sensitivity is needed here, together with very clear instructions, simple and well-structured tasks and careful

monitoring. This will help teachers interact with their students effectively and efficiently while developing each student's performance in all activities planned for each class.

## **2. Teaching techniques for large classes.**

Different activities should be implemented in large classes with the objective to guide students to learn the language and accomplish the course objectives. Experts suggest different activities among those, Penny Ur (1991) suggests: Five' families of techniques are: *Brainstorm, Recall and share, Doing your own thing, Fluid pairs, Passing it round*. All these activities are oriented to facilitate the teaching learning process in the classrooms. Teachers can vary these activities to achieve their own objectives for each course. They also will help teachers to accomplish the main objective to learn a new language which is communication.

### **A. Role Play**

A technique that encourages students to develop fluency in their speaking skill is role-play. L. Carol (1983) comments that the use of role-play has added a tremendous number of possibilities for communication practice. In role-playing, students perform roles to interact convincingly in English, and the exercise is so satisfying to them that they ask for more, this helps them improve their ability to converse in English. Since the purpose of role-play is to put the students into realistic communication situation without non pre-established language sample for this technique, only a set of instructions that initiates a conversation; this helps the students develop their fast thinking ability at the time they are acting out an every day situation and they are able to use the language spontaneously.

Besides, role-play helps many shy students by providing them with a mask. "They gradually acquire almost a new personality; thus, role-playing and language learning may be very intimately connected, and role-playing exercises should be given the importance they deserve." D. M. Julia (1983). Another important reason for using role-play is that it is

fun and help students to use their imagination. The idea of role-play is to get the students to reply as natural as possible to a common situation as it is in real life; they should say the first thing that comes into their heads. By saying the first thing that comes into their heads, they are actually behaving naturally for a particular activity and they use the language spontaneously because there is no formal preparation when people's personal interpretations are involved. This induces students to use the language fluently because "Any language activity that focuses on the language of the native speaker is called a fluency work." W. O. John (1983)

## **B. Brainstorm**

This activity consists of simple pooling of ideas: as many contributions are made as quickly as possible by as many participants as possible; ideas may or may not be written down. No time is spent on critical discussion of contributions; transitions from one to the next are swift. The brisk pace of brainstorm ensures maximum participation in the time available; and the open nature of the task means that contributions of vastly differing level and content will be acceptable.

**B.1. Example:** Say things about a picture Students are invited to say anything they like about a publicly displayed picture: they may be asked to aim for a total of twenty/thirty/forty utterances; or every student may have to supply at least one idea; or they maybe given a time limit. The same can then bed one in groups which, drastically raises the number of students who can participate.

**B.2. Example:** How many things can you think of that are. ..? Again this may be done in full-class or in small groups. The students are given definitions such as 'made of wood', 'square', 'sweet', 'worked by electricity' and, have to find (through discussion in groups, or through individual writing, or by a combination of the two) as many things as they can that fit it.

## **C. Recall and share**

The class is exposed to some kind of material, written, spoken or graphic- for example, a set of words or phrases. The material is then withdrawn, and students are asked to write down as much as they can remember of it. Subsequently, they come together in twos or threes to share results. Finally, the teacher may re-present the original material or initiate a pooling of results. Collaboration is seen as worthwhile if a group can get better results than an individual and here this is obviously true. However advanced (or not) the individual members of a group are their pooled recalling is almost inevitably going to be superior to that of any single one of them. This is a good opportunity for cooperation and peer-teaching a review of material for all, using learner interaction rather than teacher direction.

### **C.1. Example: Spelling**

The teacher writes ten or fifteen words on the board that have been recently learnt or are difficult to spell. After a minute or so the words are erased, and students challenged to recall and write them down correctly. They then come together to add to and correct each other's answers; the result is presented as a group achievement.

### **C.2. Example: What have people said?**

In order to practice forms of indirect speech, students are invited to write down all the utterances they can remember that have been said since the beginning of the lesson. In pairs or small groups they then pool their utterances and rephrase them in indirect speech.

### **D. Doing your own thing:**

In these activities each student writes or says a totally individual response to a stimulus. They may share responses with each other later for the sake of interest or to get to know each other's ideas, but there is no attempt to reach a common result or consensus



Responses may be simple or sophisticated, in elementary or advanced language: the main objective is to get individuals to express their own ideas in their own way without feeling the need to conform to a general norm.

#### **D.1. Example: Five-minute writing storms**

A topic is given to the class ('A good friend', 'A surprise I had', 'A film worth seeing') and the students are given five minutes to write down a paragraph or two about it. They may then, if they are willing, read out their texts to each other, or have the teacher read them out. Later, the texts may be rewritten as formal essays, or used as a basis for discussion.

#### **D.2. Example: Metaphors**

The class is given a set of metaphors for a familiar experience or function, and each student is asked to select the one that seems to them most appropriate. For example, they might be given the subject 'home' and the metaphors: a pillar, a bed, a springboard, a garden, a bank account, a chain. They then explain to each other why they chose what they did, perhaps find others who chose the same and compare reasons.

#### **E. Fluid pairs:**

This is another way to activate the members of a large' class simultaneously. They are given a task which involves short exchanges with as many other members of the class as they can find: a survey of opinions, for example. The students move around the class, finding out the desired information from one peer before moving on to another.

#### **E.1. Example: Finding twins**

Students fill in forms answering certain questions about themselves: for example, their favorite color, singer, television programme, leisure-time activity. They then try to find as

many other students as they can who have the same answers as they do to each question, and note names. At the end the class discusses conclusions that can be drawn about the most popular colors, etc.

### **E.2. Example: Marketplace**

Each student gets three slips of paper; on each of these they write a sentence expressing their opinion on a given topic (possibly a locally controversial one), and their name. They then find a partner and present their opinions. If the partner identifies with the opinion, they may 'buy' it: sign their name to it, and take it. If not, it remains with its original owner. 'When the pair have decided what to buy, or not, of each other's 'wares' they part and each finds someone else with whom to repeat the process. The more popular opinions change hands rapidly and amass signatures; the minority ones move more slowly.

### **F. Passing it round**

This is also a collaborative activity, but it involves reading and writing and is done quietly. Each student (or pair of students) writes something on a large piece of paper and passes it on to their neighbor(s) who adds a further word or sentence, and so on. The game 'Consequences' if you know it, is one well known entertaining example; but on the whole I prefer versions that leave the paper open all the time so that each participant has plenty to read as well as a contribution to write.

### **F.1. Example: Collaborative composition.**

A topic is given, and each student writes a brief sentence or phrase at the top of their paper about it: the first ideas or associations that occur to them. They then pass it on; the next student reads what is written, responds to it or continues it on a new line, and passes it on. And so on, until there are about ten contributions on each page. Some of the results may be read out by volunteers, or displayed on the wall.

## **F.2 Example: Passive possibilities**

Each pair of students is given a large piece of paper with a subject at the center:

'a baby', for example, or 'money', 'paper', 'a pencil'. Around this subject they write all the things they can think of that are done with it: 'a baby', for example, is washed, is played with, is loved. After not more than a minute, at a signal from the teacher, the paper is passed on, and the next pair have a minute to read what is written and try to add further ideas.

In addition to useful and effective techniques that help students reach a high level of fluency is interview. According to K. Myo (1995) the very nature of an interview makes it an excellent and effective activity because we observe, read and listen to interviews every day. The success of the interview is based on the purposes that teachers give to the activities that will be developed, taking into account the way in which they plan to carry out such activities. Teachers have the opportunity to select among some of the most common types of interviews such as personal interview, guided interview and group interview.

Personal interview is an effective technique of language learning in the classroom. According to J. George (1995) its outstanding features are: 1- It is student-oriented. 2- It eases the learning of the target language in a meaningful and communicative way. 3- It gives the students much-needed practice in the listening and speaking skills. 4- It creates good rapport between the teacher and the students. So the aim of this kind of interview is to enable the students to develop their language skill rather than to test their ability or lack of it in spoken English.

Guided interview has as the principal aim to collect information about a specific person (an expert, a representative member of a group) or about a student in any case. K. Friederike (1984) suggests that this helps students put English into practice in order to talk about their personal life according to the questions that have been prepared by the teacher, having as a final result a spontaneous usage of the English language within the whole group of students.

A group interview, sometimes known as a panel interview, is different than a one-on-one interview because it is conducted by a whole group of people. Here the students are provided with a set of questions about a specific topic and each member of the group has the opportunity to give their own answers or opinions of such topic (this is used by teachers in charge of large groups). A good thing of this type of interview is that it motivates students to share opinions and to make up each other mistakes in a more comfortable environment in order to get a final decision or answer, L. William (1981). Therefore, interviews are designed to observe how students handle a problem in the classroom. Their answers should highlight their skills to deal immediately with a potential issue in a calm and controlled way that will lead the students having an appropriate behaviour in a future real situation.

Discussion is an effective communicative technique that induces large groups of students to practice English in the classroom. According to H. Franklin (1978) the purpose of discussion, whether solving a problem, exploring an idea, constructing proposal or whatever, the main aim of a discussion in a foreign language course may be efficient fluency practice because the exercises intend to get the whole class to talk and to stimulate their interest and imagination so that they can give their point of view.

A further characteristic of a successful discussion is the apparent motivation of the participants. Some people may argue that discussion activities do not work because most of the time discussion is dominated by a few fluent speakers, and the rest either listen or get bored by being passive students, lose interest completely and turn to some other occupation. But the obvious answer to the problem is to divide the class into discussion groups ranging between two and eight participants, because the first advantage of group work is the increased participation, since participation is not limited to those who are usually expressive, "students who are shy of saying something in front of

the whole class, or to the teacher, often find it much easier to express themselves in front of a small group of their peers.” U. Penny (2001)

In addition, for a discussion to be successful, the first thing to do is to bring interesting subject of conversation to the classroom. When a group is assigned a task to carry out through verbal interaction, all speech becomes meaningful, and therefore more interesting and thus improving the atmosphere in the class and helping students cooperate better with each other within large groups. “Giving students a suitable topic provides interest and subject-matter for discussion, dividing them into groups improves the amount and quality of the verbal interaction.” U. Penny (2001)

Debate technique is a useful vehicle for fluency practice. Getting prepared for debates can promote proficiency in language development in ways that are challenging and exciting for large groups of classes because it is taken as a way for developing language fluency and academic study skills. By using debates, teachers can help the students create a good performance in the reading, writing, speaking, listening and research skills, demanded by this technique. According to F. Christine (1982) a good thing of debate is that students enjoy this kind of discussion because they can talk about a topic they like.

Teachers must be aware of bringing subjects that are likely to provoke an arguable reaction on the students so that they can express their point of view in a free way whether they may be in or against the topic picked, in order for students to enjoy the debate. In any case, it is not a good idea to choose a topic which encourages students having a violent position because instead of fulfilling the purpose mentioned previously, the debate will become disorganized and students will be likely to use their mother tongue.

Besides, one of the advantages of the debate technique is that all students participate even if the teacher is dealing with a large group students show interest and give their point of view. In order for students to reach a high level of fluency, the most important thing is to practice the language as much as possible so with debates they are able to express their true feelings on a specific issue and will feel comfortable by defending their actual feelings, using English in a fluent way and making debates more satisfying. Another important thing is that with debates it is hoped that all the students participate, since everybody wants to have a saying when it comes to an interesting topic that calls their attention, and because each student is provided with some minutes to express what they feel or think about the topic being discussed, F. Christine (1982).

The contributions given by the authors mentioned above point out important teaching techniques that will provide teachers with key information to manage large groups in order to successfully achieve the development of the English classes. Teachers need to select the appropriate techniques carefully, in order to lead their students to use the language effectively so that they can reach a high level of proficiency emphasized on the speaking skill.

## **VI- Methodology**

This research was carried out at the FLD of the University of El Salvador. The steps followed to complete the research are as follows.

- ✓ There were meetings with the mentor/advisor to agree on the topic of research and to plan the steps to be followed.
- ✓ Then the project was written and approved by the mentor, so that the research could be started.
- ✓ To gather the necessary information, the instruments were designed. The designed instruments consisted on a check list, a non-participant observation chart, a questionnaire and a proficiency oral assessment. Also bibliographical and web resources were used to support the theoretical framework. This all together have helped us write our final report.

### **1) Universe**

The universe consisted of a total number of 330 students of the Foreign Language Department (FLD) who were taking the Intermediate Intensive English I course, semester II - 2010. They were distributed in 8 groups.

### **2) Sample**

The sample consisted of total number of 115 students taking the Intermediate Intensive English I Level. They were enrolled in 3 out of 8 groups. There were between 35 to 50 students in each group. The groups were in different schedules during morning and evening shifts.

### **3) Gathering of Data**

To gather the data, the researchers used three techniques (a) observation, (b) Proficiency Oral Assessment, and (c) a questionnaire to find out students' background, age, and gender.

#### **a) Observation**

The teachers in charge of the groups to be studied were asked to allow the researchers to observe their classes. Some of the teachers were reluctant to let researchers observe the classes. However, there were some of them who were willing to cooperate with the researchers.

The classes were observed during 5 weeks, twice a week and 2 hours per session. During the observation period, an observation check list chart (see instruments description page 21) was used to have the same parameters for all 3 groups. The researchers did not participate of the activities carried out during the class sessions to not affect the results of the observation.

#### **b) Proficiency Oral Assessment**

To find out the oral proficiency level of the students participating in the study, the researchers asked for some volunteers among the students who were part of the study to participate in an oral evaluation. The evaluation consisted of asking some open-ended questions. This was passed at the beginning and at the end of the term.



The researchers asked 10 students in each of the 3 groups to take the test since that number represented the 20% of the students enrolled in the semester. Those students were asked to answer an exam containing 4 WH questions and a topic related to daily routines. Researchers recorded each interview and evaluated students' oral proficiency based on the following aspects: Coherence, Grammar, Fluency and Pronunciation.

### **c) Questionnaire for Students**

To find out students background, such as age, gender and other aspects related to their English background; students enrolled in the 3 groups were passed the questionnaire.

## **4) Instruments**

To gather the data, the researchers designed a Check List Observation Chart, Proficiency Oral Assessment, Non participant observation Chart and a Questionnaire for students. Some samples of these were found on internet and adapted to the necessities the researcher's group had to collect the information.

**Non participant observation Chart (See Annex 1, page 38):** This observation chart contained aspects focused on the four macro skills:

- **Listening**, if the teachers performed listening activities found on the Students' book and/or if the teacher brought any extra listening material to class.
- **Speaking**, if students had the chance to practice and communicate on the target language. E.g. if students had debates, conversations, oral presentations and so on.

- **Reading**, if students were given important information related reading techniques, if the teacher brought extra material , so students could practice by reading short stories, hand outs or else.
- **Writing**, any activities in which students could practice their writing skill, such as making written reports, written homework or extra material.

**Check List Observation Chart:** This consisted of 10 items that were observed in each class and the frequency of the activities. Researchers checked if teacher performed the activity in the class and comments about them. **(See Annex 2, Page 39)**

**Proficiency Oral Assessment:** This consisted of 3 WH- Questions and 1 Open Question (Discussion). Students were interviewed twice and both interviews were recorded.**(See Annex 3, Page 40)**

**Questionnaire for Students:** This consisted of 8 questions that included different areas to be observed. The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out the background knowledge of students who were in the intermediate I level. **(See Annex 4, Page 41)**

1. Students' Gender
2. Students' Age
3. Students' English Background
4. Students' Major
5. Students' Self participation in the Learning of the Language

**VII- Analysis of the Data**  
**Students Questionnaires Results**

To find out information related to the background of the students taking Intermediate Intensive English I courses on the second semester-2010.

**1. Gender:**

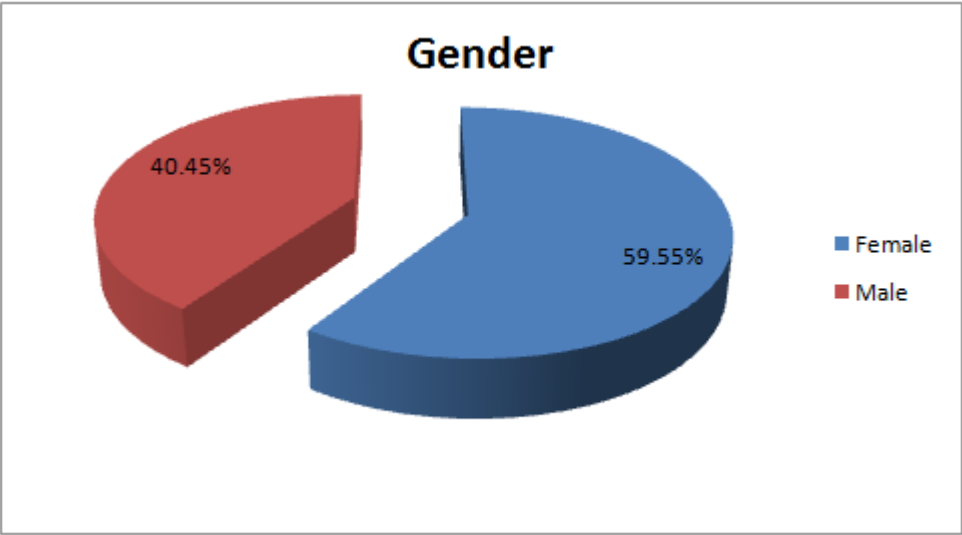


Chart 1

**2. How old are you?**

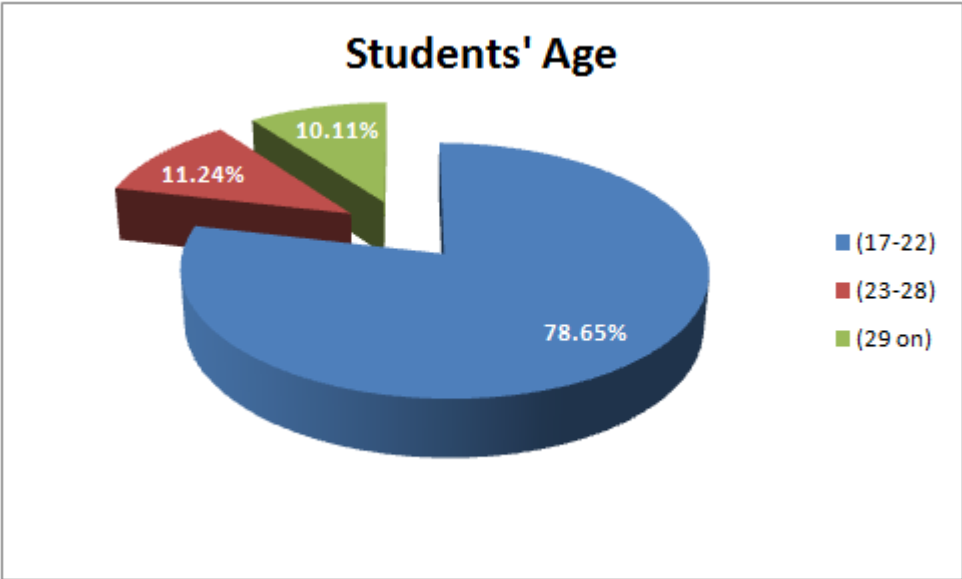


Chart 2

**3. Did you learn English before studying at the University?**

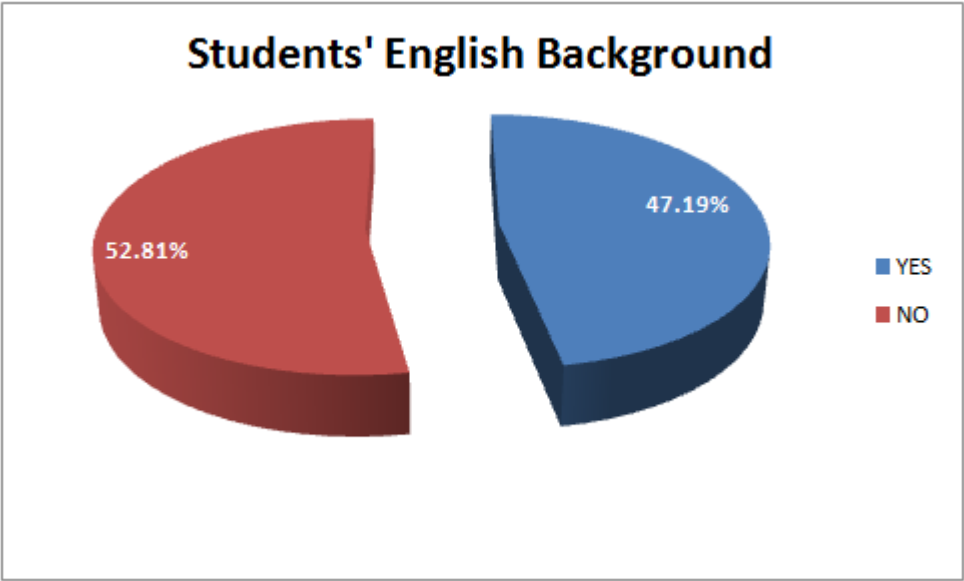


Chart 3

4. How did you learn English?

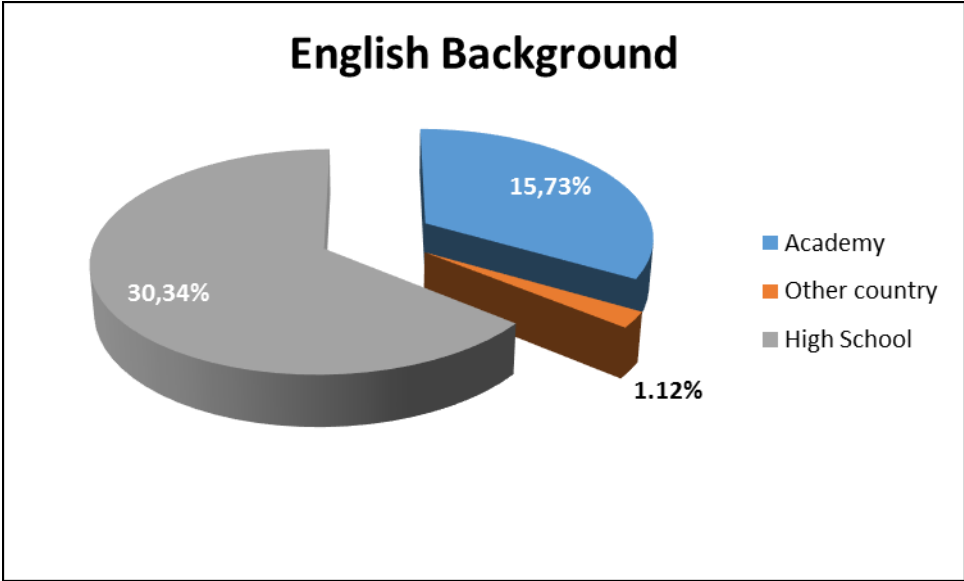


Chart 4

5. Which major are you studying?

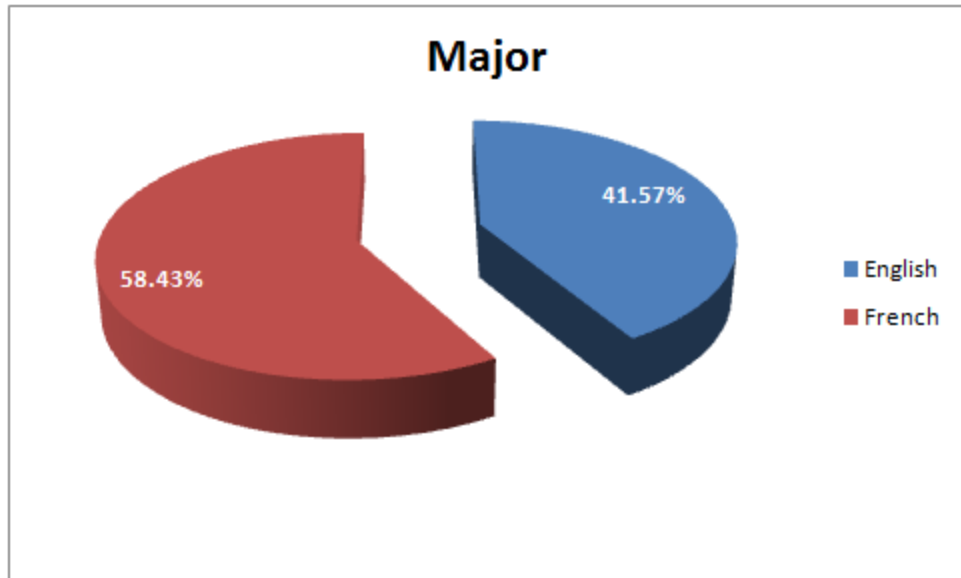


Chart 5

6. Is it the first time that you are taking the Intermediate English I course?

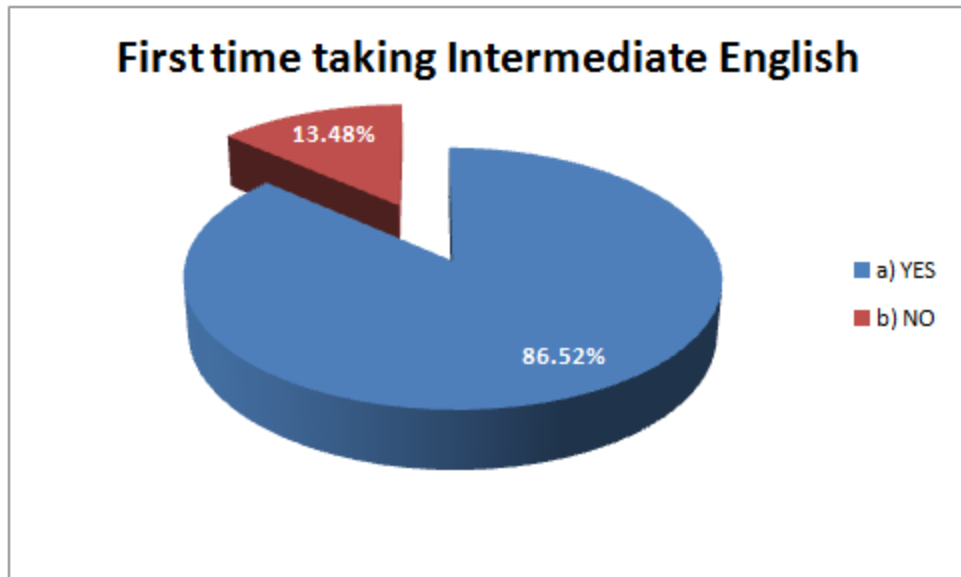


Chart 6

7. Are currently taking any extra English course (academy, online courses)?

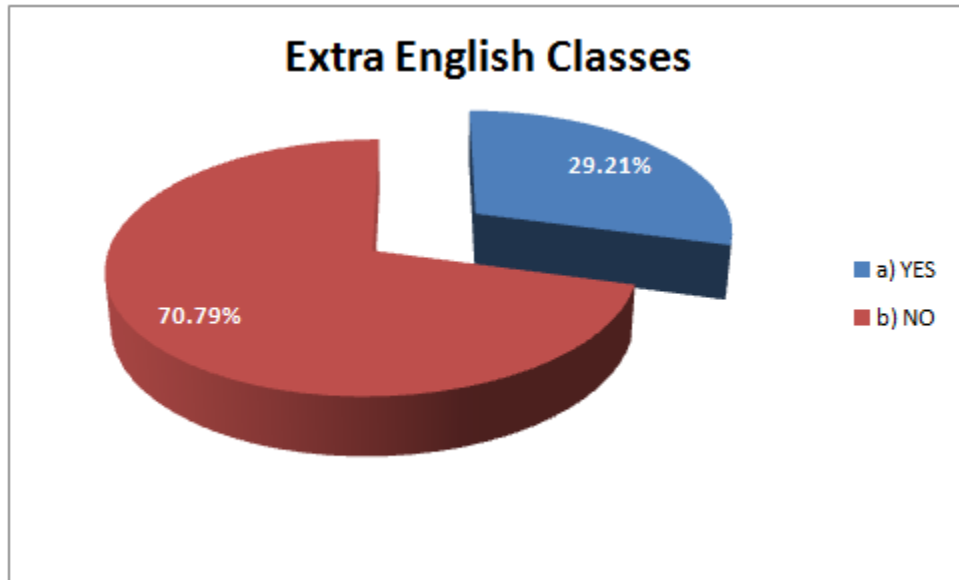


Chart 7

8. Do you use any extra resources to improve your English language level?

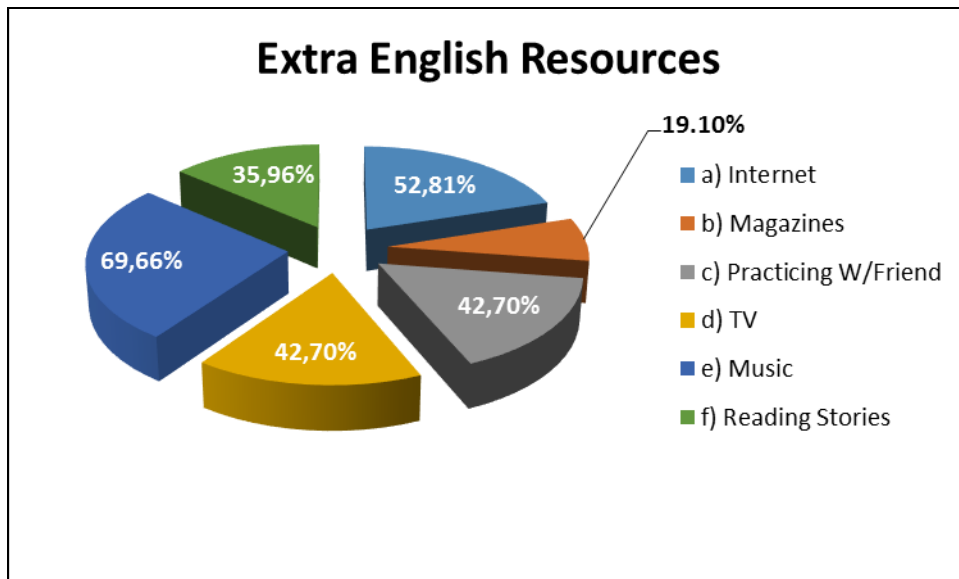


Chart 8

### **Students Questionnaires Results**

The Students Interview consisted of eight items which were addressed in order to gather key information about the universe in which the diagnoses was made. It was very important to find out students' background before studying at the University of El Salvador.

The items were as follows:

**Students' Gender:** Female gender predominates in the Foreign Languages Department with 59.55% of the sample, whereas only 40.45% of the population is male. (See Chart 1.)

**Students' Age:** 78.85% of students are between 17 to 22 years old, only 11.24% are from 23 to 28 years old, and a 10.11% from 29 years old and on. Students in both majors are in the early age of teen. This is a clear proof that new generations are interested in developing a new language. (See Chart 2.)

**Students' English Background:** When learning a new language, it's important to consider the exposure each participant has had with the language. A total of 47.19% students studied English before starting the BA in English; on the other hand, 52.81% did not have any prior exposure to the language. (See Chart 3)

**How did you learn English?** As it is observed on the chart 4, there is a total of 30.34% of students who studied English in High School, however, the level students reached in high



school is very low. This can be observed through the results that were obtained on the oral interviews. Students at an intermediate level with English Background should be able to express themselves more fluently. A 1.12% of the students studied English abroad. Based on these results, we can have a general idea that the resources for students to study overseas are not enough. (See Chart 4)

**Which major are you studying?**As it can be observed in chart 5, a total of 58.43% are currently enrolled in Modern Languages Major whereas, a 41.57% are in Teaching English as a second Language. Modern Languages Major has a higher number of students, being a 16.86% above English Major. Although, the difference is not very high, this shows that students are very interested in learning not only one language. (See Chart 5)

**Is it the first time that you are taking the Intermediate English I course?** Only a 13.48% is taking English Intermediate for a second or third time. 82.52% of students are currently taking Intermediate English I for the first time. (See Chart 6)

**Are you currently taking any extra English course (academy, online courses)?** Only 29.21% of students are currently taking additional classes and 70.70% are not. By taking additional courses, classes or tutoring students can increase their knowledge and develop their speaking skills. Considering that there is different type of learning styles, it's extremely important to look for more resources to learn and improve more students' proficiency. (See Chart 7)

**Do you use any extra resources to improve your English language level?** Students have very low contact with the language outside the classroom. This was a multi choice questionnaire. As it is described in the chart below, we can see that students prefer to look for extra resources that can be entertaining such as listening to music, watching TV

and browsing the internet. Reading resources such as books, magazines, or newspapers seem to be the last options for students to use. (See Chart 8)

### **Oral Interview Results**

On this research there were 5 important areas that were taken into account as they form an essential part on the oral skill: coherence, grammar, fluency, pronunciation. Which were selected based on the IELTS guidelines (International English Language Testing System) that is recognized as an entrance requirement by universities in UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA. Students were ranked into 3 main categories of measurement. E.g. if they had poor performance they were located under 75%, if they meet expectation they had 75% or if they exceeded expectation they were located on 100% on the scale.

On the results obtained during this research the sample was of 30 students interviewed among 3 groups of English Intermediate level I at the Foreign Language Department of University of El Salvador. They were randomly chosen in different schedules during the day. This same interview was passed to students at the beginning and the end of the term 02/2010. Then, ten students who volunteered themselves in each of those large groups totaling 30 students which is the sample for this part of the research.

The data analysis shows that there were 17 students out of 30 interviewed students who showed a little improvement on areas of coherence, grammar, fluency, and

pronunciation; this means that 56.67% of students had some improvement at the end of the semester. In general terms the average of improvement on those interviewed students is of 11%. As shown in the graphic below.

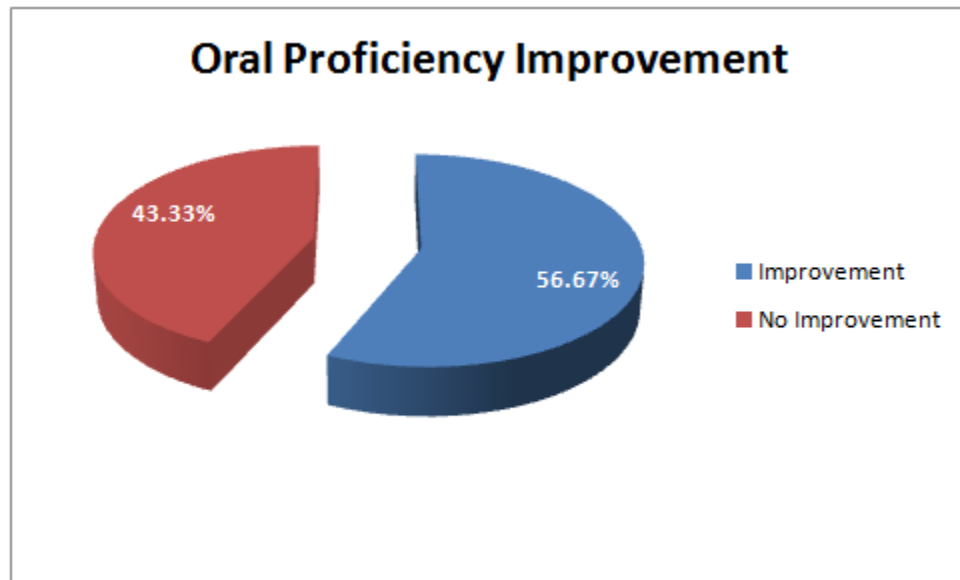


Chart 9

Another important finding on this research is that when the first interview was passed the results' average score was 50% out of 100% which means that they had overall a poor performance at the English Intermediate Level of FLD. On the other hand, when the second interview was passed to students when the term ended, students showed a little improvement on the use of the target language. The average results showed that students only improved a 11% in comparison to the previous results. (See Chart 10).

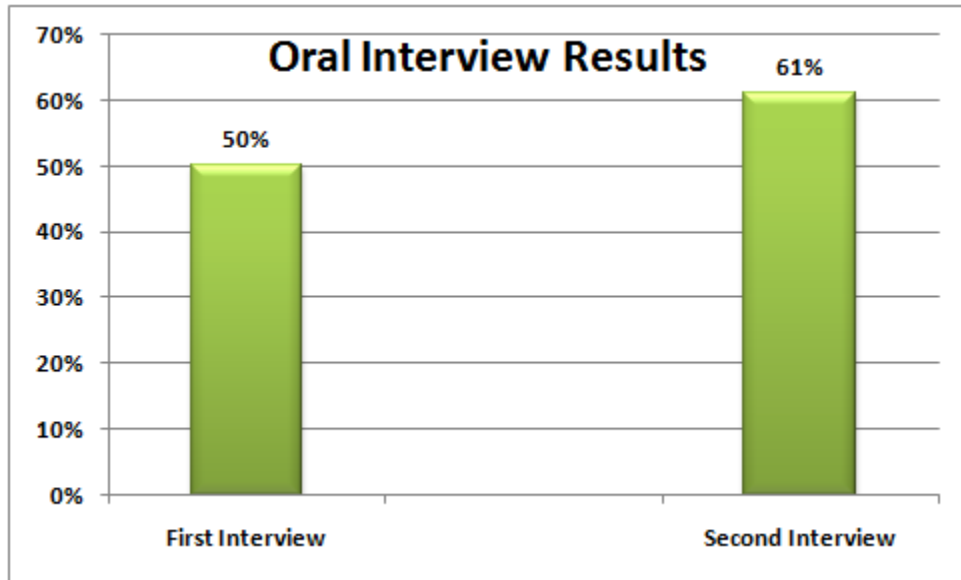
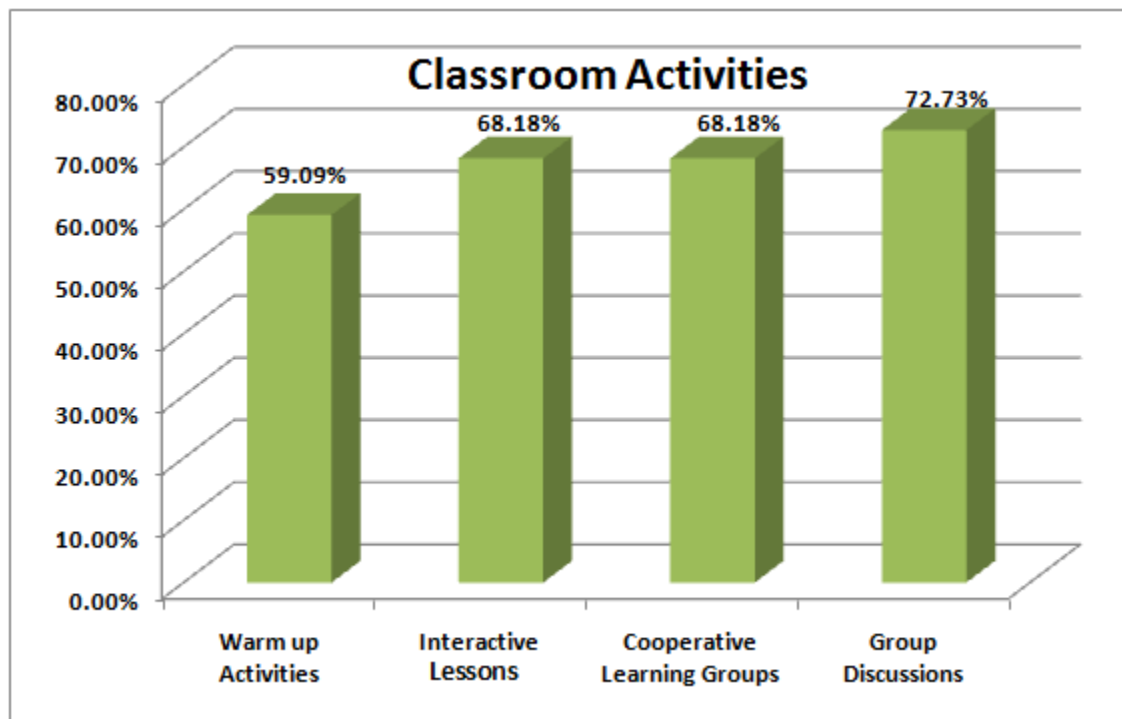


Chart 10

### Classroom Observation Analysis

During the class observations in the different classes from Intermediate English I, researchers observed the different activities that were used in the classes from the beginning to end. The chart below shows the top four activities that were implemented in the classes and its frequency.



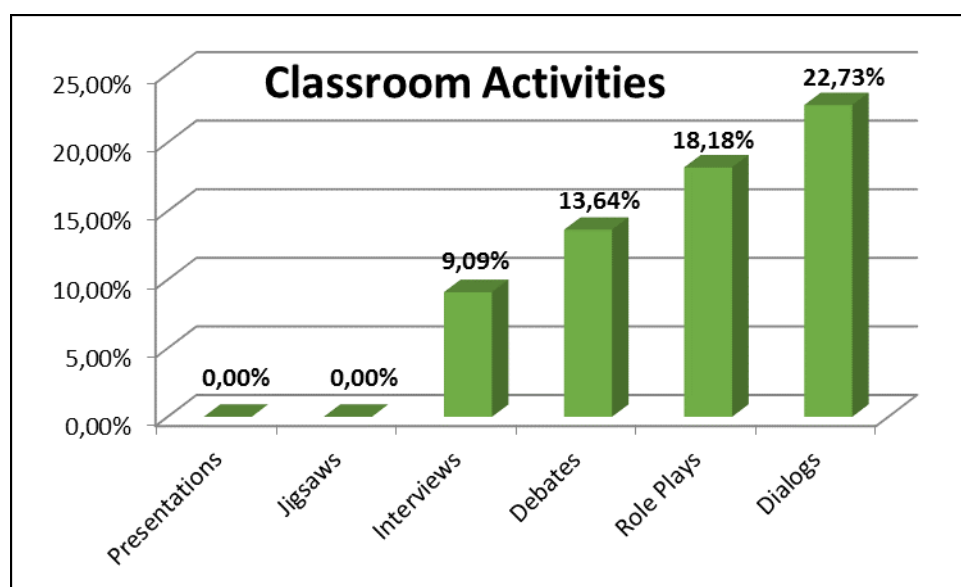
The recurrence in the activities does not go over 73% in the classes. It is considered extremely important to develop these types of activities in the classrooms as they help to develop students' learning.

**Warm up:** Can be used to attract students' attention and to sustain their interaction to the class. Very simple games played in a small group or the whole class may serve to encourage participation by making students feel an integral and necessary part of the activity. During the observation, teachers performed warm ups related to the grammar structure or topic that was studied during that day's class.

**Interactive Lessons:** Interactive lectures are classes in which the instructor breaks the Lesson at least once per class to have all of the students participate in an activity that lets them work directly with the material. These activities allow students to apply what they have learned earlier or give them a context for upcoming lesson material.

**Cooperative Learning Groups:** is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.

**Group Discussion:** Group discussions offer an opportunity for extended speaking and listening. It also enables students to develop critical thinking and use of their vocabulary.



As it can be observed on the chart above, the six activities described on the list were not constantly used. None of the classes that were observed developed any presentations or Jigsaws. These types of activities enable teachers to easily lead students to develop their Speaking Skill and practice their vocabulary.

As it can be shown, teacher did not use these type of activities in the classrooms very often. By implementing these types of activities in their daily agenda, students will not only learn but will get familiar with the context of the language. Interviews, debates, role plays and dialogs are activities that can provide an added value to the teaching learning

process as it helps students understand and apply grammar structures, concepts and vocabulary.

## **Conclusions**

Dealing with large classes is very challenging as there are many factors that need to be taken into account when delivering classes. Methodology is very important as it is the frame teacher will follow throughout the course to end. Methodology will enhance all necessary tools to facilitate the learning process for each student. Having the appropriate activities, varying the activities from time to time, engaging participation in the classrooms are some of the components that teachers need to consider when dealing with large groups.

After the results analysis, students at the Intermediate level I did not show great improvement at the end of the semester. There were a lot of factors that were observed that kept students from improving.

Teachers' activities that were covered on the class agenda were effective in students' progress. As observed on the results analysis, teachers tried to vary their activities with different techniques. At times, they were not able to follow an organized agenda in which the topic could be covered and students would have at least one or two chances to participate. Therefore, more organized activities in the classes and outside the class such as more group discussions, presentations and debates are effective activities will help students to get more involved and will lead them to become active participants in their learning process.

Students did not have many opportunities in the class to practice since classrooms were overcrowded. Also, many students were reluctant to practice their English outside the classroom. As a result, a full English environment was not observed in most of the classes, this would have helped students get more familiar with the language and improve their speaking skills.



Dealing with large classes can be difficult for most of teachers, investing time and organizing class agendas will facilitate for the teachers to deliver the contents, and so students get the best of them by learning day by day showing improvement. It was observed in each classroom that there were around 3 to 5 students who had been exposed to the language before; consequently, they showed a high level of knowledge; they were engaged with the class and cooperated with the learning process by participating, helping and motivating true beginners.

## **Recommendations**

After concluding this research, there are some important findings that can help the FLD to deal with large classes such as intermediate groups.

1. Teachers should try to carry out dynamic classes to get students' interest and attention, so the courses become relevant and interesting for all the students registered.
2. Teachers should vary their classes by implementing different teaching techniques suggested by experts on the field when dealing with large classes.
3. Teachers need to have consistency in the different activities that they develop on a daily basis. Developing Warm ups, Conversations and Debates frequently will facilitate the process so students improve their English.
4. There is lack of participation among students. Therefore, teacher should try to learn students' names to address them by their name. This way they will enhance more participation. If the class is too large, name tags can be an useful tool as suggested by Zakia Sawar (1994)
5. English Environment Only: During the observation period students used to speak in Spanish with their peers and teachers, so it is necessary to create an environment where English should be the only spoken language, students will get familiarized with the language and their speaking skill will eventually improve.

6. Teachers should create consciousness with student in order for them to invest additional time outside the classroom so that they can improve by practicing and studying.

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# Annexes

Annex 1: Non participant observation Chart

	<b>Speaking</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	Divides the class into smaller groups for cooperative learning.		
2	Asks questions to provide deeper opportunities for learning throughout every topic that is taught.		
3	Promotes Oral presentations to improve speaking and overcome shyness		
4	Uses Vocabulary based on the Students Level		
	<b>Listening</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>	<b>Comments</b>
5	Uses CD player to play listening activities for students to get familiarized with the Target Language		
6	Engages active listening while students are speaking		
7	Encourages students to participate on conversatories and or when possible brings native speakers, so they interact with students.		
8	Utilizes the listening activities on student's textbook.		
	<b>Writing</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>	<b>Comments</b>
9	Performs at least one writing activities in/out the class in daily basis		

10	Provides feedback to correct common mistakes on writing assignments		
11	Assesses students constantly by running written exams		
12	Uses the writing activities shown on the students' book		
	<b>Reading</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>	<b>Comments</b>
13	Uses the textbook to promote reading		
14	Uses extra reading material to enhance Vocabulary/Reading Skill		
15	Assigns reading materials such as such stories, articles and tales, so students can improve their reading skills.		
16	Promotes reading techniques so students can be proficient at reading.		

Annex 2: Check List Observation Chart

<b>N</b>	<b>Techniques</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	Warm up Activities				
2	Group Discussions				
3	Role Plays				
4	Dialogs				
5	Debates				
6	Interviews				

7	Presentations				
8	Interactive Letures				
9	Jigsaws				
10	Cooperative Learning Groups				

Annex 3: Proficiency Oral Assessment



**University of El Salvador**  
**Intermediate English Level**  
**Student's Complete Name: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Proficiency Oral Assessment**  
**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Part I: Open Questions**

- 1) What are some of your favorite activities and why?
  
- 2) Can you please describe what you did last weekend?
  
- 3) How do you see yourself in 5 years from now?

## **Part II: Discussion**

1. Topic: Why do you think there are a lot of students studying the BA in teaching English major and modern languages?

Annex 4: Questionnaire for Students



**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT**





**6. Are currently taking any extra English course (academy, online courses)?**

a. \_\_\_ Yes

b. \_\_\_ No

**7. Do you use any extra resources to improve your your English language level?**

a. \_\_\_ Internet

b. \_\_\_ Magazines

c. \_\_\_ Practicing with friends

d. \_\_\_ TV

e. \_\_\_ Music

e. \_\_\_ Reading Stories

Others \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for you cooperation.