

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



**UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH:**

**“MAIN PROBLEMS FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS OF THE B.A. IN ENGLISH:  
EMPHASIS IN TEACHING HAVE WHEN APPLYING CERTAIN  
GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES IN WRITTEN ENGLISH SEMESTER  
(II-2016 – I-2017) FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT–UES”**

**PRESENTED BY:**

MALDONADO MANCIA, BALMORE BLADIMIR      MM09218

NAVAS SOLIS, ILIANA NOEMY      NS10004

**RESEARCH ADVISOR:**

MAT. RHINA FRANCO RAMOS

**TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE IN:**

LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLÉS OPCIÓN ENSEÑANZA

MAIN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, SAN SALVADOR, AUGUST 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## **AUTHORITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR**

Roger Armando Arias  
Rector

Manuel de Jesús Joya  
Academic Vice-Rector

Nelson Bernabé Granados  
Administrative Vice-Rector

Cristobal Hernán Ríos Benítez  
General Secretary

## **AUTHORITIES OF THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

José Vicente Cuchilla Melara  
Dean

Edgar Nicolás Ayala  
Vice-Dean

Hector Daniel Carballo Díaz  
Secretary

## **AUTHORITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

José Ricardo Gamero Ortiz  
Head of the Department

Mauricio Contreras  
Research Process Coordinator

Rhina Franco Ramos  
Research Advisor

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We want to thank God for providing us with wisdom, strength and persistence to culminate the major and this research work. We are extremely thankful to our parents who were always supporting us throughout the enduring of our studies. Special thanks to our dear advisor Mat. Rhina Franco for sharing her knowledge, experience and time with us and for her valuable help, suggestions and advice through the research work.

In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to professors, fourth and fifth year-students. Their participation in the interviews and surveys supported our work and helped us to get the results obtained.

Sincerely,

BALMORE BLADIMIR MALDONADO MANCIA

ILIANA NOEMY NAVAS SOLIS

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, it is important to be proficient in writing whether it is done in the mother tongue or in a foreign or a second language. Being proficient in writing can represent a great advantage to anyone who has mastered that ability. Nowadays writing is a skill demanded in almost any job or academic field. For instance, when applying for a job or a scholarship, the ones who have a better chance to get what they are applying for are those who master that ability in whatever language they write.

Writing proficiently in English as a Second or foreign language is very important. When learning a new language, there are going to be many obstacles the students will need to overcome; among those ones, there can be mentioned the mastering of writing and all what it implies including a good grammar. The FLD of the University of El Salvador prepares students to become English teachers who can work in different institutions in the country or abroad. It is known that an English teacher has to be able not only to communicate in English fluently, clearly and proficiently but also to know about the language, its grammar. Therefore, if students at the FLD study to become teachers, it is expected that those students after having studied the English major for four or five years, they should not make as many grammatical errors when writing as they make, especially if they are going to be teaching the language soon.

Students of the B.A in English: Emphasis in Teaching at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador are asked to write sentences, paragraphs or essays in the target language as part of the different courses they take. Being in the fourth year of their studies, and having studied two or three grammar courses during the major,

they should have a high level of proficiency when writing in English; however, that is not always the case. In fact, most students after all those years of studies make many grammar errors.

Because of what has been previously mentioned, the researchers considered necessary to find out if students in the fourth year, semester II-2016 of the B.A in English made grammatical errors when writing in English, and what were the problems they had concerning the use of certain grammatical structures in written form. This research aimed also at identifying possible factors affecting students' performance when writing in English. In addition, the researchers thought necessary to find out if students were aware of their command of the grammatical structures they should have at that level of studies when writing in English.

The research includes the following parts. First, there is the Introduction, in which a general view of the topic under study is explained. Then there is the Statement of the Problem. In this part the importance of writing is explained, and also the importance of applying the Standard English grammar structures accurately, and how misusing them can affect the students' language development, and their performance in their major or in their jobs.

In the third part, you will find the Objectives that guided the investigation. In the fourth chapter, the Justification is included. Here the importance of the research and the benefits to people directly affected are explained. Then, there is the Theoretical Framework, in which you will find some concepts to clarify the terms used in the research. Besides, in this part, the researchers include information related to the topic under study

which has been obtained from different sources and that refers to similar studies, but which have been carried out in settings different from ours. This has been done in order to support and to compare findings of this research to other works carried out in different settings.

The six part there is the Methodology. In here, the instruments used to gather the information, and the population and sample are described. In this section, we also describe the steps followed to develop this research. In the seventh chapter the Analysis of the data is included; there is the description of the findings and the corresponding graphs. The eighth part includes the Conclusions, which are based on all results obtained on this research. The next one is the Recommendations, which are expected to help overcome the problem under study. Finally, there is the Bibliography and the Annexes.

## INDEX

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	i
<b>II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</b> .....	1
<b>III. OBJECTIVES</b> .....	3
GENERAL OBJECTIVE: .....	3
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:.....	3
<b>IV. JUSTIFICATION</b> .....	4
<b>V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	6
1. LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE.....	11
2. CURRICULUM STRUCTURE .....	12
3. FOSSILIZATION .....	13
4. GRAMMAR ERRORS MADE BY FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS OF THE B.A IN ENGLISH AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT (UES).....	15
5. CONCLUSION.....	17
<b>VI. METHODOLOGY</b> .....	19
1. SELECTION OF THE TOPIC .....	20
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	20
3. GATHERING OF DATA .....	21
DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTRUMENTS.....	22
1. THE CHARTS TO ANALYZE THE WRITTEN MATERIAL.....	22
2. THE INTERVIEW TO TEACHERS .....	23
3. THE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	23

<b>VII. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA</b> .....	25
1. THE WRITTEN MATERIAL ANALYSIS.....	25
2. ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS MADE TO TEACHERS AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT.....	32
3. QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDENTS.....	37
<b>VIII. CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	44
<b>IX. RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	47
<b>X. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	49
<b>XI. ANNEXES</b> .....	51
1. THE WRITTEN MATERIAL ANALYSIS.....	51
2. TEACHER’S INTERVIEW .....	52
3. STUDENT’S QUESTIONNAIRE.....	54



## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

When learning a foreign or second language, learners have to master mainly four macro skills; that is, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening; but these are not the only skills they have to master. There are other skills such as grammar, the skill of our interest in this work, which need to be paid attention to. Students who study any of the B.A's offered by the Foreign Language Department have to master all the above mentioned skills as well. As part of their course of study, students at the FLD have to take three grammar courses; however, after having completed the three courses they tend to make different types of grammatical errors when writing compositions in English. When these learners of the B.A in English reach their fourth year of studies, the subjects taken demand from them to write paragraphs, essays and articles in an accurate way. Nevertheless, most of these students who are about to finish their majors do not show good command of certain grammatical structures. If nothing is done to correct this problem, this can affect them academically and professionally.

Writing in any language is not an easy task, not to mention doing it in a second or foreign language. There are many difficulties that can affect the learners' performance while learning to write in a second language or foreign language. In this particular case, the learning of English as a foreign language. Among these difficulties learners can face, there can be mentioned the use of different grammatical structures which are part of the target language, and which are not easy for Spanish speakers to master.

The focus in this research will be among others, those structures which are not easy for Spanish speakers to master; they are the use of different tenses (such as the simple present, present perfect, simple past); the subject-verb agreement, the use of prepositions;

independent and dependent clauses or complete phrases, and why not spelling, to mention some. Imagine, just as a manner of example, if students of the B.A in English do not master the grammatical structures of the target language in a standard way; what would happen if they applied for an abroad scholarship in which they are required to write an essay as part of the requisites to get it? Or if they apply for a job position they ever wanted, in which they are required to prepare an essay in English too, and their getting the job or the scholarship would depend on how good their command of grammatical structures is. How would they feel if they do not get the score required because of their grammar?

It is known that the mastering of the grammar of a foreign language does not occur in a short period of time, but after four years of study, students should have more control of this skill in the target language, which does not seem to be happening now. Therefore, it is necessary to find out which structures are the ones that are more difficult for them to master and what is preventing them from mastering those structures when writing in English. Based on the previous statements, the present research is going to focus on the main problems fourth year learners of the B.A in English: Emphasis in Teaching, offered by the FLD of the University of El Salvador, have when applying certain grammatical structures in written English discourse and the reasons why this occurs.

### **III. OBJECTIVES**

#### **GENERAL OBJECTIVE:**

To find out which are the grammatical structures that are more difficult for students to master when writing in English even though they have reached their fourth year of studies in the B.A. in English: Emphasis in Teaching Program, semester II-2016 at the Foreign Language Department–UES.

#### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:**

1. To find out possible factors that prevent students from using certain grammatical structures of the target language accurately in written discourse.
2. To propose suitable strategies students can apply in order to improve the use of grammatical structures that represent a problem for them.

#### **IV. JUSTIFICATION**

Being a foreign language learner requires for learners to master the grammar of the language they are studying; students at the Foreign Language Department are not an exception to this affirmation. However, it seems that even when they are about to graduate from their majors they still tend to make grammatical errors that should not be made at this level of their studies. It is well-known that having a good command of grammar skills is really useful to attain an effective communication in every aspect of life from education to leadership and from social life to employment opportunities.

Grammatical errors come in many forms, which can easily confuse and obscure the meaning of any message. As an example, there can be mentioned some common errors among students such as sentence structure, subject/verb agreement, the misuse of tenses, the use of one part of speech instead of another, lack or wrong use of punctuation, spelling, and other basic mechanics. Some of these aspects of the language might not be considered important, but even something as simple as a misplaced comma can completely change the meaning of a sentence.

On the other hand, if fourth-year students at the Foreign Language Department are not properly corrected, they can be affected in their academic and professional life. For example, at the time of presenting resumes when applying for a job, or handing in essays for one of their courses, if their papers are full of grammatical errors that could represent a bad grade in their essays; or on the other hand it would immediately cause the wrong impression to obtain the job they are applying for. Whatever the situation, grammatical errors will affect the reader's perception on the written paper.

Based on the previous statements this research will study the specific types of grammatical errors students make when writing any paper. This research work would help fourth-year students recognize the grammatical structures they need to work more on; and it would be beneficial for them if they are interested in becoming professionals in teaching. After knowing what the most common grammatical errors are made at their level of studies, learners might be able to correct them and follow the recommendation will be provided in this research.

On the other hand, it is considered that this work could be of some help for professors working at the FLD to have another insight of the main problems students have concerning grammar and that need to be corrected through intensive practice and students' awareness of their own problems. Being aware of what the problems are, professors can make the necessary adjustments to their teaching methods or to grammar programs in order to prevent students from keeping making the same grammar errors to the point of fossilization.

This in-depth investigation will be limited to know the most common grammatical errors students in their fourth year of study make when writing in English, which can also be the basis to conduct future studies that can take place at the Foreign Language Department in regards of grammatical errors.

## V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Writing in any language is a difficult ability to develop, and of course writing in a language which is not your language makes it even more difficult. For foreign language learners at the FLD, it seems to be one of the most difficult language skills to develop. Students have to deal with communicating their ideas clearly in the target language; and to do that, they have to master the grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary of the foreign language they are learning. All of these influence students writing development.

It seems difficult for some learners to use certain grammatical structures when speaking in English, not to mention when writing in the target language. Among those structures, there can be mentioned the use of certain tenses such as the simple past tense and the present perfect tense. To contextualize this, a student might write a sentence using a verb in the present where he should use the past tense as in the following example; the student wrote “I work for two hours on the project yesterday”, when they should have written “I worked for two hours on the project yesterday”. Another common error is the use of the wrong form of the verb when using the present perfect tense as in the following sentence: “I have play the piano for two years by now”; the learner has mistakenly used “play” instead of the past participle “played,” “I have played the piano for two years by now.”

Another structure that is considered difficult for students to master is the agreement in number between the subject and the verb. In some sentences taken from students’ pieces of writing, some mistakes like the following one were found: “Swimming and running is both good exercise.” In this case, the problem was that subject and the verb did not agree in

number; because the verb should have been plural, since the subject of the sentence is plural.: Therefore, the student should have written: “Swimming and running are both good exercises.” Another example can be the following sentence: “My father and my mother plays the role of heroes at home.” In this sentence, the student wrote “plays” instead of “play” because the subject was plural.

These are just to mention a couple of problems learners have when writing in English. In the particular case of the students who have reached their fourth year of studies at the FLD, even when they have taken three grammar courses and have reached this level of their studies, they still make grammar errors in writing similar to the ones described above. Hence, in order to prevent this problem from going on, it is important to know: (1) which grammar mistakes are the ones learners make more frequently, (2) why they make those errors even when they have gone through four years of instruction in English, and (3) what can be done to overcome this situation.

Writing in any language is of great importance because it helps the users of languages to communicate ideas, to exchange messages, and to share information related to different areas of knowledge. But for writing to be clear and effective, it is necessary to use the grammar of the language in an appropriate way so that the reader can easily understand what the writer is trying to convey. However, it seems really difficult for some learners to master that skill. It is argued that mastering writing in a foreign language is a complex process and that it requires “making a series of decisions about when and why to use one grammar structure rather than the other” (Celce-Murcia, 2002, p. 121). That is, the learners of any language not only have to know to use the grammar of the language but to know

about the grammar of the language. In other words, writing requires being grammatically proficient.

Being grammatically proficient requires learners to know and to follow conventional rules of the language so that at the time of writing, the learner will be able to make judgments on whether to use a form or another and when to use or not to use it. This characteristic distinguishes a native speaker from a nonnative one. Shanklin (1994), supported this idea; he said that native people's knowledge of grammar is implicit; they are competent in grammar, but they do not necessarily know the different rules behind the use of grammar. On the other hand, non-native speakers build an explicit awareness of how the different grammar rules are formed and used.

The variety in forms and usages confuses English as second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) learners. At the Foreign Language Department, students learn grammar rules every day, and after many years of study, they still show that when it comes to writing about daily routines, taking notes, writing essays, answering written questions, writing compositions, making experimental reports, and the like, most of them have difficulties in applying grammar structures correctly.

In one class, students were assigned to write a paragraph in order for students to make use of the different tenses being studied in class. In the paragraphs, students had problems using the simple past tense. A student wrote "I find the test I took last week, it was very important for me." In the previous statement the student failed using the simple past tense of the verb "find". Another example is the next one "When I was studying and I made mistakes the teacher always asks me to check the spelling and gave me feedback



when necessary'. In the previous statement, besides the lack of the appropriate punctuation, the student used the simple past inconsistently, which could indicate that even when they have the notion of the use of past tense, they still need to master it in order to avoid these mistakes happening. The correct sentence should have been: "When I was studying and I made mistakes, the teacher always asked me to check the spelling, and always gave me feedback when necessary;" Here the verb "ask" should be in the past tense.

In spite of the process learners go through, why is it that after years of study and exposure to the foreign language in different ways, there are many of them who still commit errors when writing? Shatz and Wilkinson (2010) stated: "Often learners cannot express complex thoughts because of their inability to construct complex sentences showing complicated relationships" (p. 165). Nonetheless, an essential part of the language learning process is for learners to be competent in writing. They have to learn to transmit their ideas clearly to the readers and to avoid having misunderstandings in the message they are trying to convey. Many probably feel frustrated and give up their learning when they realize they are not doing a "good job", but there are others who keep on trying and succeed. What makes the difference between the ones who are able to master the structures of the target language and the ones who cannot? Finding this out is important in order to help learners overcome this difficulty.

## THE DEFINITION OF ERRORS

To begin with, it is important to make a distinction between errors and mistakes. According to Ellis (1997) when a learner does not have consistency on his performance, he will sometimes use the proper form of a grammatical structure and sometimes the wrong

one; this is defined as a mistake. On the other hand, if he always uses the grammar structure incorrectly, then it is defined as an error. Also, Corder (1967) stated that "errors are a systematic deviation due to the learner's lack of knowledge of the second language rule system and mistakes are deviations made by learners when they are tired, excited or hurried". If a student writes an incorrect sentence, and he is not able to correct himself, it will be considered an error. However, if he can correct himself then it was just a mistake.

When learning a language, whether a foreign or a second language, the learner always makes mistakes because as experts have stated "learning a language is a matter of trial and error." The mistakes can be related to spelling, grammar, punctuation and so forth. In other words, these mistakes will occur systematically since they are part of the process of acquiring the language. For example: a Spanish speaker learning English could write "He play soccer on weekends" since in Spanish an "s" is not added to the verb when speaking about a subject in the third person singular. Then the Spanish speaker will use the verb without "s" or "es" because that is the way it is used in Spanish; the learner might think it is right when it is not. However, in the target language, in this case English, the sentence should read "He plays soccer on weekends". After the learner has been taught the rules for this grammatical structure, they should be aware of the structure wrongly used. If they do so, then it will be considered a mistake since the learner is not applying the right structure simply because of a "slip of the tongue", or it was because he was tired or careless.

## POSSIBLE FACTORS

According to experts, errors are part of the learning process when learning any language whether it is the mother tongue or a second or foreign language. Among the

problems experts consider as possible factors are: Language Interference (Lado 1957; Weinreich, 1953) talks about it saying that second language learners (L2) make errors due to the first language (L1) interference and (Ellis, 1995) confirmed it stating that L2 learners need to identify differences between L1 and L2 and form new habits in L2 by reinforcement. Another important factor is the curriculum structure. This since a teacher should refer to the curriculum to ensure that the lessons are covering all the topics students need to master the skill they are studying and if it is being taught at the right level. In addition, something affects directly students learning a second or foreign language is "Fossilization", which according to Selinder (1972) "it is the process in which incorrect language becomes a habit and cannot easily be corrected". These are some factors might influence on students at the FLD not to use the grammatical structures properly among others will be study on this research.

## 1. LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE

Language Interference is the influence that the mother tongue has on the language we produce when we use a foreign language. It is one of the factors that is thought to contribute to the making of errors when learning a second or foreign language. Diane Nicholls, a linguist, in an article related to language interference that she published on the Med Magazine in 2012. She explained "It is not possible to learn a foreign language without relying to some extent on your mother tongue, and the impulse to look for similarities and to draw conclusions based on them is as strong here as in any other learning context".

It seems to be part of a natural process for students to think first in their mother tongue what they want to write in the target language, and then they “translate” it into the target language. It is then when learners misuse a grammatical structure in the target language.

When someone is learning a new language, there is a tendency to apply the rules of the mother tongue to the new language because learners try to contrast the characteristics of their mother tongue with those of the target language. However, this may not be an effective method since the grammar rules may be different. A very common example of this and found on recent papers that were collected from students at the FLD is missing the pronoun in a sentence. “my brother broke with his girlfriend, now is not in a good mood”. In the previous sentence, the student assumes it is not necessary to write the pronoun “he” in the second sentence, this since when talking in Spanish the “who you are talking about” might be obviated. However, the correct form in English should be “my brother broke with his girlfriend, now he is not in a good mood”.

## 2. CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

When teaching grammar professors might need to create a variety of writing activities to motivate students to write and to apply the grammar rules they are learning. The environment needs to be adopted for the activity the teacher-student will do. Students learn in different ways, reason why it is important for professors to design different lesson plans. Some professors at the Foreign Language Department who were interviewed about this topic agreed that the mastering of grammar structures does not come along; they said students need to practice as much as they can and some of them said that students need to

write full compositions and not only isolated sentences when learning a new grammar structure.

The interviewed Professors also mentioned the importance of structuring the grammar courses in a different way in the B.A in English Major. They explained that when students take Grammar I, they have only finished two Intensive courses in English and that the Grammar courses require from students to have a better command of the target language, so they will not be able to take full advantage of the grammar courses if they are taught at that level of their major. Professors said that the grammar courses should be taught later when students have reached at least the Advanced Intensive English course and take grammar along with other subjects such as English Composition and Syntax courses; these subjects can help students practice the grammar rules they are learning at the same time they are writing paragraphs and essays.

### 3. FOSSILIZATION

Another factor that affect students' accuracy in their use of the foreign language development is interlanguage fossilization. Selinder (1972) said "Fossilization is the process in which incorrect language becomes a habit and cannot easily be corrected." The fossilization becomes a stage where students are stuck at certain level, making same grammar errors repeatedly when writing in the second or foreign language. Here, the second language learners are not looking to improve their knowledge; this since they are not even aware of the errors they are making.

It is considered that when a person is learning a foreign language, it is normal for them to compare the native language grammar structure to the target language one. In some cases, students do not distinguish the difference between L1 and L2 grammar structures. This is called fossilized error. Errors in general take time to correct and even more if they are fossilized errors because the students have adapted errors to their writing and they might see them as normal or correct. This makes us to ask ourselves if students at the Foreign Language Department after four years of studies have not been able to correct grammatical structures which at the beginning of their majors only represented a mistake, but now those mistakenly used structures have become fossilized and have turned into errors?

Luiz Otávio Barros (Author and Teacher Educator) published on his article "Fossilization in language learning" that there are some factors that need to be pointed out. First, when a student feels his skill-needs in the learning language have already been met. It has been seen on some of the students at the FLD who are in fourth year of the major, they have already taken most of the subjects to develop their skills in the language and they consider they do not need to continue learning or mastering their skills. However, mastering the use of grammatical rules and grammatical structures cannot be considered an easy task to develop, especially when it is a foreign or second language.

In the questionnaire passed to students in their 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year of studies of the B.A in English of the Foreign Language Department, we were surprised by one of the answers of a fifth-year student when he affirmed: "I am about to complete my university studies, I do not make errors in written English". It is important to mention that other students responded those similar answers. However, when the researchers checked their answers in

the questionnaires, the errors were identified in there. They showed problems in the use of the simple past and present perfect tenses, considered as syntactic fossilization errors. For example: they wrote "...have fell" instead of "...have fallen" or "I did studied yesterday" instead of just writing "I studied yesterday".

Luiz Otávio Barros (Author) mentions that fossilization correlates with the absence of corrective feedback. Students need to receive feedback from their tutors or professors whenever they make an error. In writing, students are more likely to fossilize errors since most of the cases professors need to check every student's composition to provide feedback. However, some students receive little or no corrective feedback from the tutors. On the other hand, students who received feedback might not put any effort to the correction of the structure, passing by the importance of correcting the mistake.

#### 4. GRAMMAR ERRORS MADE BY FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS OF THE B.A IN ENGLISH AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT (UES)

After having defined what an error is and how it differs from a mistake, it can be discussed what errors fourth-year students of the B.A in English at FLD make, if it is a common issue among them, and how this occurs during their learning process. During the investigation on students taking Advanced Grammar, their professors (to our request) gave us some copies of their students' homework assignments in which students were required to write about different topics. The Learners wrote sentences, paragraphs and essays. Our purpose was to identify if students who are studying Advanced Grammar were making grammatical errors. Students who are taking Advanced Grammar have already taken Grammar I, Grammar II and as well they have taken some other subjects such as

Composition I and II, Advanced English courses and other subjects in which they are asked to write. When students are in their fourth year and have gone through different courses focused on their writing it is expected from students to be able to express themselves proficiently.

Students who were part of the sample in our research demonstrated being able to communicate in the target language, English. However, the papers collected showed the majority of them still make grammatical errors when writing. Students failed making use of grammatical structures such as the Simple Past, the Subject Verb Agreement, Perfect Tenses, and prepositions among some others that will be presented on the analysis of the data. What causes students to make grammatical errors even though they have studied the foreign language for four years? Are the courses given at the FLD effective or taught the right way? Are students conscious of the importance of mastering the grammatical structures since they will be Teaching English? To find answers to these questions, we decided to collect some work done by students in their fourth year of studies.

The professors teaching grammar at the FLD helped us with their opinions about how grammar is taught at the FLD and how students were taking the studies. Some of their opinions were that Grammar at the FLD is writing isolated sentence applying the grammar rules are being taught. They said students are not being requested to write and use the grammar rules in context. Then, students might be able to write sentences very effective but when writing in context, writing about their lives, events that occurred or about a specific topic; students are not able to use the grammatical rules accurately. The Professors mentioned that it is not only a problem with the methodology, but that students are limiting their studies, practices of the language to the activities provided in their classrooms. They said students should write more extensively in their houses or outside their classrooms this



because if they do not practice what they learnt, they will not master it and will end up forgetting it. Apparently, students at the Foreign Language Department need more practice, dedication and as one professor mentioned: "students probably need more homework assignments".

## 5. CONCLUSION

After having read some of the theories written by different researchers mentioned in this work, and having completed our research work, the authors of this research have come to the conclusion that learners of English in different settings show the same or similar problems to those shown by fourth-year students of the B.A in English of the FLD at the UES.. Students who were part of the sample in this study had already taken three different grammar courses in which they had studied different grammar structures, but which seem to still represent a problem for them to use appropriately. In those courses they were explained how to use those structures and were given exercises to practice them in different types of contexts. However, they somehow failed using them the right way.

On the other hand, there seems to be a tendency from students to compare (consciously or unconsciously) their first language structures with the target language ones, which causes some type of interference when communicating their ideas in written form in the target language. According to Shanklin (1994), native speakers, studying grammar will not have this problem as non-native ones will. Ellis, (1995) confirmed that theory.

Selinder (1972) on his part, talked about learners committing errors repeatedly without even being aware they were doing it; he calls this phenomenon fossilization. As

part of this research at the FLD, students who were part of the sample were administered a test in which the researchers could find that Selinder's study matches what was found among participants in this research. When asked about their performance in the language, some of them answered they do not make errors; however, many errors were found in the papers which were collected among them.

As a conclusion, we can say that students at the FLD are not the only ones who have difficulties with the correct use of grammatical structures but any person who studies English as a foreign language in any place in the world can have the same problems our students have, and that it is so because most likely it is part of their learning process.

## **VI. METHODOLOGY**

The present research was carried out at the Foreign Language Department, and it included students of the fourth year of the B.A in English of the foreign Language Department, of the University of El Salvador. The method used to carry out this research was the “Qualitative Method” with some statistical components. The researchers implemented this method to obtain detailed information related to possible factors that prevent students from using the target language grammatical structures accurately in written discourse and to propose suitable strategies students can apply to use grammatical structures accurately.

In addition, in order to obtain the required information, the researchers interviewed professors who at the moment were working with students in their fourth year of studies, among them were included the ones teaching grammar. This was done with the purpose of finding out their opinions about students’ performance in the use of target language in written English and grammatical problems they identify students have at this level of their studies. Besides the interviews, the researchers asked professors for samples of different kinds of material written by students such as sentences, dialogues, summaries and other written material assigned to students through the course in order to find out the most common grammatical errors students still make at that level.

To carry out the research, the researchers went through the following steps:

## 1. SELECTION OF THE TOPIC

After discussing different topics that were appropriate to investigate, the researchers together with the advisor concluded that researching about the main problems students in their fourth year of studies at the University of El Salvador had when applying grammatical structures in written English was an interesting topic to write about. Although there were some other studies carried out at the Foreign Language Department somehow similar to this, the researchers agreed that a fresh insight could be given to the topic and also find out the reasons for this happening, which seems not to have been included in a previous research on the topic.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

After deciding on the topic, the following step was to gather material related to the it; to do it, the researchers collected materials from different kinds of sources such as digital and printed books. This has been carried out abroad and in different settings so that the researchers could have a wider panorama on how the topic under discussion is dealt with in those settings. Besides that, the researchers in order to know if there already existed other works carried out at the University of El Salvador related to the topic under research, they sought for those researches to find out under which terms they had been discussed.

After the material was collected, the following step was to classify and discriminate the material which would be used for the research. Of course, this was only a preliminary list. As the research went on, other information was included in the investigation besides the one chosen at the beginning.

### 3. GATHERING OF DATA

#### UNIVERSE

The universe for the research were students who were in the fourth year of their major of the B.A in English: Emphasis in Teaching. This group was chosen as the universe because of two reasons; first, they had already reached the fourth level of their studies; and second, because they had already taken two of the three levels of grammar offered in the major and at the moment of the research they were taking Advanced Grammar.

#### SAMPLE

The sample included for the study consisted of 45 students who were in the fourth year of their studies and also were taking Advanced Grammar during the Second Semester of the Academic Year 2016. To select the participants of the study, a simple random sampling method was used. There were 3 groups of students taking Advanced Grammar, 15 students from each group were chosen. The students were all Spanish speakers whose ages ranged between 18 and 25 years of age.

#### RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

To gather the information of the topic under study different tools were used. The researchers designed the following instruments: Five charts that would be used to analyze the written material produced by students in or out of the classroom, an interview to be given to professors who were working with fourth year students of the B.A in English, and a questionnaire to be given to students who fulfilled the characteristics mentioned above.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTRUMENTS

### 1. THE CHARTS TO ANALYZE THE WRITTEN MATERIAL

To collect the information related to the errors made by students in writing, five charts were designed. The charts were divided based on the grammatical structures the researchers considered to be the ones that represent more problems for learners to master.

In order to get the information to be presented in the charts, some Advanced Grammar professors were asked to provide different kinds of materials their students had written throughout the course. Those materials were: essays, articles, summaries or any other written form. This written material was to identify the common grammatical structures students have problems with when writing in English.

The first chart included samples of sentences students had problems with when using different verb tenses in the English Language such as simple present, simple past, present perfect and the future. The second chart was used to collect information related to problems with subject-verb agreement. The third one included the use of prepositions; the fourth one contained word order of sentences. Finally, in the fifth chart, there were included sentence fragments such as subordinate clauses, participle phrases, infinitive phrases, verb phrases and appositives written as if they were complete sentences.

After the information was classified in each chart, it was analyzed and represented in pie graphics for a better comprehension of the findings.

## 2. THE INTERVIEW TO TEACHERS

Apart from asking professors for written materials, they were also interviewed. The interview was made with the purpose of getting their point of view on the topic under study. The interview consisted on 12 open questions. Three of these open questions were related to professors' teaching background for example: their teaching experience at the Foreign Language Department, the subjects and/or major for which they teach. The rest of the questions were oriented to find out their opinions on their students' difficulty applying grammatical structures when writing different kinds of materials. It helped as well to find out what they think about how grammar is taught at the FLD and how, according to them, it should be taught at the different levels of the majors, and what they think it should be done in order to help students not to continue making grammatical errors when writing.

## 3. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

To collect more information, a questionnaire was passed to fourth and fifth-year students with the purpose of finding out what their opinion was concerning the students making grammatical errors, why students in fourth year of the major still making grammatical errors and if they were aware of it.

The questionnaire included eight questions; three of these questions were related to students' background such as major, gender and level of studies. The rest of the questions were oriented to finding out their opinions about the grammar courses they took; and how they help them with the command of the written language. Besides that, they were also, asked if they thought they made grammar errors when writing, the grammatical structures they found the most difficult when writing in English, and why they consider

them to be difficult. Finally, students were asked if professors corrected their in-class written activities, and how they corrected them and if they made the corresponding corrections pointed out by the professors.

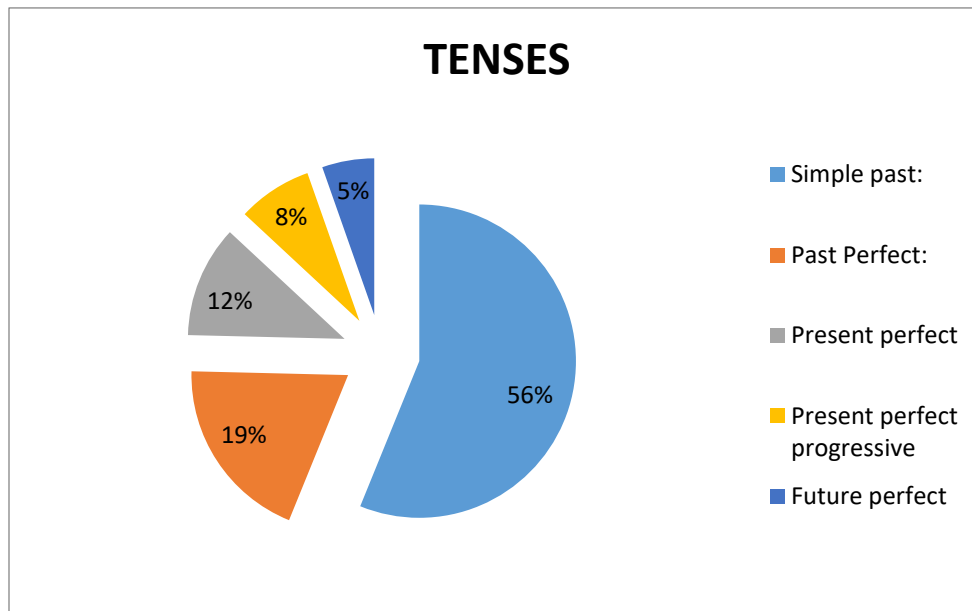


## **VII. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

To analyze the written material produced by the students, the information was first organized in charts divided into grammatical structures, depending on the kinds of errors identified by the researchers. In each chart, the researchers included the frequency of errors and its percentage. Then to have a better understanding of the information, the researchers used pie graphs to represent the most common grammatical errors and an interpretation of the pie graphs was done. On the other hand, the interviews to teachers and the questionnaires to students were analyzed in a descriptive way so that the reader can have a better view of what their opinions on the topic were.

### **1. THE WRITTEN MATERIAL ANALYSIS**

To analyze the kinds of errors students made in their compositions during their Advanced Grammar course, the group of researchers designed 5 charts. There were in total forty-five compositions analyzed. The result for the first chart is about the use of tenses, which are divided in the followings: simple past, past perfect, present perfect, present perfect progressive and future perfect.

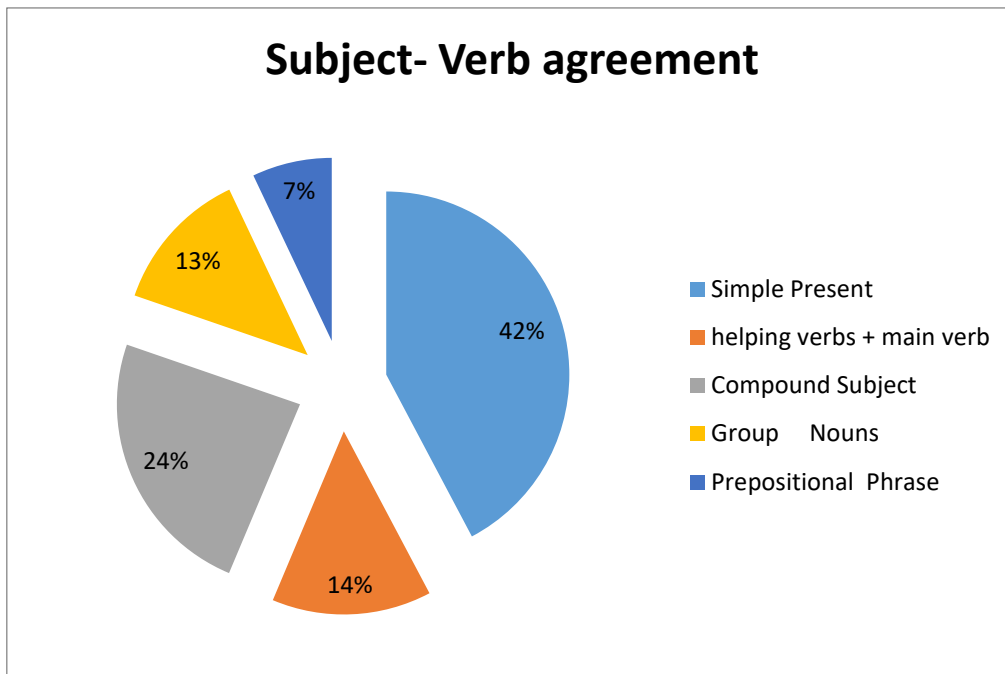


This graph represents the percentage of students committing errors related to tenses. The most common grammar error concerning tenses is the use of simple past. The 56% of students wrote the past form of a verb incorrectly. For example: “sing” instead of “sang”, “fall” instead of “fell”. Also, when they had to write it negative statements in the simple past tense, students used the tense incorrectly; for example, they wrote: “did not went” instead of “did not go” when referring to the past of the verb. When the auxiliary *did* is used the simple form of the verb has to be written.

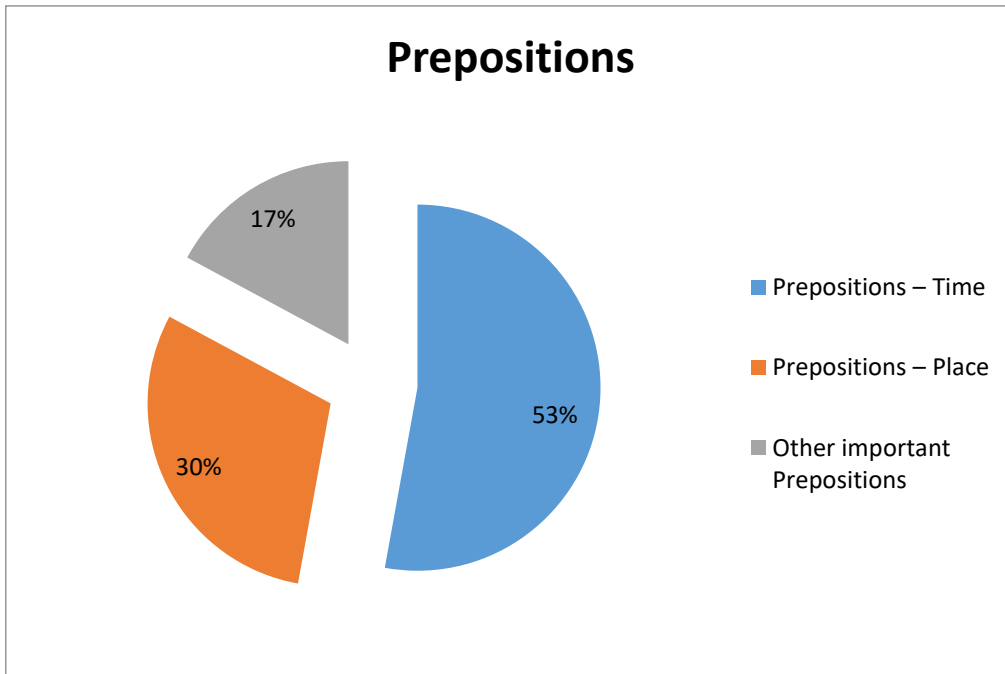
In some of the compositions there were found some errors in the use of the perfect tense such as: “...He has returned from London last week”. Here, since they were using *last week*, the appropriate structure to be used was “...He returned from London last week”. The error lied in using the present perfect tense instead of the simple past tense. The present perfect cannot be used with adverbs showing past time.

Also, 19% of students made grammar errors when using the past participle of a verb. When using present perfect tense, 12% of the students confused the present perfect and the past perfect tense. Students tended to write the simple past of a verb even though

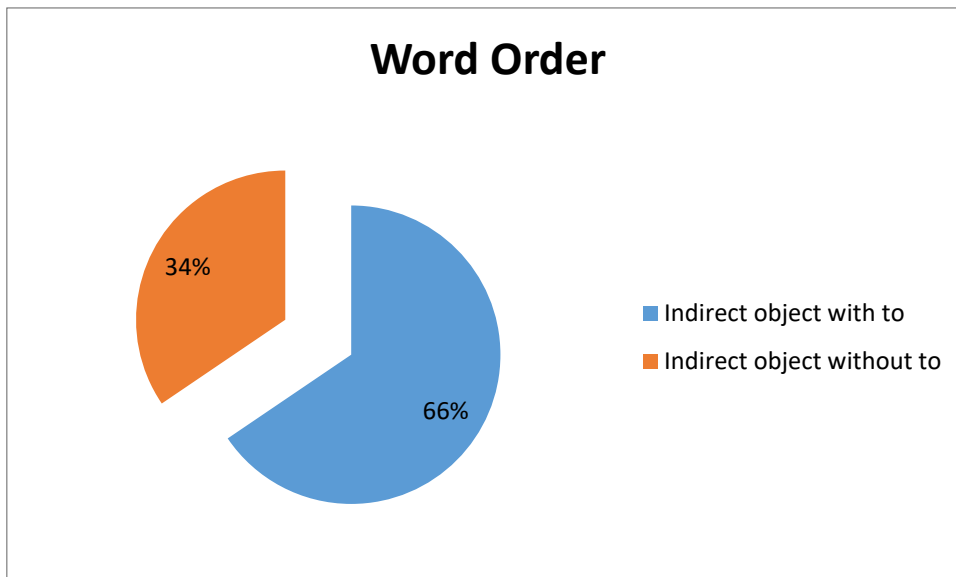
they were using the present perfect tense. Example: "...she has went already" the correct structure would be "...she has gone already". On the other hand, only 8% of students had some grammar errors when using present progressive tense. The future perfect is also a common grammar error among students in Advanced Grammar courses. Only the 5% of the total of students whose compositions were part of the study had problems at the time of using this structure. Even though the percentage in the use of this structure is not high, it should be also paid attention to. The researchers consider that this must have been because this structure was not needed to be used in the kind of exercises collected at the moment when the researchers were given the information.



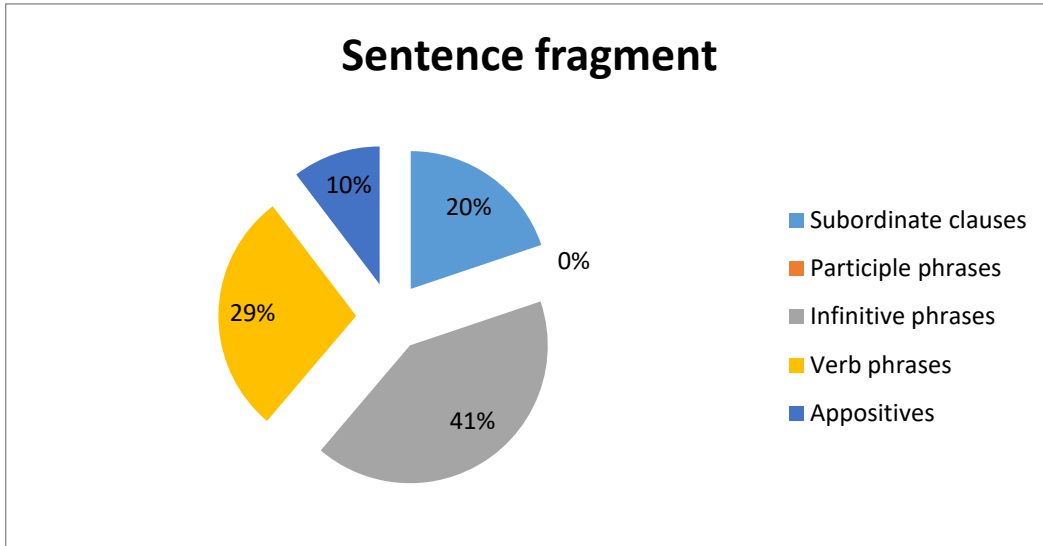
This graph shows that the most common error related to subject-verb agreement happens when using the simple present. The graph shows that 42% of the total of students had problems when it comes to subject-verb agreement. The most common error found in students' compositions is when it comes to the use of the simple present tense. Example: when students wrote "Everyone have been late" instead of "Everyone *has* been late". On the other hand, the 24% had some kind of problem when they used a subject joined by correlative conjunctions as in the following case: "Neither the kids nor the witch find the cave" instead of "Neither the kids nor the witch *finds* the cave". According to the rule, when two subjects are joined by the coordinating conjunctions "either .... or; neither .... nor; nor only ..... but also" the subject closer to the verb determines whether the verb is singular or plural in number. On the other hand, there was a slight difference between the use of auxiliary verbs + main verbs with a 14% while the 13% had problem with the use of collective nouns. Only the 7% had problem in matching subject-verb agreement when using prepositional phrases.



In this graph, 53% of students made errors when using prepositions of Time while the 30% had trouble when using prepositions of Place. Examples of the most common errors found in students writing were: “When Lucas arrived *in* my house” instead of “When Lucas arrived *at* my house” or “The kids arrived late *in* the night” instead of “The kids arrived late *at* night”. On the other hand, the use other types of prepositions such as prepositions for Agents and preposition for Directions only the 17% had problems with them. Regarding the preposition for agents, students committed error using “by” or “with.



The 66% of the students made errors when using the combination: S + V + TO preposition + INDIRECT OBJECT + DIRECT OBJECT; instead of: S + V + INDIRECT OBJECT + DIRECT OBJECT; or: S + V + DIRECT OBJECT + TO (preposition) + NOUN (as object of preposition). The 34% committed errors when using indirect objects without to.



This graph shows that the most common grammar error when using was the use of infinitive phrases. However, the 29% of the students had errors when using verb phrases. On the other hand, subordinate clauses represented 20% of the total. The use of appositives represented the 10% while there were not errors in the use of participle phrases.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS MADE TO TEACHERS AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT.

In order to find out opinions related to the problems students have when using certain grammatical structures in written form in English, some Professors who are part of the staff at the Foreign Language Department were interviewed. Among the questions they were asked, the following ones were included:

- 1) How many years have you been teaching at the Foreign Language Department?
- 2) What subjects are you teaching at this moment?
- 3) What major do you usually teach on?

The Professors who were interviewed explained that they have been working at the FLD for more than twenty-five years. At the moment of the interview, they were teaching fourth-year students of the major B.A in English: Emphasis in Teaching.

The Professors were interviewed in order to find out possible problems learners have using some grammatical structures when writing in English. They told us about their experiences teaching English at the FLD. They also expressed their opinions on how they view the grammar problems students have when applying grammatical structures in written form, what might cause them, and why this is happening. The questions and answer they gave are included below just as they were asked and answered.

- **Do students in their fourth-year of studies make grammatical errors when writing in English?**

To this question, all the professors agreed that students in their 4<sup>th</sup> year still make mistakes when writing in English. They make grammatical mistakes when writing any



composition. Professors answered that not only students commit grammatical mistakes but professionals do too.

- **Do students show difficulties applying grammatical structures when writing different kind of materials?**

Professors stated students show difficulties applying grammatical structures all the time. They said that they correct them in different ways. They as well highlight the need of students to practice more what they have learnt.

- **According to your experience, what are the most common grammar mistakes students make in their writing?**

All the Professors interviewed confirmed that one of the most common grammar mistakes the second language learners at the Foreign Language Department make is the called Subject-Verb Agreement. They have problems with the nouns on the sentences. Students often omit them. In addition, Professors explain that when writing questions, students fail applying the right structure. They confirmed that students have problems when writing complex sentences. They also added that the use of conditionals is one of the problems students have when writing. When using hypothetical thinking students sometimes do not use the past participle when needed. Finally, Professors stated that students at that level fail making use of the right prepositions in different contexts; as a manner of example, they mentioned the following ones: “it depends of”, instead of “it depends on”, which they think is just a poor translation.

- **What do you think are the causes for students to commit grammatical errors after having taken two or three grammar courses?**

Professors stated that one of the causes for students to commit grammatical errors is that they do not practice the rules they are taught in those courses. They think that during the grammar courses students were given the rules, were requested to apply them in different kinds of exercises, but after they finished the grammar courses, they forget how to use them correctly. Another factor they mentioned is that students are not involved in the language.

Students need more exposure to the English language. They comment that students probably need to be exposed to professional native speakers, so that they can see how they use grammar in a real setting. Mostly, they think that students do not practice or study enough and that affects them. One professor mentioned that students cannot pretend to be players without practicing, that if there is an input, there has to be an output; like the cause and effect. Knowing the rules according to the professors does not mean students will use them. Therefore, students need to practice more during courses and probably have more homework according to them.

- **Why do you think students do not put into practice the grammatical rules they have been taught in the grammar courses?**

To the question above, all professors answered that students do not practice enough during classes; they think students need to write extensively, they need to write paragraphs, essays, not only in grammar but also in any other subject.

They mentioned some factors that affect the good practice of grammar. They consider students have not internalized the rules well, that learners forget how to use them, or that

they do not know them well. Students should write a lot. One of the interviewed teachers mentioned that since the classes are large some professors probably do not want to make some more effort and that is why students forget to apply the grammatical rules. They become lazy too. They do not use those rules.

- **When students make grammar mistakes, when do you correct them?**

They said that because of fluency, they will not correct them while there is a communicative activity, but they do it after the activity is over. One of the professors stated that sometimes when he sees a mistake, he would not correct it because one mistake leads to more. He also added that he thinks he would not do it because students are not in the habit of reflecting on the mistakes they make or on seeking for the solutions. On the other hand, some professors mentioned that there are students who benefit from the feedback provided and will not make the grammatical mistake again.

- **How do you correct your students' written grammar mistakes?**

Most of the professors stated that they correct the grammar mistakes students make by drawing a circle and an arrow, crossing out the error, writing a comment to it or simply marking it. Besides, they said that if students have to return the paper; then students might notice the correction. However, if they are not requested to return the paper with the correction, students might not even see the corrections.

- **Do you think that the three grammar courses are needed in the curriculum? If not, what do you suggest?**

For this specific question, Professors expressed different opinions on what they think on how grammar is being taught at the Foreign Language Department. One of them said that he did not believe in numbers but in quality. He said that students can receive more than three grammar courses and it still will not be enough; as a student when he received two courses, it was enough. He considered that if learners knew Spanish grammar then it would be easier for students to understand the other languages grammar.

Another professor stated that the methodologies used should be improved. He explained that probably the grammar being taught is just the basis for the TOEFL, and that the way the curriculum is structured should be changed since he considered that Grammar I is too early in the curriculum for students to benefit from it, and that Advanced Grammar is not advanced grammar but a summary of Grammar I and II.

Finally, professors think that students need to write more in these courses since students are being asked to learn just grammar rules, and to solve exercises that have been already prepared. They suggested that students should write essays, compositions, and not only explicit grammar rules. Nevertheless, it is a good idea to isolate the rules from the context.

- **How do you think grammar should be taught at the different levels of the majors? Specially, how do you think grammar courses should be taught?**

One of the opinions was that grammar should not be only solving exercises in isolated sentences but grammar in context as well. Writing essays and then probably checking the grammar in the context. Another opinion provided was that professors at the Foreign

Language Department should also have frequent trainings, workshops or developments by specialists in grammar. This professor stated the FLD should bring grammar specialists.

They said there is a fundamental principle; that is, to have the Spanish grammar bases. This is because at the FLD there are students who cannot distinguish prepositions, conjunctions or something else. They also added that if students do not understand this in Spanish, it will be even more difficult in English or any other language. They said that Spanish Grammar should be taught at the beginning of the major or before.

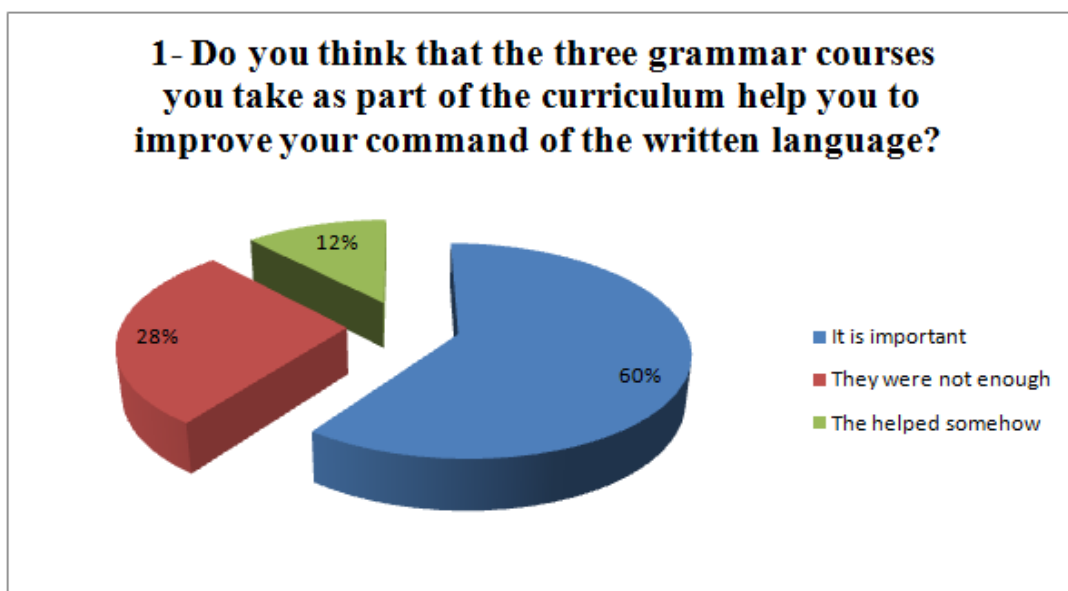
- **Do students in their fourth year make grammatical errors when writing in English?**

To this question, all the professors agreed that students at in their 4<sup>th</sup> year still make errors when writing in English. They make grammatical errors when writing any composition. Professors answered that not only students commit grammatical errors but professionals too.

### 3. QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDENTS

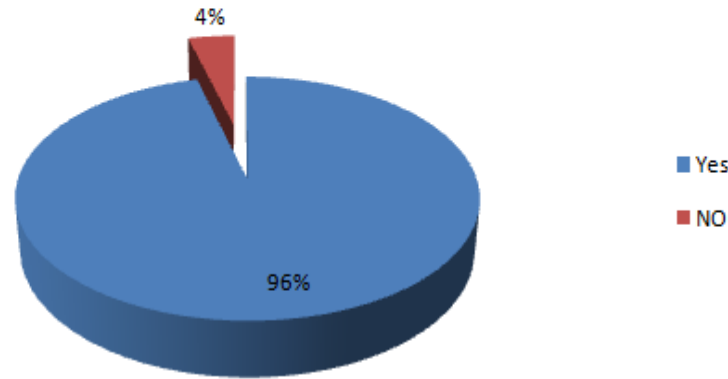
The questionnaire to fourth-fifth year students was carried out with the purpose of collecting opinions and experiences they had about the topic under study. The total of students was twenty-five. The questionnaire was structured with three background questions which included students gender, Major and Level of Studies. Also, there were five open questions in which students had to give their opinions related to their taking of

grammar courses and the way how they feel about their command of the language. The results obtained are presented in pie charts. The graphs show the common grammar errors student make, the reason why they think they still commit those errors, if their teachers corrected them and how they were corrected.



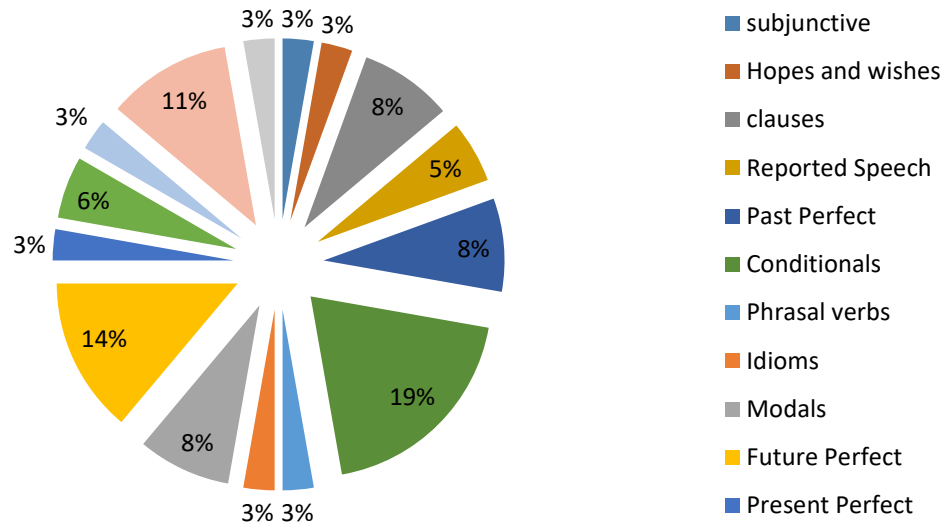
The 60% of the students who answered the questionnaire thought that the three grammar courses taken during the major helped them improve their command of the written language. Some of them expressed that they learned different grammatical structures and they got more options to express their ideas clearly. All of them agreed that the courses helped them improve their writing skill. On the other hand, 28% of students answered that the three grammar courses were not enough to learn the grammatical rules that could help them to have a better command of the language. Some other students considered that the methodology applied to teach grammar did not fulfill students' needs. The remaining 12% of the learners considered the courses were just helpful somehow.

## 2- Do you think that you make grammatical errors when writing in English?



The 96% of students affirmed that they make grammatical errors. They said it is not their native language; they do not know all the grammatical rules, or that they had forgotten the structures learnt. Also, some students said they did not have enough practice, reason why they make grammatical errors. However, 4% stated that they do not make grammatical errors in writing; however, they expressed that they make errors when speaking because they do not have the opportunity to think or analyze their ideas at the time of communicating orally in the target language.

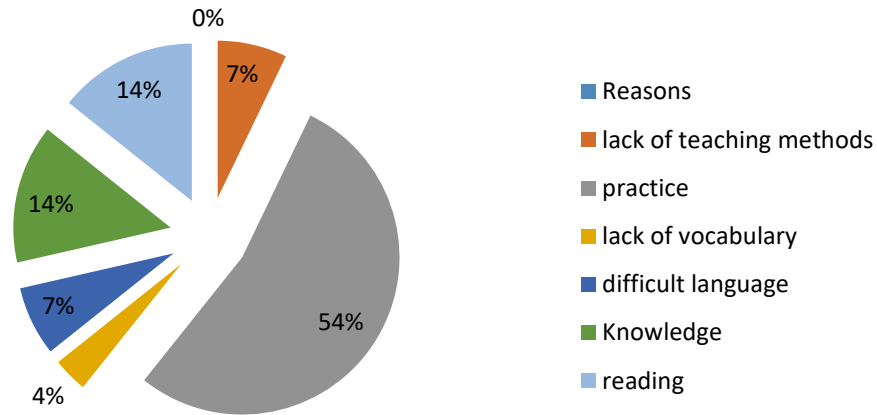
### 3. What are the grammatical structures you find the most difficult when writing?



When the 100% students who were part of the sample were asked which grammatical structure they considered to be the most difficult to use when writing, they answered that the most difficult one for them was the use of the four types of conditionals (Zero, first, Second and Third). The students agreed this structure is the most complex to use. Also, 14% of the students mentioned that the future perfect tense is the second grammatical structure they find more difficult to use. On the other hand, 11% of the students consider active and passive voice the third more difficult grammatical structure. 8% of students said that clauses, past perfect and modals have the same level of difficulty for them. The 6% of the students said prepositions are somehow difficult to apply when writing. The 5% of students agreed that reported speech confused students when reporting someone else's ideas. The 3% of students think that the use of subjunctive, hopes and wishes, phrasal verbs, idioms, present perfect, conjunctions and past perfect continuous are the least difficult for them to use.



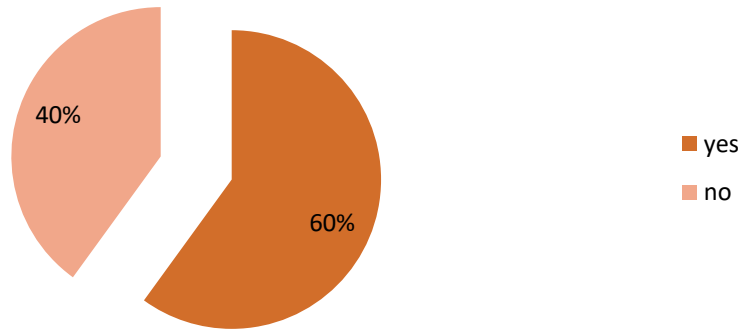
#### 4. Why do you think that students at this level still commit grammatical errors?



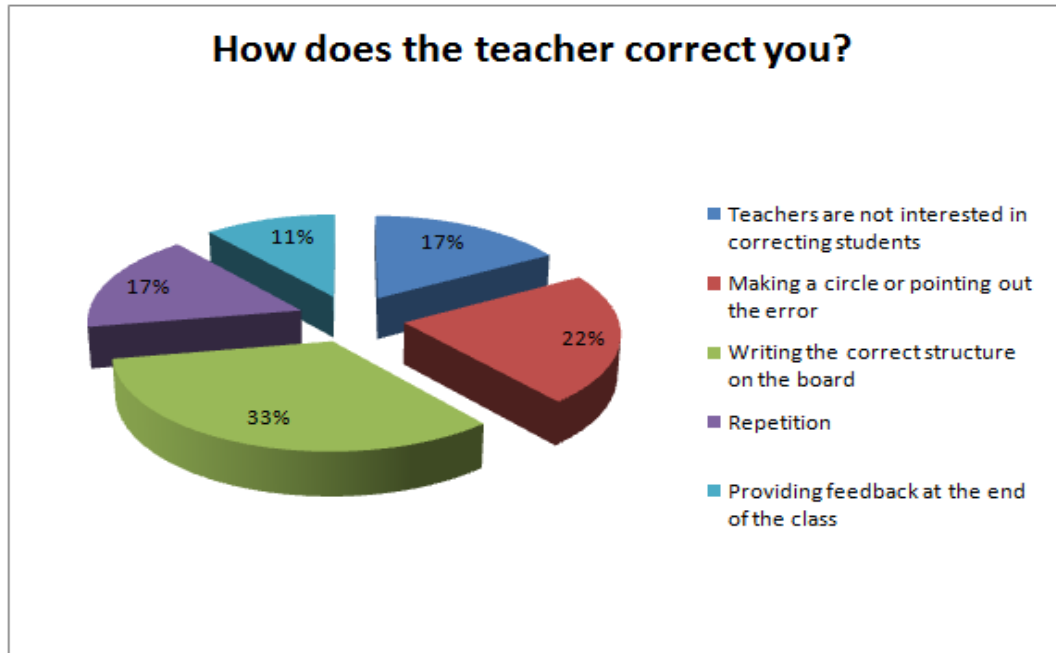
The 54% of the students who were asked to answer these questions stated that they commit grammatical errors because they do not practice writing in English. Secondly, the 14% of the students confirmed that the lack of grammar knowledge influence them to make grammar errors when writing in English. Another 14% of the population studied said that reading affects the process of applying grammatical structures accurately. This is because students do not read, and then students do not get familiar with the target language structures.

The 7% of the students explained that the lack of teaching methods and the difficultness of the language are factors that do not let them write in the correct way. Finally, just the 4% off the students think that the lack of vocabulary affect the process of writing without making grammatical errors.

### 5. Does the teacher correct you during the class?



When students were asked if when writing their professors corrected them, the answers were divided between yes and no. The 60% of students confirmed professors provided them with feedback related to any grammar errors they make when writing in English. On the other hand, the 40% of the students answered “no” to the question; meaning that they do not get any feedback from their instructors.



To the question how they were corrected, 17% of the population under study commented they do not get any feedback since their professors are not interested in correcting students. However, 22% of the students said they got feedback having the errors circled or pointed out. On the other hand, 33% of the population stated the feedback is provided by writing the correct structure on the board. The 17% stated the feedback was also provided through repetition; professors asked them to repeat what they said in their writing, so they could be aware of the error. Lastly, 11% said they were corrected at the end of the class. The professor called them to check what the errors were and provided them with feedback needed.

## VIII. CONCLUSIONS

During the learning process of any language whether it is the mother tongue or a second or foreign language there are some problems experts who consider there are different factors responsible for the misusing of certain grammatical structures when writing a paper. Among those factors, there can be mentioned Language Interference, the curriculum, and Fossilization.

Based on the previous statement, the researchers decided to find out which of those factors could be interfering in the performance of the fourth-year students' of the major, who were taking Advanced Grammar at the time when the research took place. In order to do this, a test was administered to them with the purpose of finding out the main problems they had when applying grammatical structures in written English. Another purpose for this was to get a fresh insight of what might be preventing them from mastering those structures. The results obtained showed that many students at this level of their studies still had difficulties making use of certain grammar structures appropriately when writing in the target language.

In addition, professors at the FLD were interviewed to get their opinion in relation to the students' performance when using certain grammatical structures in written form. The following conclusions are based on the results obtained after having analyzed the written material students wrote.

- The most frequent error fourth-year students make is with the use of the past tense. In the material that was used as sample for the investigation, most of the students failed writing in the past correctly.

- The students demonstrated having difficulties using the subject-verb agreement in the simple present. In the interview, the professors confirmed that most students do not make the correct use of the subject-verb agreement at some point when writing.
- When it comes to write simple sentences, it was found that students use the grammar structures correctly. However, when they have to write complex sentences in a paragraph or essay, they make errors repeatedly.
- Regarding the use of prepositions, the compositions that were analyzed showed that students have more problems using prepositions of time than any other type.
- Fourth-year students agreed that even though they have taken the three grammar courses during the major of the B.A in English, they still make errors when writing.
- The results obtained show students received feedback from their professors whenever they made any error. It was interesting to find that both professors and students agreed that students fail making use of correct grammar structures due to lack of practice.
- As a group, we conclude students taking grammar courses should be given more practice applying the grammar rules in real context. Not writing just simple sentences but also paragraphs, essays, articles using the new grammar rules learnt in classes.

- According to students and professor, students have some practice in their classes and that professors give them feedback when making errors. Therefore, it can be concluded that students practice mostly during the classes, but they do not practice much out of the classroom. This causes students to forget the grammar rules that were studied during the class and misuse them when required.
- Students seem not to be taking advantage of the grammar courses in the way they should, since everything they learn could be applied in the courses they take along their course of study.

## **IX. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the researchers provide the following recommendations:

- Students need to study the grammatical structures even when being outside the classroom so that they can master the use of them.
- Learners should actively participate writing any type of composition given in class applying what they are learning.
- Students need to read more than what is being taught in classes; as a professor interviewed said, “The more you read, the more you learn.”
- Students should take seriously the role of active learners since the time for the class is not enough to command the grammatical rules they have learnt during the class. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage students to practice out of the classroom.
- Professors need to integrate different types of writing activities such as short stories, essays, articles in order to make students write as much as they can, applying the different grammar rules under study.
- Professors should encourage students to write compositions at home in order that they can make use of the grammar structures appropriately.

- The Head of the Foreign Language Department of the UES along with the professors teaching the different grammar courses, might consider revising the curriculum since some professors mentioned that grammar is not being taught at the right level; therefore, students are not taking advantage of the grammar courses, as they should.
- Professors can take into account in their syllabus for grammar courses the different grammar structures students have more problems with; and they could use this research and similar ones as a reference, so students can have a reinforcement on the areas that are affecting their writing proficiency.
- Professors should correct grammar mistakes and errors during the class, and not at the end of it.
- Professors should consider holding conversation workshop activities per week dedicated to discussing, clarifying and correcting the grammar mistakes and errors that were detected on the students' written activities during the previous class sessions.
- Professors can reinforce the structures students have more trouble using particularly the past tense, prepositions of time and the subject-verb agreement, since they represent the weakest points on the evaluated sample.



## X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BASTIAN, T.R. (1980)"An investigation into the effects of second language learning on achievement in English." (pp. 6176-6177). DA, 40,12-A, Pt 1. Boise, ID: University of 7 Idaho. (Graduating high school seniors with two or more years of foreign language study showed significant superiority in performance on achievement tests in English when compared with non-foreign language students).
- BROOKES, ARTHUR, AND PETER GRUNDY (1990). Writing for study purposes: A teacher's guide to developing individual writing skills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GRIFFIN, C. WILLIAMS (Editor) (1982). Teaching Writing in all Disciplines. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.
- GAUDIANI, CLAIRE, (1981) Teaching Writing in the foreign language Curriculum. Washington, D.C. Center for Applied Linguistics,
- LAMBERG, W. J. (1975). "Major problems in Doing Academic Writing". College Composition and Communication. New York.
- NIGEL D TURTON, (1985) "A B C of common grammatical errors" Paperback – June 28, 1985

## WEB REFERENCES

- Jacqueline Norris-Holt, motivation
  - <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Norris-Motivation.html>
  
- Manian, M. (2010). —The Influence of First Language Grammar (L1) on the English Language (L2) Writing.
  - <http://www.languageinindia.com/april2010/mahendrandissertation.pdf>
  
- See Han (2003) – The influence of fossilization in a language learner
  - <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/fossilization>

## XI. ANNEXES

### 1. THE WRITTEN MATERIAL ANALYSIS

Maria Fernanda Blanco Martinez.

#### The Eagle of the Ninth

This is a story about a man named Marcus which wanted to get back the lost eagle of his father legion. The story is perform by the time where was the war between the romans and british. Marcus was a roman commander with military history because of his father, but after suffer a hurt on his leg, Marcus could not continue on the war and went to his uncles house in which he bought a slave named Esca. Suddenly, Esca and Marcus became friends and they decide to go search together the lost eagle of the ninth legion, in which Marcus father was the second in command but unfortunately, as the eagle, the complete legion had disappeared. While looking for the eagle, Marcus realized that the soldiers of the ninth legion became british habitants and the chiefs of the legion were killed. Marcus got back to the remains the lost eagle and the true that the legion did not disappear, in fact, <sup>some</sup> the soldiers were alive but living peacefully which their families not been remain soldiers anymore. Because of the return of the lost eagle, Marcus was given for a lot of money which he used to become a farmer and he live a normal life waiting to get married with his lovely Cottia.

## 2. TEACHER'S INTERVIEW



*University of El Salvador  
School of Arts and Sciences  
Foreign Language Department*

### **Teacher's Interview**



**Objective:** To find out the main problems students face when applying certain grammatical structures in written English.

**Instructions:** Please answer the following questions based in your own experience.

#### PART I:

1. How many years have you been teaching at the Foreign Language Department?
2. What subjects are you teaching at this moment?
3. What major do you usually teach on?

#### PART II:

4. Do students in their fourth year make grammatical errors when writing in English?
5. Do students show difficulties applying grammatical structures when writing different kind of materials?
6. According to your experience, what are the most common grammar mistakes students make in their writing?
7. What do you think are the causes for students to commit grammatical errors after having taken two or three grammar courses?
8. Why do you think students do not put into practice the grammatical rules they have been taught in their grammar course?
9. When students make grammar mistakes, when do you correct them?

10. How do you correct your students' written grammar mistakes?
11. Do you think that the three grammar courses are needed in the curriculum? If not, what do you suggest?
12. How do you think grammar should be taught at the different levels of the majors? And specially, how do you think grammar courses should be taught?

### 3. STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE



*University of El Salvador*  
*School of Arts and Sciences*  
*Foreign Language Department*  
**Student's Questionnaire**



**Objective:** To find out the main problems students face when applying certain grammatical structures in written English.

#### PART I:

**Instruction:** Mark with X the appropriate choice

Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Major	Modern Languages <input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching Option <input type="checkbox"/>
Level of Studies	4th year <input type="checkbox"/>	5th year <input type="checkbox"/>

#### PART I:

**Instruction:** Please answer the following questions based on your own experience.

1. Do you think that the three grammar courses you take as part of the curriculum help you to improve your command of the written language? Explain.

---

---

---

---

2. Do you think that you make grammatical errors when writing in English? Explain.

---

---

---

---

3. What are the grammatical structures you find the most difficult when writing?

---

---

---

---

4. Why do you think that students at this level still commit grammatical errors?

---

---

---

---

5. If you make grammar mistakes during classes, does the teacher correct you? If yes, how does the teacher correct you?

---

---

---

---