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

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH:

FACTORS THAT AFFECTED THE PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS FROM THE B. A. IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR, FROM 2014 TO 2018.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This research is a bibliographical work which aims at finding out the factors that affected the pronunciation of English as a Foreign Language students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department. As well, this work describes how the internal and external factors affected directly in the communicative competences of the students. In fact, it presents the most common sound pronunciation issues faced by students from 2014 to 2018.. In addition, it suggests resources and strategies that could help students to improve their oral proficiency by themselves. These resources and strategies might be profitable for the students to continue developing their oral language skill along their major. Finally, the methodology used in this research is the Qualitative Research Approach, the type of study is Descriptive Bibliographic Research, and the Research Design is Non-experimental, Cross Sectional. This research was carried out using prior information and data collected from 2014 to 2018 in research works done by former undergraduate students of majors related with linguistics and the development of oral proficiency.

Key words: bibliographic research, internal factors, external factors,

I.   SUMMARY

This research project was aimed at finding out the factors that affected the pronunciation of English as a foreign language students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, School of Arts and Sciences, University of El Salvador, from 2014 to 2018.

The objectives for this study are:

General Objective:

- To find out the main factors that affected the pronunciation of English of students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018.

Specific Objectives:

- To describe the internal and external factors that affected the pronunciation of English of Students from the B. A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018.

- To present the most common sound pronunciation issues faced by students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018.

- To present a set of innovative and interactive sources to students to practice English pronunciation.

The methodology used in this research is the Qualitative Research Approach, the type of study is Descriptive Bibliographic Research, and the Research Design is Non-experimental, Cross Sectional. This research was carried out using prior information and data collected from 2014 to 2018 in research works done by former undergraduate students of majors related with linguistics and the

development of oral proficiency. So, this work was done just based on bibliographical data available from the time-period stated above.

At the end of this project the researchers found the most common factors that affected the English pronunciation of the students and issues faced in pronouncing vowels and consonants when they spoke English in the years from 2014 to 2018. Based on the findings, the research team made some proposals that might help students to improve their speaking skills.

Definitions

Bibliographic research: It may be defined as any research requiring information to be gathered from published materials. These materials may include more traditional resources such as books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and reports, but may also consist of electronic media such as audio and video recordings, and films, and online resources like websites, blogs, and bibliographic databases (The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods).

Communicative competence refers to a learner's ability to use language to communicate successfully. Canale and Swain (1980) defined it as composing competence in four areas: words and rules, appropriacy, cohesion and coherence.

Exposure: The contact that the learners have with the language that they are trying to learn, either generally or with specific language points. Referring to the language in general, it often refers to contact outside the classroom (British Council. BBC Teaching English. Teaching knowledge database).

Extrinsic motivation: APA Dictionary of Psychology defines extrinsic motivation as an external incentive to engage in a specific activity, especially motivation arising from the expectation of punishment or reward (e.g., completing a disliked chore in exchange for payment).

Fluency refers to how well a learner communicates meaning rather than how many mistakes they make in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Fluency is often compared with accuracy, which is concerned with the type, amount and seriousness of mistakes made (British Council. BBC Teaching English. Teaching knowledge database).

Inherent: Existing in someone or something as a natural and inseparable quality, characteristic, or right; innate; basic; inborn (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 4th Edition. Copyright © 2010 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved).

Intrinsic motivation: APA Dictionary of Psychology defines intrinsic motivation as an incentive to engage in a specific activity that derives from pleasure in the activity itself (e.g., a genuine interest in a subject studied) rather than because of any external benefits that might be obtained (e.g., money, course credits).

Native-like: (Adjective.) Resembling that of a native; specifically designating proficiency in a foreign language comparable to that of a native speaker (Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary).

Speaking skill: Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning, it involves producing, receiving, and processing information (Burns & Joyce, 1997).

Stress is the emphasis given to certain syllables in words. In English, stress is produced with a longer, louder, and higher pitched sound than unstressed sounds (British Council. BBC Teaching English. Teaching knowledge database)

Suprasegmental: Pertaining to or noting features of speech, as stress, pitch, and length, that accompany individual consonants and vowels and may extend over more than one such segmental element; pertaining to junctural and prosodic features (Collins English Dictionary. Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers).

The target language is the language learners are studying, and also the individual items of language that they want to learn, or the teacher wants them to learn (British Council. BBC Teaching English. Teaching knowledge database).

II.   INTRODUCTION

It is well known that pronunciation is an integral part of foreign language learning since it directly affects learners' communicative competence as well as

performance. In this respect, the current research aimed at finding out the most common factors that affected the pronunciation of English as a foreign language students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, School of Arts and Sciences, University of El Salvador, from 2014 to 2018. Besides, the research team included the research questions, which are:

Main Research Questions

What were the main factors that affected the pronunciation of English as a foreign language students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, School of Arts and Sciences, University of El Salvador, from 2014 to 2018?

Subsidiary Questions

- What were the internal and external factors that affected the pronunciation of English of Students of the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018?

- What are the most common sound pronunciation issues faced by students of the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018?

- What are some possible innovative and interactive sources for students to practice English pronunciation?

To answer the questions above, this study includes the following sections: the importance, the method, the findings, the conclusions, references, and appendices.

In the importance section, the researchers manifest the reasons why this study is relevant, apart from pointing out the importance of having an acceptable pronunciation of English, and the proposals that the team members made to students. Then, in the second section, the method used in this research, which was the Qualitative Research Approach, was described. The type of study, which was Descriptive Bibliographic Research, and the Research Design, which was Non-experimental, Cross Sectional was used. Because this was a qualitative research, the researchers selected undergraduate projects from biblioteca.ues.edu.sv published between 2014 and 2018 to collect data; then, the researchers carried out a content analysis of the documents that were studied. Beside this, the process of collecting data was carried out through the use of bibliography cards and a checklist as the research instruments.

The third section contains the findings; the team found out the main factors that affected the English pronunciation of students in the time-period stated for this project, and how the internal and external factors affected directly in the communicative competences of the students. The members of the research team also presents the most common sound pronunciation issues faced by students in the period of time stated in the research topic.

In the fourth section, the researchers make known the conclusions about this study. After analizyng prior works made in this field, the team could describe which were the internal and external factors that affected the pronunciation of English of students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018. At the end, the bibliographic references,

undergraduate works and websites are presented, as well as the reasearch instruments that were used to gather the information.

III.   IMPORTANCE

Before stating the importance of doing this research work, the team considered quite important to present a brief part on why learning English pronunciation for foreign language students is extremely relevant not only because the students must understand spoken English, but also because of the role of pronunciation in supporting students' speaking performance both in a real-life situation and at the moment of teaching or interacting with others. Also, the research team knows that acquiring proper pronunciation is one of the most difficult features of learning a foreign language, mostly when it is not learned at an early age.

For the members of the team, it was quite important to do this research on the before-mentioned topic and state the importance of this research that aimed at finding out the main factors that affected the pronunciation of English of students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018.

In conclusion, this research was essential to provide a sum up of the main factors that affected the pronunciation of the English of students referred to in this study.

Furthermore, it suggested resources that could help students to improve their oral proficiency by themselves since it is widely known that some students really start learning English when they begin studying their major, and their oral skill is not as developed as it should be; consequently, the resources the research

team recommended might be very useful for the students to continue developing

their oral language along the major.

IV.   THE METHOD

This section includes the methodology used in this research, which was the Qualitative Research Approach; the type of study, which was Descriptive Bibliographical Research, and the Research Design, which was Non-experimental, Cross sectional.

Research Approach

The members of the team, after considering all the important parts of this research work such as the topic, the general and specific objectives and the nature of this study, decided to use the qualitative research approach since no graphs or numerical terms were used. Besides, no quantitative analysis was done; instead, the bibliographical data researched was presented. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is a *means* for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants' setting, data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. Qualitative research typically serves one or more of the purposes: description, interpretation, verification and evaluation (Peshkin,1993).

Type of Study

The type of study through which this research was carried out was descriptive bibliographical research since the researchers did not make any type of

experimental process or handle any variables. The members of the team only gathered and analyzed bibliographical information.

According to Nassaji H. (2015), a descriptive design is defined as a research method that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon studied. This methodology focuses more on the "what" of the research subject than on the "why" of the research subject. The descriptive research method primarily focuses on describing the nature of a demographic segment, without focusing on "why" a particular phenomenon occurs.

Encyclopaedia Britannica's editors state that the primary purpose of descriptive bibliography is to organize detailed information selected from a mass of materials in a systematic way so that others can have access to useful information. In the earliest bibliographies, the organizing principle was simply that of compiling all the works of a given writer into a list created either by the works' author (auto bibliography) or by an author's biographer.

Research Design

This was a non-experimental and cross sectional research design since the researchers wanted to make an overall description of the main factors that affected the pronunciation of English as a foreign language students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, School of Arts and Sciences, University of El Salvador, from 2014 to 2018.

According to Jalil (2013), a non-experimental design does not compare one group with another but describes the relationship between an intervention (treatment) and its effects on the population of interest. Furthermore, it may provide rich understanding of the contexts, processes, events, or situations and explain why any results occurred, which may be essential for building result chains.

As stated by LaurenThomas (2020) a cross-sectional study involves looking at data from a population at one specific point in time. The participants in this type of study are selected based on particular variables of interest. Cross-sectional studies are often used in developmental psychology, but this method is also used in many other areas, including social science and education.

Cross-sectional studies are observational in nature and are known as descriptive research, not causal or relational, meaning that you can't use them to determine the cause of something, such as a disease. Researchers record the information that is present in a population, but they do not manipulate variables.

A cross-sectional study is a type of research design in which you collect data from many different individuals at a single point in time. In cross-sectional research, you observe variables without influencing them.

Population and Sample

This research was carried out using prior information and data collected from 2014 to 2018 in research works done by former undergraduate students of majors related with linguistics and the development of oral proficiency. So, there was no human population or sample studied directly; instead, a set of bibliographic

sources was selected. In fact, this work was done just based on bibliographical data available from the time-period stated above.

Research Techniques

Guillermina Baena (1985) defines bibliographic research as a technique that consists of the selection and collection of information through reading, critique of documents and bibliographic materials, libraries, newspaper archives and educational centers, documentation, and information. The Documentary research implies complex cognitive processes: analysis, synthesis, and deduction. It has to be done orderly and with precise objectives. Its purpose is to construct new knowledge which will be used to do research.

The process of collecting data information and documents was complex and required a series of steps for the correct handling of the information. In this respect, the researchers conducted this bibliographical research through four stages:

In the first stage, the researchers conducted a bibliographic research in order to collect the representative documents for this study. In the second stage, the team selected undergraduate projects from biblioteca.ues.edu.sv published between 2014 and 2018. In the third stage, the researchers took a sample of those undergraduate projects, of the years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. Finally, the researchers carried out a content analysis of the documents found and taken as the sample of bibliographical sources. This led the team to find out the factors that affected the students' English pronunciation, and tables were made to show the findings under the different objectives proposed in this study.

Research Instruments

The bibliographic information that was used for the development of this research was obtained from documentary analysis. It refers to the analysis of prior research works located in the biblioteca.ues.edu.sv. Based on the previously stated information, the following instruments were used:

- Checklist

A checklist is a selected list of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in which an observer records a check mark to denote a presence or absence of whatever is being observed. It calls for a simple yes / no judgment. The main purpose of the checklist is to call attention to various aspects of an object or situation, to see that nothing of importance is overlooked. It ensures the completeness of details of the data. Responses to the checklist items are largely a matter of fact, not of judgment. It is an important tool in gathering facts for educational surveys *("Educational Research".n.d. pp259)*.

- Bibliography card

According to an article (Foster. M. 2012), a bibliography card, also known as a bib card, is an index card where you give credit to the author who has written an article that you have used as a source for information. On a bibliography card, you must list: the author of the book, the title of the book you have gotten your information from, the publisher, the year, and finally the source medium.

V.   FINDINGS

After analyzing the sample of the undergraduate works carried at the Foreign Language Department, the researchers spotted some of the most outstanding findings. These findings helped the team to understand and to have an overall perspective about the external and internal factors that affected the English pronunciation of the students, as well as the most common issues faced in pronouncing vowels and consonants when they spoke English from 2014 to 2018.

The researchers present a description of relevant points after summarizing and reflecting about what the team found in each consulted undergraduate work.

In the undergraduate work *"The most influential factors of English oral tasks on the learners' fluency level in that language: case of Advanced Intensive English I curses of the Foreign Language Department,* 2014", the advisor of this work, professor of the Foreign Language Department, University of El Salvador, said that according to his experience as a foreign language professor, there are many factors that influence the development of students´ oral performance; these are the affective factors, students' background knowledge, students ´motivation and attitude toward the language, lack of practice, task difficulty, and skill integration.

In the study *"Assessing the English pronunciation of students finishing their third year at the Foreign Language Department, 2014",* the different features that English pronunciation involves such as comprehensibility, fluency, intonation, intelligibility, stress, vowels and consonant sounds and others were studied. Then, after analyzing what students answered in this work, the team members could see that regarding intonation, the interviewees showed acceptable intonation, but when pronouncing, it was noticeable that many of them did not know that there are three

types of stress in English, primary, secondary, and almost no stress. Therefore, depending on the stress of a word, the meaning of it will change, because there are nouns and verbs that are spelled the same way, but what makes the difference in meaning is the way we pronounce them, as when they function as verbs or as nouns; for example, the word *present* as a verb is pronounced /pɹɪˈzɛnt/, and as a noun, it is pronounced /ˈpɹɛzənt/.

It was found:

- The most common pronunciation mistakes made in vowel sounds were: / i /, /ɪ /, /æ/, /ɑ/, /u/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/, /c/, /ɜ/, and /aɪ/

- Regarding the most common mistakes in consonant sounds made by the interviewed students, the following data were gathered: /t/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, / j/, /p/, and /b/

  The pronunciation features above were described as follows:

  The respondents pronounced /i/ incorrectly because they tended to pronounce it the same as the sound /ɪ/.

  In the sounds /u/ and /ʊ/, it was noticed that the students had difficulty with the /u/ and /ʊ/ sounds; it did not matter if the sound was in an initial, medial, or final position. It might have been this way because the students tended to pay more attention to the spelling and not to the phonetic symbol.

  It was found that the participants had serious issues in pronouncing /æ/ /ɑ/ /aɪ/, and /ɝ / sounds, for example in the words cat, heart, eyesight, nurse, respectively.

For the sounds /ɔ/ and /ʌ/, it was noticed that students tended to pronounce the letter "o" /oʊ/ instead of pronouncing the right vowel sounds (It is a nonexistent sound in Spanish); for example, the words "author" and "governor" are pronounced with /ɔ/ and /ʌ/ respectively.

The respondents showed some trouble in pronouncing plosive sounds like /p/ and /b/, /θ/ and /ð/. For example: ripe apples /raɪp/ /ˈæpəlz/, lobster /ˈlɒbstər/, think /θɪŋk/, weather /wɛðər/.

According to a work carried in 2015 by undergraduate students of the B.A. in English Language Teaching, *"A diagnostic study of target language speaking problems",* the researchers of this work stated the opinions of five professors from the Department of Foreign languages, who pointed out that some of the problems regarding oral communication that students faced throughout the major are the lack of vocabulary, deficient knowledge of colloquial expressions, and the lack of motivation to attend extracurricular courses that could help them to improve their speaking skills. According to the data gathered, the way students speak is based on books, among other oral communication weaknesses that they showed through this study. Also, it was found that most students faced mispronunciation problems even after they had taken advanced levels of English courses. In addition, there was a high percentage of students that did not practice oral English after classes, and the percentage increases if it is considered that many students do not take an active role in the classroom regarding the classes.

In the research project *"The incidence of Spanish on English oral production, 2015",* it is stated that the use of the native language in class activities is a result of the necessity of the students to speak fluently or to be understood. It was found

that students' English oral participation is interfered by the native language as in the following situations observed in different sample groups. Students mainly showed difficulties in pronouncing nonexistent sounds in Spanish which they needed to produce in English, e.g., "Students tended to pronounce some English sounds as they would do it in Spanish, like words beginning with [s], so they added the phoneme [ε] before it (/εspeɪn/ /εstudnt/). Another example is the misuse of the 'stress' of English words." These common issues that student faced in pronunciation are exacerbated when students prefer to communicate in their mother tongue instead of making an extra effort to use English to express their ideas or to participate in class.

In another work *"The Influence of the Spoken Interaction with English Native Speakers in the English Pronunciation of the Personnel Working in San Salvador-Based Call Centers"* conducted in 2017, it is demonstrated that lack of interaction with native English-speaking people or a frequent exposure to authentic material might affect their pronunciation. The authors stated that people that speak English as a foreign language in El Salvador do not have the opportunity to interact with native speakers of the language. As a result, some of them may have poor pronunciation." The same work states that constant interaction with English native speakers helps to improve pronunciation because it was found that participants who had more than six months and less than one year of experience showed a lower score in the aspects of connecting speech, the use of the schwa sound, and rhythm and intonation than the ones who had more than one year or less than two years of experience, which means that those participants improved their pronunciation for being in contact with English native speakers.

The work *"Factors affecting students' speaking performance in the English language" 2018,* demonstrated that factors such as the confidence and motivation affected students' oral skills. This was observed when students did not show enthusiasm to participate in oral class activities. Also, the little practice and the lack of vocabulary caused that the students showed hesitation when they spoke. Moreover, the use of authentic materials increased the motivation of students to participate in classes; the tools such as videos and Power Point Presentations helped learners to get motivation and interest in the topics developed in class.

Knowing that speaking is the main vehicle people use to interact with others around them and to bring their thoughts outside, the research team analyzed the study *"A description of the most frequent speaking activities implemented by teachers in Advanced English I courses, 2016",* and it was found that this work stated that if students are constantly exposed to all types of comprehensible input like conversation clubs, debates, role plays, class discussion based on reading material, brainstorming, and oral tasks, among others; all of these could improve the students' oral skills. Also, this study revealed that the speaking activity that the teachers applied the most was "reading and discussing the material", and other strategies like debates, role plays, discussions, speaking tasks, brainstorming were least applied in the class. It is understandable that the activities applied depend on the teachers' methodology. Teachers developed the most appropriate activities with each class group based on their experience.

In addition, it was found that there were some other aspects that did not let students to practice their oral skills when attending classes.

- Teachers barely monitored the class to check out if the students spoke English or Spanish while the teaching-learning process was going on.

- Teachers hardly ever encouraged students to speak English during and after class.

- According to the observations stated in the consulted work, certain teachers used Spanish in classes, and it gave students the chance to use it, too.

- When the professor did not monitor students, they usually used Spanish to talk about things not only about the lessons but also about their daily life events.

- The speaking activities that the teacher developed in classes were based only on academic topics rather than on everyday topics.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the sample of undergraduate works selected for this project, the team decided to fill the checklist as the instrument to gather the data. Then, the members of the team considered they achieved the objectives proposed for that study. The general objective was to find out the main factors that affected the pronunciation of English of students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018 and the subsidiary questions were answered as well.

Regarding the **internal factors** that affected the pronunciation of students of the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, in the time-period stated above, the research team concluded that:

- The learners' age, most of the time, influences the English pronunciation of students who are learning English as a foreign language. In fact, it is easier to learn accurate pronunciation for children, and it is more difficult for adults.

- When considering using the schwa sound in the English pronunciation of students when pronouncing multi-syllable words, this sound was almost always absent or omitted.

- Regarding the factors why students usually showed difficulties in identifying the schwa sound when pronouncing this phoneme in words, the research team confirmed that the students presented problems due to the following factors: mother tongue interference, knowledge about pronunciation of English phonemes, and fluency to express quick ideas.

- The majority of students were often self-motivated to improve their English pronunciation, and they felt confident to learn and improve their pronunciation with practice. However, there were some factors that affected this oral acquisition through the process of learning English as a foreign language such as:

  - Students' lack of vocabulary usually hinders self-motivation in their participation in the classroom.

  - When students did not understand the pronunciation of a word or phrase, and the teachers did not explain again, in some cases, the students lost their ideas.

  - If students had difficulties in pronouncing some specific English sounds, like the schwa, they pronounced this sound the way they thought it was correct, but it was wrong.

  - Students expressed that the teachers' methodology helps or cause difficulties when students are learning and practicing English pronunciation.

  - Students' shyness was a factor that affected the learning of English pronunciation through speaking in the classroom.

  - Using Spanish affected students' English fluency and pronunciation negatively.

Regarding the **external factors** that affected the pronunciation of English of Students of the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Foreign Language Department, from 2014 to 2018, the researchers also concluded that the main factors were the ones described below:

The native language influence:

- Students mainly showed difficulties in pronouncing nonexistent sounds in Spanish that they needed to produce in English.

- The most common pronunciation mistakes made in vowel sounds were: / i /, / ɪ /, / æ /, /ɑ/, / u /, /ʊ/, / ʌ /, /c/, / ɜ /, and /aɪ/

- Regarding the most common mistakes in consonants sounds, the researchers found the following: /t/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, / j/, /p/, and /b/

- Students usually tended to use their mother tongue to communicate when attending classes, no matter the level in which they were.

Regarding to the appropriate input to develop oral skills:

- The speaking activity that the teachers applied the most was "Reading and discussing the material".

- The speaking activities provided in the classroom were based only on academic topics rather than on everyday topics.

- Teachers barely monitored the class to see if the students spoke English or Spanish.

- Teachers sometimes encouraged students to speak English during and after class.

- Certain teachers used Spanish in classes, and it gave students the chance to use it, too.

- When professors did not monitor students, they usually used Spanish to talk about things related to the class and about daily personal issues.

- It is not only the teachers´ responsibility to make their students achieve the specific objectives required in the syllabus; students also have to make their own effort if they really want to succeed in learning a foreign language, mainly if they want to become fluent in the use of the language.

Oral English practice out of classes:

- The data gathered showed that most of the respondents did not practice their oral English after class. In contrast, they thought that the ways to get a good English oral proficiency is by practicing with a native speaker, listening to music in English, listening to the news and authentic audios, joining conversation clubs, and participating actively in class discussions or debates, among others.

- It was found that students were often provided with oral tasks in order to improve their oral fluency.

- Even though extra-curricular activities help students to improve their speaking skill, most of them were not determined to attend these types of courses.

Students were provided with extra-curricular activities to continue practicing their oral English after classes.

The data gathered showed that teachers constantly provided students with oral tasks. When the students were asked about the reasons why they performed the oral activities they said:

- They wanted to get a good grade.

- They wanted to improve their oral fluency in English.

- These tasks were mandatory.

- The team concluded that the students did not develop their speaking abilities after classes, thus it is less likely to improve the speaking skills just by attending classes.

    As a research team, the conclusions about **the use of innovative and interactive sources by teachers in the English pronunciation practice of students** were the following:

- The teachers provided students with common or traditional English pronunciation sources in order to practice their pronunciation during class time. However, it is important that teachers not only use traditional methodology in the process of teaching and learning English pronunciation.

- Students needed to be provided with different innovative speaking activities that help them achieve an accurate level of fluency in the speaking skill.

- It is essential to use innovative and interactive pronunciation sources not only inside, but also outside the classroom to improve the English pronunciation of students.

- Teachers who were not digitally literate were not able to understand and use information from a variety of digital sources for the English pronunciation practice.

- Some teachers needed to be prepared to use new technology and digital resources in order to provide innovative and interactive pronunciation sources to students for getting effective practice of the oral skill.

Students' background knowledge influences their English pronunciation.

- The data gathered showed that a considerable part of students did not study English before they enrolled in the major.

- Also, it was noticed that students who studied English before enrolling in the major showed self-confidence to speak English during the class unlike students that did not have previous knowledge of English. Although, a large number of students knew some English, it was just at the basic level.

- English background is very helpful since the beginning of the major, then the native tongue may not have a negative impact on the process of learning English, mainly in the oral skill.

- Also, the research team concluded that when students took English classes before starting the major, they felt more confident to use the foreign language in classes.

Students who lack vocabulary showed more difficulties in pronunciation when communicating thoughts or opinions.

- After comparing some undergraduate works, the researchers concluded that the lack of vocabulary was a factor that directly affected the oral English performance of students in speaking activities.

- The most common factor that made the students felt shy when speaking was the lack of vocabulary. When the students did not know a word in English, they used Spanish to complete the idea. In other cases, they mispronounced several words when they did not know the correct pronunciation.

VII. SOURCES FOR STUDENTS TO PRACTICE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

The research team also concluded that it is quite important for students to practice oral English during and after classes. For this reason, the following sources for students to practice English pronunciation are presented:

- On the link below, the students will find videos, interactive quizzes, and downloadable activities and materials, which can be used for self-study to improve pronunciation. The material can be downloaded in mp4 version, which students can save and watch on their computer.

  http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/

- **Rachel's English:**

  This site teaches American English pronunciation and the keys to conversational English (rhythm, intonation, linking, and stresses). It has over 400 free videos that feature a variety of topics as well as exercises and tutorials on correct mouth positions when pronouncing words. http://rachelsenglish.com/

- Schwa is the name for the most common sound in English. It is a weak, unstressed sound, and it occurs in many words. On the links below, the students could identify the schwa sound throughout diverse exercises.

  http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/features/schwa/
  http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/features/schwa/

- **Recording:**

  Voice recording is a great way to practice pronunciation. It is an effective tool to hear oneself pronouncing words and check if the pronunciation is accurate. The

following sites are great for voice recording and providing assessment or feedback. These sites do not need registration:

- ➢ Voicecoach (Besides the voice recording tool, it has other tools to improve articulation like tongue twister practice and talking with images).

- ➢ Vocaroo.com

- ➢ Audiopal

- English Central YouTube Channel:

  This site has many free videos and tutorials that can help students to pronounce sounds properly.

  https://www.youtube.com/user/EnglishCentral/videos

- On the link below, student will find vowels, consonants, and a diphthongs phonetic poster. Also students will find exercises to practice vowel and consonant sounds. https://agendaweb.org/phonetic.html

- **RhinoSpike** is a language learning tool that connects participants with native speakers to exchange foreign language audio files, and get any foreign language text read aloud for the student by a native speaker. This website is easy to use; it is free and gives the student real input by native speakers. It lets the participants request audio recordings of a text by native speakers. This way, the students learn the real pronunciation of a native speaker. https://rhinospike.com/

- **Forvo**. This website is a great resource based on a community which uploads pronunciation by native speakers. The website has a large collection of pronunciation of difficult English words in its dictionary. https://forvo.com/

- **Memrise.** This is an app that is available through the internet, as well as being available on Android and iOs. The aim of this educational app is learning a foreign language. This application contains thousands of videos of natives speaking in their language. https://www.memrise.com/

- **Liveworksheets.** This website is mostly addressed to teachers, in order to transform the traditional printable worksheets into self-correcting interactive exercises that the students can do online and send to the teacher: also, the students can practice pronunciation with audios in the interactive worksheets by themselves. https://www.liveworksheets.com/

- **HowToPronounce.com** is a free online audio pronunciation dictionary which helps anyone to learn the way a word or name is pronounced around the world by listening to its audio pronunciation by native speakers.

  https://www.howtopronounce.com/

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XI.   APPENDICES

CHECKLIST

This instrument was filled out taking into account all the sources in general since not all the research works had focused their subject of study on both internal and external factors; instead, some of them talked about only internal factors, and others only on external ones.

ITEM DESCRIPTION **Internal Factors**	ALWAYS	USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
1 Age influences the English pronunciation of students.		X				
2 The participants use the schwa sound when pronouncing multi-syllable words.		X				
3 The participants show difficulties in the identification the shwa sound when pronouncing this phoneme in words.		X				
4 Students are self-motivated to improve their English pronunciation.			X			
External Factors						
1 The native language influences the acquisition of the new language.	X					
2 Students did not receive the appropriate input to develop their oral skill appropriately (as oral activities in classes).			X			
3 Students practice oral English with others when they are not in classes.				X		
4 Students are provided with extra-curricular activities to continue practicing their oral English after classes.		X				
5 The teachers provide innovative and interactive sources to students to practice English pronunciation.					X	
6 Students background knowledge influences their English pronunciation.			X			
7 Students who lack vocabulary show more difficulties in pronunciation when communicating thoughts or opinions.		X				

INTERPRETATION OF ITEMS

Item Description	Summary of the findings
Age influences the English pronunciation of students.	The learners' age **usually** influenced the English pronunciation of students. According to the consulted sources and undergraduate works, one of the most considerable influences among an accurate English pronunciation and retention of the specific information about sounds, rhythm, and adequate intonation is the age; in this analysis, the age range of students identified was from 15 to 52 years old. In fact, it was found that students' English pronunciation is affected by the learners' age as the way human beings learn to speak any language such as English or any other language at an early age. Moreover, the researchers observed that the learners' age usually influenced the accurate pronunciation in different circumstances such as: • The younger the students are, the easier it is for them to acquire an accurate pronunciation. • To older students, it becomes increasingly difficult as they age as the brain's original plasticity diminishes, and it becomes more rigid. Now that said, this does not mean adult students should give up trying to improve their pronunciation. It just means they have to work harder. • If the students are older, they will almost always retain an "accent." However, fluency and accuracy can achieve the same levels regardless the initial age at which language study began. • If learners do not learn a foreign language before a certain age, they maybe cannot obtain a better pronunciation than those who learn a foreign language at a proper age.

> - On the other hand, it is easier for children or younger students to learn better a new language like English including an accurate pronunciation.
>
> In addition, the results showed that the students considered they can interact with other students to take part in discussions actively, and to explain the viewpoints of the topics among other kinds of characteristics that students have in their class development despite pronunciation errors.

Item Description	Summary of the findings
The participants use the schwa sound when pronouncing multi-syllable words.	The schwa sound was **usually** absent in the participants when pronouncing multi-syllable words. After checking undergraduate works, the results showed that the schwa sound was absent in most of the cases in those studies. According to the analysis of the data obtained, the absence of the schwa sound when participants pronounced multi-syllable words could have been a result of the lack of this phoneme in the Spanish language. In fact, Spanish speakers substitute that phoneme for one that is closer to this phoneme in English. For example, the word ***norma**l* exist in both languages, in Spanish both vowels, the ***o*** and ***a*** sounds are pronounced: in English, the word sounds like /ˈnoɚ-məl/. The second vowel, the ***a*** is changed to a short, reduced /ə/ sound because it is part of the unstressed syllable. There are more examples such as: **Spanish** **English** chocolate chocolate /ˈtʃɑ:klət/ control control /kənˈtroʊl/ familiar familiar /fəˈmɪljɚ/ Additionally, in the undergraduate work "The Influence of the Spoken Interaction with

English Native Speakers in the English Pronunciation of the Personnel Working in San Salvador-Based Call- Centers", it was found that the participants suffered problems at the moment of identifying the correct pronunciation of the schwa sound when they produced multi-syllable words with this specific phoneme in English language interaction with native speakers.

Item Description	Summary of the findings
The participants show difficulties in the identification the schwa sound when pronouncing this phoneme in words.	The participants **usually** showed difficulties in the identification of the schwa sound when pronouncing this phoneme in words. According to the results showed, in the undergraduate work "The Influence of the Spoken Interaction with English Native Speakers in the English Pronunciation of the Personnel Working in San Salvador-Based Call- Centers", that schwa sound was almost absent, and this may happen because in Spanish, there is not a similar phoneme sound like the schwa sound in the English language. That could tell that Spanish speakers made an extra effort to produce sounds that are not immersed in their mental structure mother tongue, and try to reproduce them more like English sounds. For instance, the participants suffered problems at the moment of identifying the correct pronunciation of the schwa sound when they produced words with this specific phoneme in the English language. There are some factors that influence in the absence of this schwa sound such as: • Mother tongue interference • Knowledge of English pronunciation phonemes • Fluency at the moment of expressing the ideas

Furthermore, this undergraduate work "The Influence of the Spoken Interaction with English Native Speakers in the English Pronunciation of the Personnel Working in San Salvador-Based Call- Centers" showed the lowest percentages in the schwa pronunciation of personnel working in San Salvador-Based Call-Centers; however, they are exposed to the interaction with native speakers during their work-time.

Item Description	Summary of the findings
Students are self-motivated to improve their English pronunciation.	The students **often** were self-motivated to improve their English pronunciation. The research team consulted undergraduate research works and found that learners often are self-motivated to learn the English language and improve their English pronunciation through a constant practice although there are some factors that affect this oral acquisition through the process of learning a foreign language, such as: • If students present lack of vocabulary, it shows there was no self-motivation in their participation in the classroom. • When students do not understand the pronunciation of a word or phrase, and the teachers do not explain again, in some cases, the students lose the ideas. • If students have difficulties in pronouncing some specific English sounds, like the schwa sound, students pronounce like they think is correct, but it is wrong. • Students express that the teachers' methodology helps or causes difficulties when students are learning and practicing English pronunciation. • Students' shyness is a factor that affects the learning of English pronunciation through speaking in the classroom. • Using Spanish affects students' English fluency and pronunciation negatively. Furthermore, the researchers have investigated the main factors that affect the

students' speaking performance in the English language as researched in the undergraduate work, "Factors Affecting students' Speaking Performance in the English language at Advanced Intensive English I courses, semester II – 2018." In fact, the research team reinforced it with information about how these factors intervene in the learning of English pronunciation, mainly in a negative way.

Item Description	Summary of the findings
The native language influences the acquisition of the new language.	The native language **always** influences the acquisition of the new language. According to all the consulted undergraduate works, the use of the native language in class activities was a result of the necessity of the students to speak fluently or to be understood. It was found that students' English oral participation was interfered by the native language as in the following situations: • Students mainly showed difficulties in pronouncing nonexistent sounds in Spanish which they needed to produce in English. e.g., students tended to pronounce some English sounds as they would do it in Spanish; like words beginning with [s] so they added the phoneme [ɛ] before it (/ɛspeɪn/ /ɛˈstudnt/). • Students also showed difficulties in pronouncing vowel and consonant sounds. The most common pronunciation mistakes made in vowel sounds were: /i/, /ɪ/, /æ/, /ɑ/, /u/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/, /c/, /ɜ/, and /aɪ/, and in consonants were /t/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /j/, /p/, and /b/ sounds. • When students did not understand a word or phrase, the teachers sometimes translated the word of phrase into Spanish. • Students usually tended to use their mother tongue to communicate when attending classes, no matter the level in which they were.

Item Description	Summary of the findings
Students did not receive the appropriate input to develop their oral skill appropriately (as oral activities in classes).	Students **often** received the appropriate input to develop their oral skill appropriately (as oral activities in classes). The Theory of Second Language Acquisition stablishes that a foreign language is learned the same way we acquire our native language. In that sense, a foreign language like English should be taught with a permanent exposure to it. Thus, if students are constantly exposed to all types of comprehensible input like conversation clubs, debates, role plays, class discussion based on reading material, brainstorming, and oral tasks, among others, all of these could improve the students' oral skills. The following aspects were found in the consulted works, and they show some points that helped or did not help students to improve their oral skill. • The speaking activity that the teachers applied the most was "Reading and discussing the material". • The speaking activities provided in the classroom were based only on academic topics rather than on everyday topics. • Teachers barely monitored the class to see if the students spoke English or Spanish. • Teachers sometimes encouraged students to speak English during and after class. • Certain teachers used Spanish in classes, and it gave students the chance to use it, too. • When professors did not monitor students, they usually used Spanish to talk about things related to the class and about daily personal issues.

Item Description	Summary of the findings
Students practice oral English with others when they are not in classes.	Students **sometimes** practiced oral English with others when they were not in classes. After consulting prior works, the team found that students sometimes practiced oral English after class. Also, some of the students' responses about their study habits revealed that a high percentage of them said that they only reviewed their notes after classes, and a lower percentage of them said that they studied with a friend or worked on online exercises. The gathered data showed that most of the respondents did not practice their oral English after class. In contrast, they thought that the ways to get a good English oral proficiency is by practicing with a native speaker, listening to music in English, listening to the news and authentic audios, joining conversation clubs, and participating actively in class discussions or debates, among others. Also, it was found that students were often provided with oral tasks in order to improve their oral fluency. Even though extra-curricular activities help students to improve their speaking skill, most of them were not determined to attend these types of courses. Also, the data gathered showed that the interviewers were aware that fluency is also affected if they do not practice English as much as they should.

Item Description	Summary of the findings
Students are provided with extra-curricular activities to continue practicing their oral English after classes.	Students were **usually** provided with extra-curricular activities to continue practicing their oral English after classes. According to the data gathered, the researchers found that teachers constantly provided students with oral tasks. When the students were asked about the reasons why they performed the oral activities they said: • They wanted to get a good grade. • They wanted to improve their oral fluency in English. • These tasks were mandatory. After analyzing the data gathered about this item, the team concluded that the students did not develop their speaking abilities after classes, thus it is less likely to improve the speaking skills just by attending classes.

Item Description	Summary of the findings
The teachers provide innovative and interactive sources to students to practice English pronunciation.	The teachers **seldom** provided innovative and interactive sources to students to practice English pronunciation. After the team analyzed the data gathered, it was found that teachers seldom provided students with sources in order to practice their pronunciation during the class time. However, it is important that teachers not only use traditional methodology in the process of teaching and learning English pronunciation. In fact, the use of innovative and interactive pronunciation sources is essential not only inside, but outside the classroom to improve the English pronunciation of students. In addition, some innovative sources can help the students to improve their

speaking skill with more accurate pronunciation.

According to the consulted works, the speaking activity that the teachers applied the most was "reading and discussing the material", and other strategies like debates, role plays, discussions, speaking tasks, brainstorming were the least applied in the class. Also, the research team found some factors why the teachers possibly did not apply innovative and interactive sources in the process of teaching pronunciation, such as:

- Some teachers showed resistance to use new sources about interactive technologies in the speaking skill practice.

- Teachers who were not digitally literate were not able to understand and use information from a variety of digital sources for the English pronunciation practice.

- Some teachers needed to be prepared to use new technology and digital resources in order to provide innovative and interactive pronunciation sources to students for getting effective practice of the oral skill.

Item description	Summary of the findings
Students background knowledge influences their English pronunciation.	Students background knowledge **often** influenced their English pronunciation. After analyzing the data gathered, the researchers could state how the students´ prior English knowledge influenced their oral skills performance. The ones below are some aspects that provide a general view about this item: • The gathered data showed that a considerable part of students did not study English before they enrolled in the major. • Also, it was noticed that students who studied English before enrolling in the major showed self-confidence to speak English during the class unlike students

	that did not have previous knowledge of English. Although, a large number of students knew some English, it was just at the basic level.
	• English background is very helpful since the beginning of the major; then, the native tongue may not have a negative impact on the process of learning English, mainly in the oral skill.
	• Also, the research team concluded that when students took English classes before starting the major, they felt more confident to use the foreign language in classes.

Item description	Summary of the findings
Students who lack vocabulary show more difficulties in pronunciation when communicating thoughts or opinions.	Students who lack vocabulary **usually** showed more difficulties in pronunciation when communicating thoughts or opinions.
	After analyzing the data gathered from the undergraduate works selected for this study, the researchers concluded that the lack of vocabulary was a factor that directly affected the oral English performance of students in speaking activities.
	The most common factor that made the students feel shy when speaking was the lack of vocabulary. When the students did not know a word in English, they used Spanish to complete the idea. In other cases, they mispronounced several words when they did not know the correct pronunciation.

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"This work shows the most common pronunciation mistakes of students finishing their third year at the Foreign Language Department. Besides, it mentions the main factors that influence on pronunciation."

Source 2
Martínez, K. E., Ramos, J. A., Rosa, D. G., The Most Influential Factors of English Oral Tasks on The learners' fluency level in that Language: Case of Advanced Intensive English I courses of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador. 2014. B.A. in English Language Teaching. University of El Salvador, San Salvador, El Salvador. Jorge Homero Llanes Márquez López, M.A. April 2014. 55pp.
"This work describes the main factors that influence students' oral fluency. It also describes how these aspects impact negatively or positively on student's oral performance."

Source 3
Ángel, E.P., Henríquez, A. L., & Martínez, E.E. <u>"A diagnostic study of target language speaking problems. Case of: Advanced intensive English I, Intermediate Intensive English I and Readings and Conversation I students at the Foreign Languages Department, UES, semester II, 2015.</u> B.A. in English Language Teaching. English. University of El Salvador. San Salvador, El Salvador. Ricardo Garay Salinas, M.Ed. October 2015. 126pp.
"This project identifies and lists the main target language speaking problems that students face in the courses of Intermediate Intensive English I, Advanced Intensive English I and Readings and Conversation I".

Source 4
Flores, R. G., Rivas, J. G., & Zepeda, Y. M., <u>The incidence of Spanish on English oral production: case of the Readings and Conversation I students from the English Teaching Major at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, 2015</u>. B.A. in English Language Teaching. Universidad de El Salvador. Wilber Alexander Bruno. Mte. May 2016. 119pp.
"This work identifies the factors that lead students to speak Spanish in an English class and how its frequent use affects the learning process of English. It also describes how the constant use of English in class enhances the oral production of students."

Source 5

Cruz, K. G., García, J. J., & Mejia, D. A., <u>A description of the most frequent speaking activities implemented by teachers in Advanced English I courses at Foreign Language Department in Bachelor of Arts major emphasis in English teaching semester II, 2016.</u> B.A. in English Language Teaching. Universidad de El Salvador. Miguel Ángel Mata Chávez. November 2016. 37pp.

"This work describes the most frequent speaking activities implemented by teachers in Advanced English I courses, such as debate, oral presentation, brainstorming, role-play, reading and discussing the material in class, speaking tasks, making video and discussions."

Source 6

Alvarenga, D. B., Artiga, M. D., & Menéndez, D. L. <u>"The influence of the spoken interaction with English native speakers in the English pronunciation of the personnel working in San Salvador-Based Call-Centers.</u> 2017. B.A. in English Language Teaching. University of El Salvador, San Salvador, El Salvador. José Israel Oliva, M.A. 107pp.

"This research project analyzes the influence that participants potentially acquired in pronunciation as a result of the constant spoken interaction with English native speakers through the phone."

Merino, R. A., Echeverría, I. G., Factors Affecting Students' Speaking Performance in the
English Language at Advanced Intensive English I courses, Semester II – 2018.
B.A. in English Language Teaching. University of El Salvador, San Salvador, El
Salvador. Lilian Orbelina Olivares Aguirre, MA TESOL. March 2019. 124pp.

"This work shows the factors affecting students' speaking performance in the English
language such as psychological factors, lack of practice, vocabulary knowledge, the rapport
in classes, and the use of authentic materials to improve the spoken English."

Database Table

N°	TOPIC	COURSES	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	DEPARTMENT /SCHOOL	YEAR	URL
1	The most influential factors of English oral tasks on the learners' fluency level in that language: case of Advanced Intensive English I curses of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador.	Advanced Intensive English I	This work describes the main factors that influence students" oral fluency. It also describes how these aspects impact negatively or positively on students" oral performance.	Foreign Language Department	2014	http://ri.ues.edu.sv/id/eprint/6337/
2	A diagnostic study of target language speaking problems. Case of: Advanced intensive English I, Intermediate Intensive English I and Readings and Conversation I students at the Foreign Languages Department, UES, semester II, 2015	Advanced Intensive English I, Intermediate Intensive English I and Readings and Conversation I	This project identifies and list the main target language speaking problems that students face in the courses of Intermediate Intensive English I, Advanced Intensive English I and Readings and Conversation I.	Foreign Language Department	2015	http://ri.ues.edu.sv/id/eprint/15196/
3	Assessing the English pronunciation of students finishing their third year at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador, semester II, 2014	Students finishing their third year.	This work shows the most common pronunciation mistakes of students finishing their third year at the Foreign Language Department. Besides, it mentions the main factors that influence on pronunciation.	Foreign Language Department	2015	http://ri.ues.edu.sv/id/eprint/8603
4	A description of the most frequent speaking activities implemented by teachers in Advanced English I courses at Foreign Language Department in Bachelor of Arts major emphasis in English teaching semester II,2016	Advanced Intensive English I	This work describes the most frequent speaking activities implemented by teachers in Advanced English I courses, such as debate, oral presentation, brainstorming, role-play, reading and discussing the material in class, speak task, making video, discussions.	Foreign Language Department	2016	http://ri.ues.edu.sv/id/eprint/13593

5	The incidence of Spanish on English oral production: case of the Readings and Conversation I students from the English Teaching Major at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, 2015	Readings and Conversation I	This work identifies the factors that lead students to speak Spanish in an English class and how its frequent use affects the learning process of English. It also describes the how the constant use of English in class enhances the oral production of students.	Foreign Language Department	2015	http://ri.ues.edu.sv/id/eprint/12111
6	The influence of the spoken interaction with English native speakers in the English pronunciation of the personnel working in San Salvador-Based Call-Centers	--------------------	This research project analyzes the influence that participants potentially acquired in pronunciation as a result of the constant spoken interaction with English native speakers through the phone.	Foreign Language Department	2017	http://ri.ues.edu.sv/id/eprint/14692/
7	Factors affecting students' speaking performance in the English Language at Advanced Intensive English I courses, semester II – 2018	Advanced Intensive English I	This work shows the factors affecting students' speaking performance in the English language, such as: psychological factors, lack of practice, vocabulary knowledge, the rapport in classes, and the use of authentic materials to improve the spoken English.	Foreign Language Department	2018	http://ri.ues.edu.sv/id/eprint/20315