UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

"INCIDENCE OF THE PREVIOUS ENGLISH KNOWLEDGE OF FOURTH YEAR
STUDENTS IN THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH TEACHING REFLECTED IN
THEIR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH GRADES"

PRESENTED BY:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

First of all, this research project is a descriptive one, because only two matters have been selected in order to be measured: previous English knowledge and academic achievement.

The issue having to do with previous knowledge is going to be measured by asking the students if they have already had contact with English or not. It is going to be reported how many people did it, where they did it, and how long that took, for instance.

The other issue is about academic achievement, and it will be described by taking into account the mere grades students have obtained in the five intensive courses of English.

It is thought that the students who had already had a previous contact with the English language are the most successful ones when they make up their minds to study the degree in English language, because of the knowledge they could have acquired during the contact with the language, either where English is officially spoken or at academies of free courses for language learning. A student with a previous knowledge is supposed to have better grades, in fact, more than 7.0.

He/She is supposed to pronounce in a better way, read better, and is able to understand more when having a conversation. A student like that has to be one of the best in certain subjects dealing with English language.

On the other hand, it is thought that the students who have never had a previous knowledge of English are those who face academic failure in their learning process, since they do not have good language background. As a result, they do not understand well when reading or listening. In the case of listening, that might be only noise to them. Moreover, they are not able to write or speak properly. But, what If they really wish to deepen into the language? They could reach a very good level of English as time goes by.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

PROBLEM:

Some students do not have good foundations or background English knowledge when initiating university studies; therefore, they are in disadvantage in comparison to those who have good foundations or background English knowledge.

A. OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

➢ To describe both the previous English knowledge and the academic achievement of students with and without English background knowledge before initiating university studies.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

➢ To know if the students had previous contact with the English language before beginning their university studies.

➢ To know and compare the grades of students with previous English knowledge and the grades of students who did not have any English background knowledge before entering university studies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Did the students have previous contact with the English language before beginning their university studies?

2. Have the students with previous English background knowledge gotten better grades compared with the ones without previous English background knowledge?

C. JUSTIFICATION

This descriptive study is very important for all those involved in the English language both learning and teaching, because many students sometimes do not have previous English knowledge when they make up their minds to study English as a major. Not all the students are available to master the language structures.

As usual, there is a small amount of students who have already had contact with English before studying it at UES. That facilitates them to have better grades than the ones without a previous knowledge. For these scholars is easier to understand what they are being taught about.

Students who had never studied English before getting into the university, are going to face serious problems to pass subjects and, consequently, to get very good grades. This is what usually happens with students of this kind. So, for the FLD is very good to know how its students are doing in their academic process. It has to be very useful for the FLD to have statistical data of the student`s performance. Academic achievement reflected through grades and previous knowledge of the English language are the variables to work on.

It is very convenient for the FLD to set up programs in which students with a good level of English be able to teach those who really need it, those who do not know much or any about English. If teachers` staff is not enough to supply those needs, students with a previous English knowledge are to be placed as teachers` assistants. The FLD has to summon those scholars to do this job. The FLD must take advantage of the knowledge of those scholars. If, for example, those smart students do not know anything of teaching, the FLD has to instruct them on how to do it. That is very convenient for the FLD. It saves time and money, because that job can be taken as a community service.

This research is very useful in order to solve some current problems. The greatest problem to be found is the low academic achievement of some students. This generates problems to the FLD.

The FLD has to look for some practical solutions before this issue. The FLD must be concerned of output student yield.

This research is really going to generate new information to the FLD, because it will provide real statistical data about the students` academic achievement and previous English knowledge. It will provide percentages of students` success and failure in their learning process. It will say the advantages and disadvantages that students have found when learning English. It will say what the easiest thing for the students is, and also, what the most difficult thing is. Of course this has to do with language learning.

THEORETICAL

FRAMEWORK

A. THE CONSTRUCTIVISM (DAVID AUSUBEL)

The constructivism is the idea that maintain that the human being – referring both cognitive and social aspects and the behaviour such as the affective – is not merely a product of the environment nor a simply result of the internal disposition, but a self-construction that is product or generated day by day as a result of the interaction between those factors.

Such construction process depends on one fundamental aspect:

➤ From previous knowledge or representation that one can have of the new information or of the activity or task to resolve.

The constructivist conception that the scholar learning has is to promote the process of student's personal increasing referring to the culture of the group that they belong to.

Three key aspects that must favour the instructional process should be the achievement of the meaningful learning, the comprehensive memorization of the school contents and the function to be learned.

The last finality of the pedagogical intervention is to develop in the student the capacity to realize meaningful learning on their own and in a great variety of situations and circumstances (learn to learn). Teaching to think and to act over meaningful and contextualized contents.

Some learning principles that are associated to a constructivist conception of learning are the following:

➤ Learning is an internal constructive process, auto structuring.
➤ The level of learning depends on the cognitive development level.
➤ The starting point of all learning is the previous knowledge.
➤ Learning is a process of (re)construction of cultural knowledge.

> Learning is facilitated by the grace of the mediation or interaction with others.
> Learning is produced when getting in conflict, what the student knows with what should know.

B. COGNITIVE APPROACHES

In psychology, cognitive theories of learning emphasized the role of the mind in actively acquiring new knowledge. The cognitive approach to human learning, diametrically opposed to behaviourist doctrine, was mentalistic and rationalistic in nature, and was not limited to strictly empirical investigation. The ideas that Ausubel set forth in his book, Educational Psychology: A cognitive view, underlie the cognitivist stance in education. The most important of these ideas is that learning must be meaningful and relatable to and individual cognitive structure if it is to become a permanent part of his or her understanding of the world.

C. AUSUBEL`S COGNITIVE LEARNING THEORY

David Ausubel contends that learning takes place in human organisms through a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts or propositions – hanging new items on existing cognitive pegs. Meaning is not an implicit response, but a clearly articulated and precisely differentiated conscious experience that emerges when potentially meaningful signs, symbols, concepts, or propositions are related to and incorporated within a given individual's cognitive structure on a no arbitrary and substantive basis. It is relatability that, according to Ausubel, accounts for a number of phenomena: the acquisition of new meanings (knowledge), retention, the psychological organization as a hierarchical structure, and the eventual occurrence of forgetting.

The cognitive theory of learning as put forth by Ausubel is perhaps best understood by contrasting rote and meaningful learning. Rote learning involves the mental storage of items having little or no association with existing cognitive structure. Meaningful learning may be described as a process of relating and anchoring new material to relevant established entities in cognitive structure. 7

Any learning situation can be meaningful if: 1) learners have a meaningful learning set – that is, a disposition to relate the new learning task to what they already know; and 2) the learning task itself is potentially meaningful to the learners – that is, relatable to the learners` structure of knowledge. The second method of establishing meaningfulness - one which Frank Smith has called "manufacturing meaningfulness" – is a potentially powerful factor in human learning. Common among students cramming for an examination is the invention of a mnemonic device for remembering a list of items; the meaningful retention of the device successfully retrieves the whole list of the items.

It is often tempted to examine learning from the perspective of input alone, failing to consider the uselessness of a learned item that is not retained. Human beings are capable of learning almost any given item within the so-called "magic seven, plus or minus two" for perhaps a few seconds, but long-term memory is a different matter. We can remember an unfamiliar phone number, for example, long enough to dial the number, after which point it is usually extinguished by interfering factors. But a meaningfully learned, subsumed item has far greater potential for retention.

D. MEANINGFUL LEARNING OF DAVID PAUL AUSUBEL.

Ausubel considers that the learning for discovering must not be introduced as opposite to learning for exposition.
Advantages of meaningful learning:

➢ It produces a more durable retention of the information.

➢ It facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge related with the one previously acquired in a meaningful way, since being clear in the cognitive structure, they facilitate the retention of new contents.

➢ When the new information is related to the previous one, it is saved in the memory for a long time.

➢ It is active because it depends on the student's assimilation of the learning activities.

➢ It is personal, because the meaning of learning depends on the student's cognitive resources.

Requirements to achieve the meaningful learning.

➢ Logic meaningfulness of the material: the material that the teacher introduces to the student must be organized in order to have a knowledge construction.

➢ Psychological meaningfulness of the material: let the student connect the new knowledge with the previous ones and may be able to understand them. Also, the student must have a memory with a good retention. On the contrary, he would forget everything in a short time.

➢ Student's favourable attitude: learning can not take place if the student does not want. This is a component of emotional and behavioural dispositions where the teacher can only influence through motivation.

E. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Many authors have established definitions about academic achievement. Carpio (1975) defines academic achievement as the pedagogical – technical process which judges the profits according to foreseen learning objectives. Supper says, academic achievement is the level of progress of the subjects to be studied. There are some that say academic achievement might be defined as the failure or success in the learning process expressed through grades, merely.

But, how is the evaluation of academic achievement done? This is done by taking into account both grades and instruments assigned by the teachers, but these are not reasonable scales. The grades that students have gotten in their different subjects, standards used to measure the achievement, do not let a valid comparison – either every student's achievement in their

different subjects or the student's achievement in the same subject – this, due to the un-standardized tests, and the confidence are very low. However, because it would be impossible to standardize all the previous evaluation, one can take the grades as a parameter that suggests the student's achievement in a determined matter. A way to abolish evaluation lack is not to take the obtained grades in the mere way they look like, but to shorten the obtained average to the credit of every course to obtain better results in every subject.

TYPE OF RESEARCH

This research project: "incidence of the previous English knowledge of fourth year students in the bachelor of arts in English teaching reflected in their academic achievement through grades" is **descriptive** because the purpose of this is to collect valuable data (from research books, students` grades, questionnaires, internet, etc), analyze them and provide valuable information that determines that students of previous English background knowledge when starting English career at the University of El Salvador get better grades than non-based English students.

The results of the findings of this project will answer our research questions and will approve or disapprove the declared hypothesis "construction process depends on previous knowledge or representation that one can have of the new information or of the activity or task to resolve" that is based on the theory of David Ausubel, The Constructivism.

This study contemplates the quantity of students with and without previos English Knowlege when entering (from year 2005) and their grade performaces in the subjects: Intensive English, Intermediate English I & II, Advanced English I.

METHODOLOGY

In this part of the project it is presented all the steps which will be followed to carry out this research. They are as follows:

1. Theme elaboration. A list of themes proposal was given to the group and only one had to be chosen. Out of that, the mere and/or real theme was elaborated in better way because on the proposal list they were not well defined.

2. Research question. It was stated in the way of a hypothesis because it is not known if it can be true or false.

3. Finding information: All the information regarding with this research project was taken from books (which are mentioned in the bibliography) and web-bibliography, too.

4. Framework elaboration: After having consulted the different bibliography, the theoretical framework was written taking into consideration the most important information found.

5. Objectives elaboration: As it is known, every work of this nature has both general and specific objectives. This research project report includes one general objective and three specific ones.

6. Time-table elaboration: When working on this, it was taken into account all the activities that have already been done and the ones which will be done as well. They include their respective dates.

7. Information of grades: It was necessary to go to the Main Administrative Office of the School of Arts and Sciences in order to obtain the grades of those students being the ones to be studied. Only the grades of the five intensive courses of English will be taken as sample because, in general way, they show the English performance of the students during the English learning process.

8. Analysis of grades: The data is going to be analyzed by looking at the students` grades and comparing them with the previous knowledge of English. A questionnaire is going to be used (see document enclosed).

DATA COLLECTIG PROCESS

A.   UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE

For the development of this project, it was needed to have a representation of a population of students with and without previous English basis when entering at the English language major in order to investigate their performance, grades, in English subjects. As a result, the representative universe was extracted from students who entered in 2005 at English major, University of El Salvador.

The English subjects to be analyzed from the representative universe, Intensive Basic English, Intermediate English I & II, and Advanced English I, were selected as a sample and as a result of a confirmation of the hypothesis supported by a theory "The Constructivism" (David Ausubel), that says: The construction process depends on one fundamental aspect: From previous knowledge or representation that one can have of the new information or of the activity or task to resolve.

B.   INSTRUMENT

The instrument used for collecting data was a questionnaire (see annex), in order to find from the representative universe the ones who entered in 2005 with and without previous knowledge and other criteria as the background of them related with English.

This questionnaire was made with open and closed question and permits the researchers to have the starting point from the representative students and so to keep the trace of them and by the grades (made available by the English Academic Authorities).

TIMETABLE

TIMETABLE 2007																									
Activities / Dates	**May**				**June**				**July**				**August**				**Sept.**				**October**			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Theme elaboration.		x	x	x																				
Research question					x																			
Finding information					x	x	x	x																
Framework elaboration					x	x	x	x																
Objectives elaboration						x	x																	
Timetable elaboration									x	x														
Framework checking & presentation										x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gathering of grades														x	x									
Grades and its Analysis														x	x									
Elab. of Questionnaire																								
Questionnaire Analysis																								
Draft elaboration																								
Presentation of draft																								
Draft fixing																								
Presentation of final project																								

Activities / Dates	January				February				March				April				May				June			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Theme elaboration.																								
Research question																								
Finding information																								
Framework elaboration																								
Objectives elaboration																								
Timetable elaboration																								
Framework checking & presentation					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x											
Gathering of grades																								
Grades and its Analysis																								
Elaboration of survey													x	x										
Survey Analysis															x									
Draft elaboration															x	x								
Presentation of draft																x	x	x						
Draft fixing																x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Presentation of final project																								

TIMETABLE 2008

TIMETABLE 2008																								
Activities / Dates	July				August				September				October				November				December			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Theme elaboration.																								
Research question																								
Finding information																								
Framework elaboration																								
Objectives elaboration																								
Timetable elaboration																								
Framework checking & presentation																								
Gathering of grades																								
Grades and its Analysis																								
Elab. of Questionnaire																								
Questionnaire Analysis																								
Draft elaboration																								
Presentation of draft																								
Draft fixing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Presentation of final project																								

Activities / Dates	January				February				March				April				May				June			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Theme elaboration.																								
Research question																								
Finding information																								
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Objectives elaboration																								
Timetable elaboration																								
Framework checking & presentation																								
Gathering of grades																								
Grades and its Analysis																								
Elaboration of survey																								
Survey Analisys																								
Draft elaboration																								
Presentation of draft																								
Draft fixing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Presentation of final project																								

TIMETABLE 2009

Activities / Dates	July				August				September				October				November				December			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Theme elaboration.																								
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Draft elaboration																								
Presentation of draft																								
Draft fixing	x	x																						
Presentation of final project		x	x	x	x	x	x	x																

TIMETABLE 2009

18

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS

GRADE

ANALYSIS

GRADES ANALYSIS
GRAPHIC 1
BASIC INTENSIVE ENGLISH I (SEMESTER I/2005)
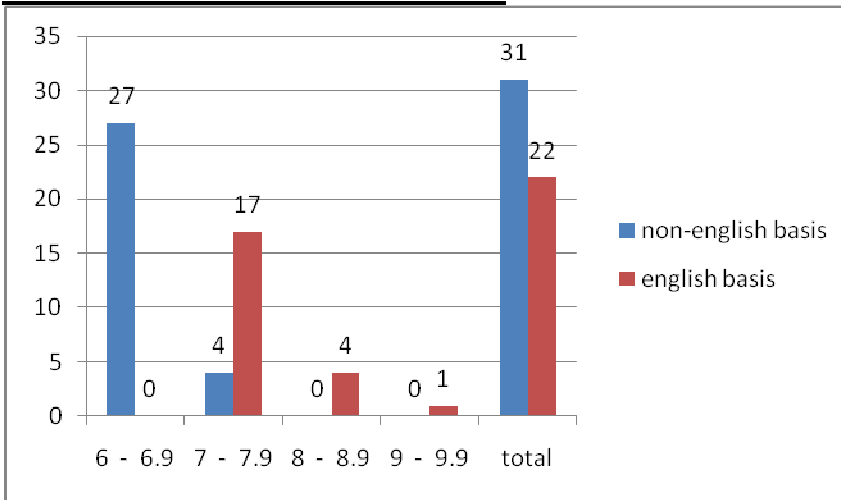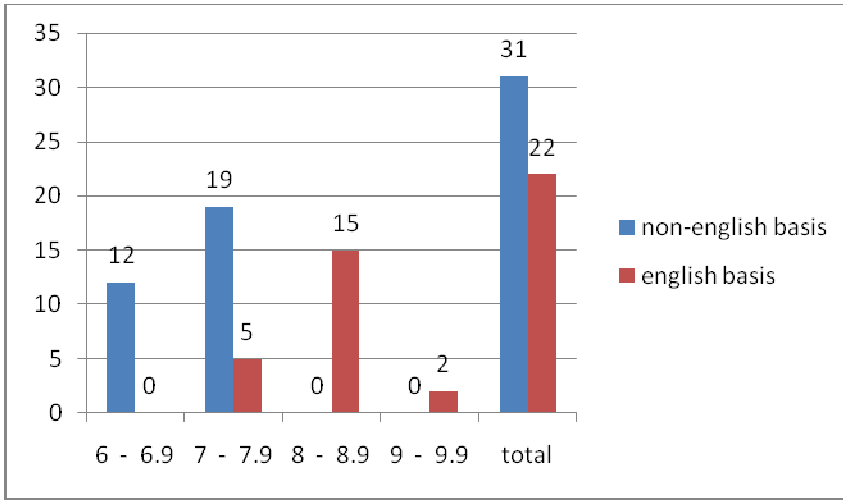**TOTAL SAMPLED STUDENTS: 53**
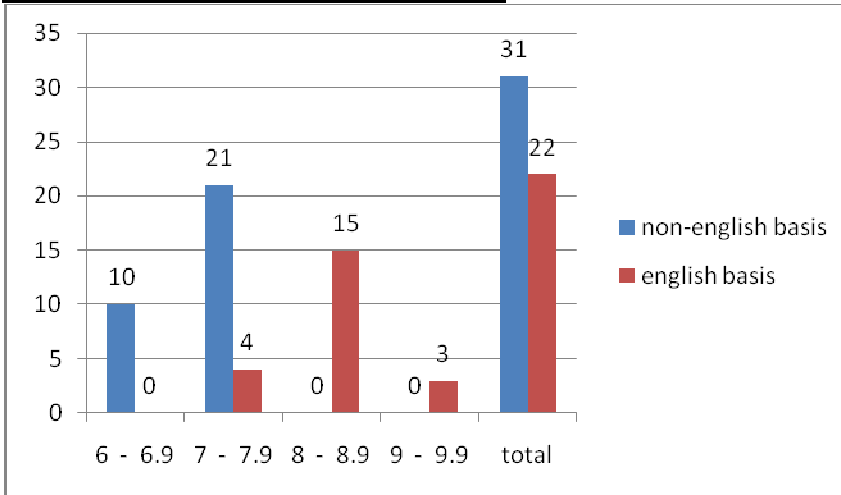
10 students **without English basis** had grades between 6 and 6.9.

21 students **without English basis** and **4** students **with English basis** had grades between 7 and 7.9.

15 students **with English basis** had grades between 8 and 8.9.

**3** students **with English basis** had grades between 9 and 9.9

GRAPHIC 2
INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH (SEMESTER I/2005)
TOTAL SAMPLED STUDENTS: 53
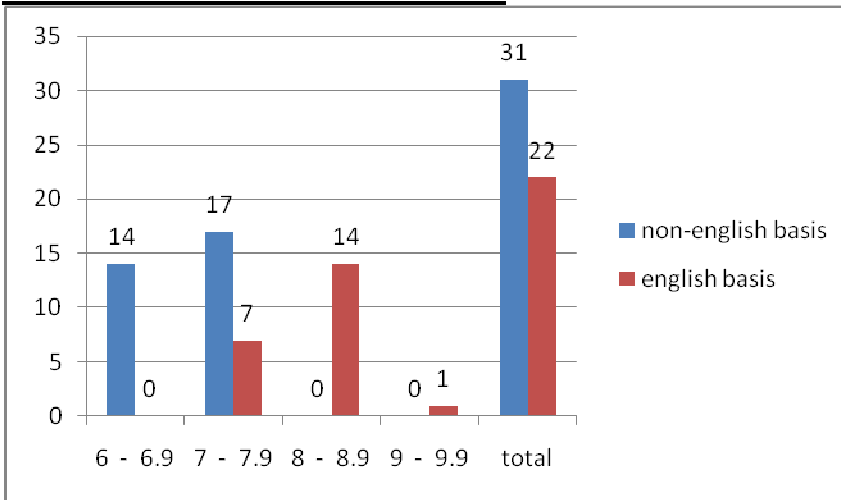
14 students **without English basis** had grades between 6 and 6.9.

17 students **without English basis** and **7** students **with English basis** had grades between 7 and 7.9.

14 students **with English basis** had grades between 8 and 8.9.

1 student **with English basis** had grades between 9 and 9.9.

GRAPHIC 3
ADVANCED ENGLISH I (SEMESTER II/2006)
TOTAL SAMPLED STUDENTS: 53

27 students **without English basis** had grades between 6 and 6.9.

4 students **without English basis** and **17** students **with English basis** had grades between 7 and 7.9.

4 students **with English basis** had grades between 8 and 8.9.

1 student **with English basis** had grades between 9 and 9.9.

12 students **without English basis** had grades between 6 and 6.9.

19 students **without English basis** and **5** students **with English basis** had grades between 7 and 7.9.

15 students **with English basis** had grades between 8 and 8.9.

2 students **with English basis** had grades between 9 and 9.9.

QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

GRAPHIC 1
P1.
Did you already know English before beginning your universities studies?
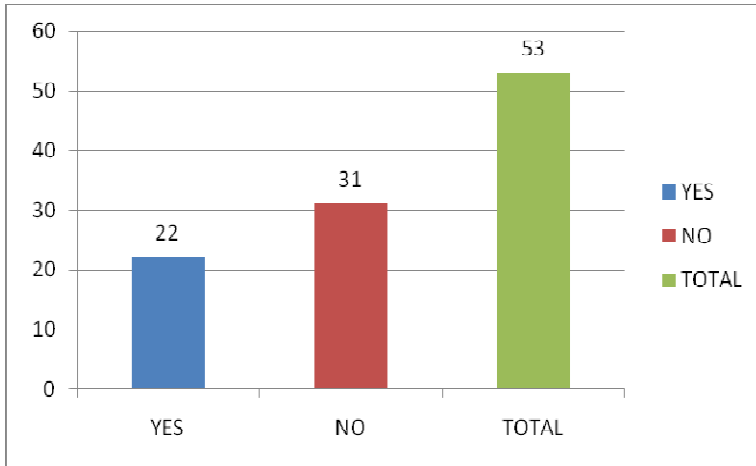
22 students said to have English basis before beginning universities studies.

31 students said not to have English basis before beginning universities studies.

GRAPHIC 2
P2.
Had you ever been in an English speaking country before beginning to study at the university?
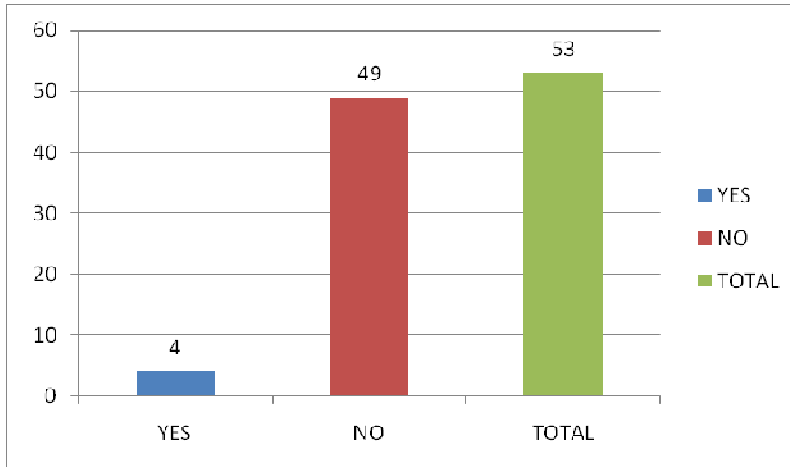
4 students said to have been in an English speaking country (USA, Sweden) before beginning to study at the university.

49 students said not to have been in an English speaking country before beginning to study at the university.

GRAPHIC 3
P3.
If you have lived in an English speaking country, did you learn English by going to school or did you learn it differently? How did you learn it?
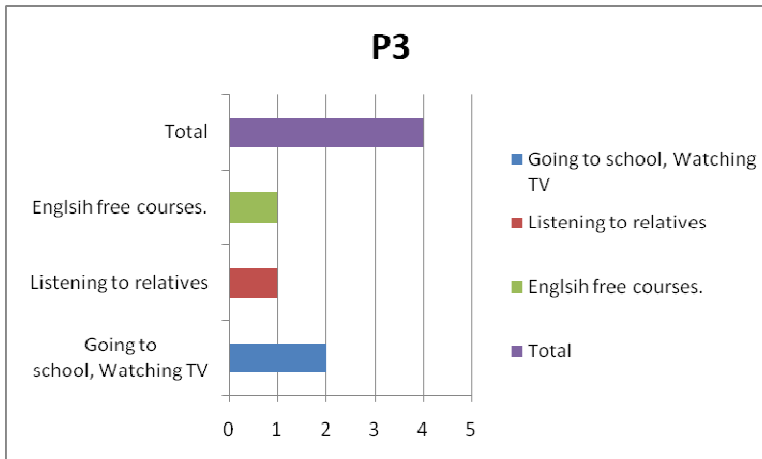
2 students said to have learned English in an English speaking country by going to school and watching TV.

1 student said to have learned English in an English speaking country by taking English free courses.

1 student said to have learned English in an English speaking country by listening to his relatives (cousins).

GRAPHIC 4

P4.
Did you study English in El Salvador before coming to the university? Where?
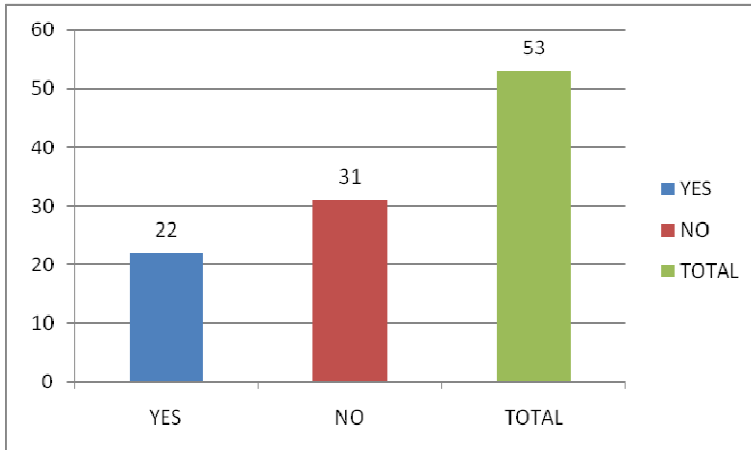
22 students said to have studied English in El Salvador before coming to the university (High schools, and academies).

31 students said not to have studied English in El Salvador before coming to the university.

GRAPHIC 5

P5.
How long did you spend learning English before studying it at the university?
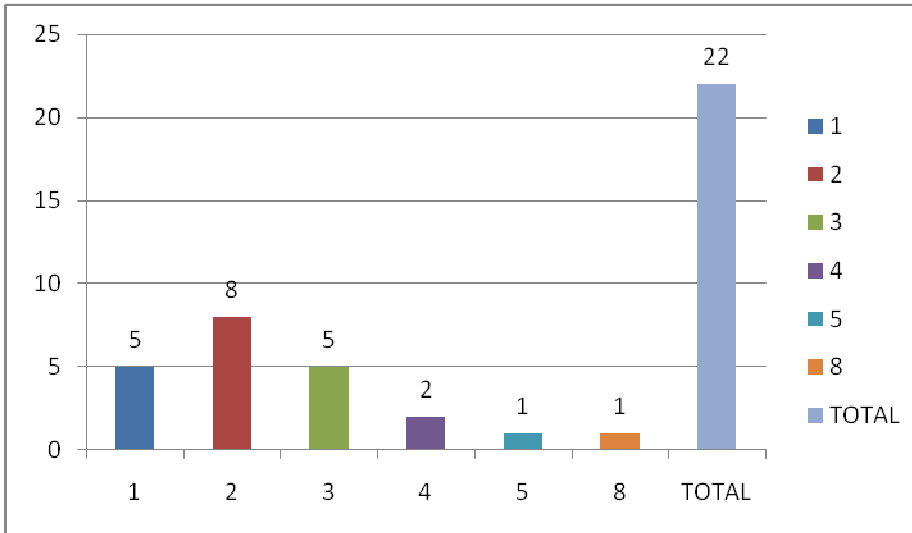
5 students said to have spent 1 year learning English before studying it at the university.

8 students said to have spent 2 years learning English before studying it at the university.

5 students said to have spent 3 years learning English before studying it at the university.

2 students said to have spent 4 years learning English before studying it at the university.

1 student said to have spent 4 years learning English before studying it at the university.

1 student said to have spent 8 years learning English before studying it at the university.

GRAPHIC 6

P6.
If you did not study English before coming to the university, why did you not do it?
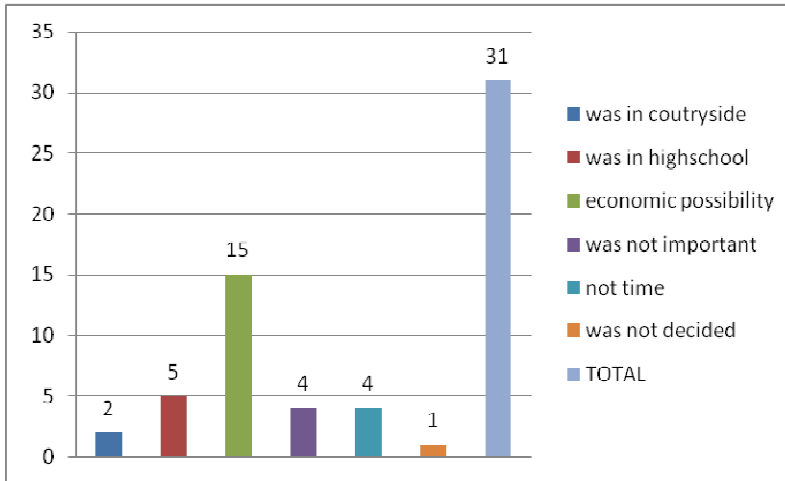
2 students said they did not study English before coming to the university because they were at the countryside.

5 students said they did not study English before coming to the university because they were at high school.

15 students said they did not study English before coming to the university because they had economic problems.

4 students said he did not study English before coming to the university because it was not important for him.
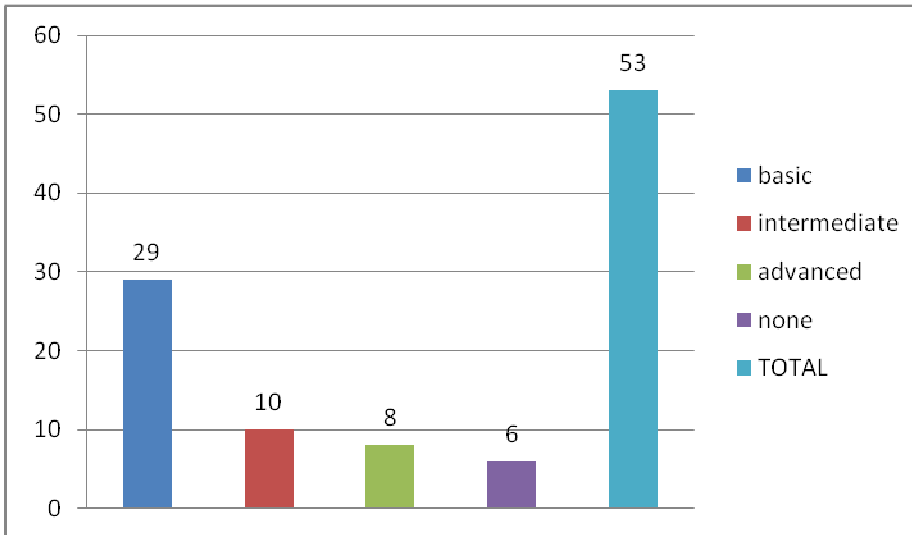
4 students said he did not study English before coming to the university because he did not have time.

1 student said they did not study English before coming to the university because he was not decided.

GRAPHIC 7
P9.

What level of English did you get when starting to study at the Foreign Language

Department?

29 students said to have had Basic English basis when starting to study at the Foreign

Language Department.

10 students said to have had Intermediate English basis when starting to study at the Foreign
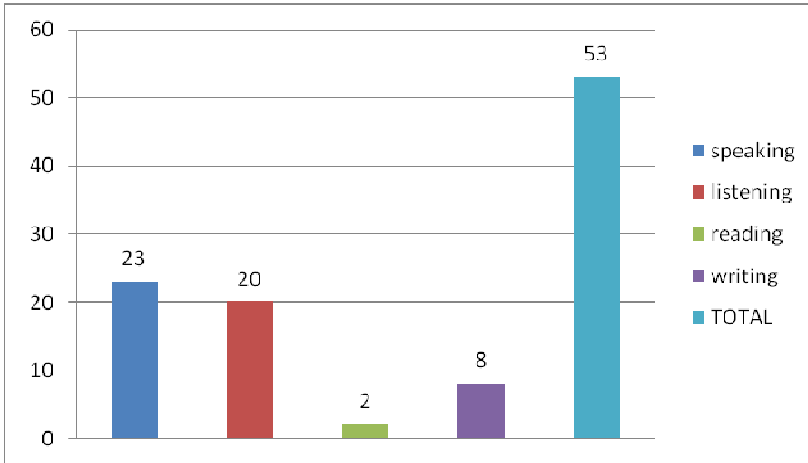
Language Department.

8 students said to have had Advanced English basis when starting to study at the Foreign

Language Department.

6 students said to have had No English basis when starting to study at the Foreign Language

Department.

GRAPHIC 8
P10.
Which do you think may be the most difficult skill to master when learning English?

23 students said "**English speaking**" **is the most difficult skill** to master when learning it.

20 students said "**English listening**" **is the most difficult skill** to master when learning it.

2 students said "**English Reading**" **is the most difficult skill** to master when learning it.

8 students said "**English Writing**" **is the most difficult skill** to master when learning it.

DATA ANALYSIS

In 2005, the total students who entered at English Language Career (UES) were of 66 students. From these students, were surveyed 53 due that they passed the subjects in discussion (Basic Intensive English, Intermediate English I & II, and Advanced English I).

By passing a questionnaire to these 53 students, it was revealed that 22 students had previous English language knowledge and 31 students did not have.

The English basis that had EB (English Basis) students before entering at English career were gathered from different sides:

- 4 students (7.55%) had been in an English speaking country (USA and Sweden)

- 18 students (33.96%) had studied English in El Salvador (See graphic P5, Analysis of questionnaire for more detail).

The reasons that NEB (Non-English Basis) (31) students declared as obstacles for not learning English before are as follows (see graphic P6, Analysis of questionnaire):

- They were in the countryside (6.45%).

- They were in high school (16.13%).

- For economic possibility (48.39).

- English was not important before (12.90%).

- They did not have time (12.90%); and

- They were not decided (3.23%).

The English level that had the (NEB and EB) students (53) was as follows:

- 06 (NEB) students, 11.32%, had Non-English Basis.

- 29 (25 NEB & 4 EB) students, 54.72%, had Basic English.   34

- 10 (2 NEB & 8 EB) students, 18.87%, had Intermediate English; and

- 8 (EB) students, 15.09%, had advanced English.

The basis that had English basis students was of great importance in the grade performance for obtaining better results than NEB students. The following data were based from final grade results from the sampled students (Intensive Basic English, Intermediate English I & II, and Advanced English I).

When comparing both performances, and the evidence is significant. For example, the main grade concentration at the starting subject (Intensive Basic English) for NEBS (non English-basis students) is of 7 - 7.9 (67.74%) while the English-basis students gets a bit higher grade, 8 - 8.9 (68.18%). Also the evidence of the students who got the highest grades is for EBS (9 - 9.9, 4.55%).

In the Intermediate English I, the main concentration result is a little bit the same as Basic Intensive English, 17 NEB students (54.84%) got grades between 7 – 7.9, and EB students (63.64%) got grades between 7 – 7.9. Also here, the students who got the highest grades is for EBS (9 – 9.9, 4.55%).

In the Intermediate English II, the main grade concentration is very different as before, they got lower grades. 27 NEB students (87.10%) got grades between 6 – 6.9, and EB students (77.27%) got grades between 7 – 7.9. Also here, the students who got the highest grades is for EBS (9 – 9.9, 4.55%).

And, finally, In the Advanced English I, the main concentration result is a little bit the same as when they started. 19 NEB students (61.29%) got grades between 7 – 7.9, and 15 EB students (68.18%) got grades between 7 – 7.9. As usual, the students who got the highest grades is for EBS (9 – 9.9, 9.09%).

By checking this data, it is revealed that EB students get better grades than NEB students and none of them get lower grades than 7, and also they are the ones who get the higher grades

than NEB students. This evidences that EB students maintain grades that permit them not to fail and to have a constant average.

It is convenient for the responsible authorities to take handle of this and to demand an English level convenient for taking Basic Intensive English in order for students to perform better and assimilate new data, according to Aussubel Theory – Constructivism, see pag. 1), that says: the construction process depends on a fundamental aspect: from previous knowledge or representation that one can have of the new information or of the activity or task to resolve.

RESOURCES

A. HUMAN RESOURCES

➢ Mti. Nicolas Ayala, Advisor of the research project.
➢ Lic. Norma Blandon de Castro, Head of the Main Academic Office of the School of Arts and Sciences.
➢ Students of Foreign Language Department involved in the research.

B. MATERIAL RESOURCES

➢ Photocopies
➢ Computer
➢ Books
➢ Magazines
➢ Stationery
➢ Others

C. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

➢ Research books	$ 50.50
➢ Photocopies	200.00
➢ Internet	150.00
➢ Bus fares / Taxis	670.00
➢ Nourishment	900.00
TOTAL	**1,970.50**

CONCLUSION

It has been proven that students with English background knowledge get better grades than students with non-English background knowledge; therefore, performance is better in every subject as well.

Most of the students said that speaking is the first most difficult ability to master when learning English either as a second or foreign language. And, they also said that listening is the other most difficult skill. So, reading and writing become the easier skills of this language according to what students said.

Of all students who already knew English before starting to study at the university, only four of them had spent sometimes in an English speaking country. They learned the language in a native environment, and that must have been both a great experience and a great advantage for them. The rest learned English in Salvadoran English learning academies, and it is not the same to study a language in a non-native environment. But, at the end, it has been proven that both kinds of students are really able to demonstrate how much they know about English. They can reflect that in their grades.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By checking the project results, the recommendations for the responsible authorities in this matter are the following:

- It is convenient for the responsible authorities to demand an English level (basic as minimum) in order for students to perform better and assimilate new data, according to Aussubel Theory – Constructivism, see pag. 1).

- To have a pre-course for high school students in order to get a Standard English level when entering at the English Major of the University of El Salvador.

- After finishing every subject, to have an extra-compensating course for low grade students in order for the following subject to have a similar English level of students. This will help the teachers to maintain the students the required level for every subject.

- To increase the passing grade of 7.0 as minimum for every English subject. This will help teachers to demand for students more English capacity in order to have a minimum required of English for every subject.

LIMITATION

Throughout this research process, there was found one limitation having to do with the grade datum of the subject Intermediate English I. The datum was needed to make an analysis. Therefore, it was imposible to add the analysis of those grades in the final report.

The grades were not found in the office of the Foreign Language Department, and they were not available for the group in the Main Academic Office of the School of Arts and Sciences.

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ANEX - QUESTIONNAIRE

University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Department of Foreign Languages

Objective: To collect information from students who entered the UES in 2005 in order to establish relationships between English background knowledge and success or failure in academic achievement.

Indications: Please answer the questions accurately.

1. Did you already know English before beginning your University studies?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

2. Have you ever been in an English speaking country?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**   If "**Yes**", Where?_____

3. If "**Yes**" in number **2**, did you go to school to school to study the language or did you learn it in an informal way? Explain How?

4. Did you study English here in the country before coming to the University?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

5. If "**Yes**" in number **4**, where did you learn English? _____

6. What English level did you have when starting to study here at the university?

 A. Basic   B. Intermediate   C. Advanced   D. None

7. Which category do you consider it has been your level of difficult in the intensive courses?

 A. Low   B. Medium   C. High