

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



“DIAGNOSIS OF THE ORAL PROFICIENCY LEVEL IN FRENCH THAT FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE MAJOR HAVE REACHED IN THE SECOND SEMESTER–2013, AND ACTIVITIES PROFESSORS USE TO HELP STUDENTS REACH LEVEL B1 ACCORDING TO THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK” AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization demands the knowledge of a foreign language. Some of the reasons why people learn a foreign language are the necessity to understand and communicate with others around the world, study or live overseas, discover and appreciate new cultures and have better opportunities to grow professionally. Because of this, the University of El Salvador offers English teaching majors either for learning a foreign language or as a tool so that students can have wider access to information from English speaking countries. In addition, they now offer also the option to learn other languages like the case of the Modern Languages Major that gives students the option to learn not only English but also French.

Learning a foreign language involves reaching a high level of proficiency in order to manage the best possible way in different areas of knowledge or jobs. Modern languages students are not the exception, they are also required to reach a high level of proficiency in French. That is why, it was necessary to do a diagnosis on the current oral proficiency level in French that fourth year students have reach in semester II – 2013.

This research work's aim was to know the oral proficiency level of the fourth year students of Modern Languages in French and also to identify the activities professors do to help students reach the level b1, independent user (according to the common European framework) in French because that was the level fourth year students were expected to reach .To do this, it was necessary to carry out a diagnosis on the student's oral proficiency level and the role of professors during the students 'learning.

This research is divided in eleven chapters. The first one includes the introduction of the research. The second chapter includes the statement of the problem. This part describes the need of knowing the level of proficiency achieved by students and what professors do to help them reach the expected level. In the next chapter the objectives that guide the research are also presented. Moreover, the fourth chapter includes the justification of the research, in which we emphasize the importance and benefits of this project. The fifth chapter contains the theoretical framework. In this part, there can be found some concepts, and the theory related to previous research works that supported our research. The sixth chapter describes the methodology of this study. It includes the steps followed to carry out the field research, the type of research and a brief description of the different instruments that were used to carry out the research project. The seventh chapter includes the analysis of the data and results obtained. The eighth chapter includes the conclusions where all findings are presented in detail. The ninth chapter recommendations in which the group provides advices based on the results obtained. Also the bibliography, which lists all the books, articles and websites consulted to support this research, and also in the last chapter the annexes that supported the research are included at the end of the work.

II. Statement of the problem

In the last decades, learning a foreign language has become very important for many different reasons among which there can be mentioned personal satisfaction, traveling abroad, having better job opportunities, knowing about a different culture or just for pleasure. Therefore, more and more people study a foreign language to be prepared to fill the requirements of a globalized world.

The University of El Salvador, in order to give an answer to the changes and needs faced by the society, founded the Foreign Language Department (FLD) in 1948. Nowadays, the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador offers two majors: the English Teaching Major, and The Modern Languages Major. In the case of students taking the first major, the language they learn is English; on the other hand, those taking the Modern Languages Major learn both English and French. Concerning the Modern Languages Major, students choose between the teaching area or the Public affair area. In both cases the major is designed to be completed in five years for those students who take the courses according to the curriculum.

From the beginning of their studies, students learn both languages, English and French. Students are prepared to develop the four macro skills; that is: reading, speaking, listening and writing in both languages. In addition, every year of studies, students have to be able to develop the skills mentioned before with a certain level of proficiency and in order to measure those levels of proficiency there are different scales proposed by experts in evaluating the skills mentioned.

In the case of Foreign Languages Department, the professors of the Modern Languages Major use as reference the Common European Framework

to evaluate the different abilities students are expected to reach in the four macro skills in French. This scale goes from level A1, which is the lowest level, to level C2, which is the highest level a student of a foreign language can attain.

Among the four macro skills mentioned above, the speaking skill is considered one of the most important to be mastered because it is the first skill to which human beings resort to communicate with others. When learning any language, the speaking skill is developed in terms of grammatical structure, vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation.

In the particular case of students taking the Modern Languages major at the FLD, they are expected to reach different levels of proficiency as they move along their studies. Those expected levels of proficiency are measured based on the above mentioned scale. In the first level of their learning process, learners have to be able to communicate at an A1 level, as described in the scale. And at the end of their studies in the major, students are expected to have reached level B2. Regarding the fourth-year students of the Modern Languages major, they should attain an oral proficiency level B1 (independent user, according to the Common European Framework).

In level B1(Independent user), which is the level fourth year students of the Foreign Language Major should reach, learners are expected to: Enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics, to follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversation, though sometimes will have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases, to keep a conversation or discussion with some hesitations when trying to say exactly what he/she would like to, to express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference.

Nevertheless, it seems that many or most of the fourth year students of the Modern Languages Major, who are taking French courses, do not reach the expected oral proficiency level; that is, level B1. It seems that when they reach their fourth year of studies, they have difficulties attaining the required oral

proficiency level, which can be related to grammar structure, fluency, vocabulary accuracy, coherence, etc. Considering the problematical situation described above, it is important to find out first the oral proficiency level that students reach once they are in their fourth year of studies of French, and second to find out what professors do in the classrooms to help students reach the expected level.

III. Objectives

1.2.1 General objective

- a. To carry out a diagnosis to find out the oral proficiency level in French that fourth year students of Modern Languages Major have reached in the semester II-2013; and the activities professors do to help students reach level B1, independent user, (according to the common European framework).

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

- a. To describe the activities that French professors carry out in order to develop the fourth year students' oral skills that lead them to reach the level B1.
- b. To find out fourth year students' oral competences and what professors do in order to help four year students to reach level B1.

IV. Justification of the research

The Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador offers two majors, the English Major and the Modern Languages Major. In the case of the students taking the Modern Languages Major, they have the option to study in one of the two areas in which the major is divided: the teaching area or the public affairs area.

During the first years, Modern Languages Students are trained to develop the four macro skills, that is, speaking, reading, writing and listening. These skills also involve some other elements (such as pronunciation, stress, intonation, grammar and tone) in order to be able to communicate with other speakers with more or less difficulty depending on the level of studies they have. Among the four macro skills mentioned, the speaking skill is considered to be one of the most important skills to master if not the most important; since it is the first skill people resort to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

On the other hand, along their course of studies in this major, students are expected to reach different levels of proficiency in French. In the case of the students who reach their fourth year of studies, they are expected to reach an oral proficiency level B1 (independent user, according to the Common European Framework) in French. That is, they have to be able to enter unprepared conversations on familiar topics, to follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversation, though sometimes will have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases, to keep a conversation or discussion with some hesitations when trying to say exactly what he/she would like to, to express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference.

The researcher team consider that when learning a foreign language among the four macro skills mentioned above (reading, writing, listening and

speaking); the oral skill is one of the most difficult to master, and reaching an oral proficiency level B1, independent user, in French for fourth-year students of the Foreign Language Department seems to be a real challenge and a very important part of their learning process. It is the area in which students need to develop their ability to express ideas efficiently and effectively in different situations.

To talk about proficiency, it is necessary first to define the term. Different authors define this term as the general ability to speak clearly in terms of, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and tone, to distinguish among words of similar meaning and to select the most appropriate term for the context, and have a broad lexicon. During this process there can be some difficulties that prevent students from reaching the expected oral proficiency level in French.

So far, there has not been any research done in the Foreign Language Department that shows the performance of the students of French in the different levels they are expected to develop during the career. To do a better job with the students of the Modern Languages, it is necessary to find out the oral proficiency level in French reached by fourth year students and what it is done in classrooms so students can reach the level B1.

The purpose of this research is first to find out the level that fourth-year students have and second to know what French teachers do in their classrooms so that students can reach the expected level.

Although one of the objectives of this research is oriented to knowing the oral proficiency level of fourth year students of the Modern Languages Major, it is also expected to help students to be aware of what level they are expected to reach when they are in the fourth year of their studies so they can make a greater effort from the very beginning of the Major in order for them to reach the required level of competence along their course of studies. If students are aware of their level of competence at the end of every year of studies, by the end of their Major, they will be able to attain a higher level than the expected one.

Finally, the researchers hope that this research will serve as reference for future studies related to this topic. In addition, it is also expected that this work can serve students, teachers and researchers to know factors that can prevent students from reaching the expected oral proficiency level at different stages of their studies, so as to give recommendations on how to avoid those factors that could prevent them from reaching the oral proficiency levels as they go through the learning process in this major.

V. Theoretical Framework

Diagnosis of the oral proficiency level in French that fourth year students of Modern Languages Major have reached in the second semester 2013, and the activities professors use to help students reach level B1 according to the common European framework at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador.

People have always had the necessity to communicate with others around them for different reasons and under different circumstances. Now, that necessity has become more urgent to solve since societies are developing rapidly and the world has gone through a process of globalization. People have the necessity to learn other languages different from their mother tongue so that they can communicate with others who speak languages other than their own.

Initially, learning another language, particularly the English language, was necessary in order to be able to enter the international business world; however, the learning of languages has given a different turn that has nothing to do with business it has become a means to learn from other cultures, to learn about different areas of study, to work, or just to have fun

The University as part of this changing world began offering extension courses so that people who were not interested in getting a university degree in languages but wanted to learn another language could enroll in these courses. And this is how the academy of foreign languages started. The Foreign Languages Department was created in 1948. It began functioning as an academy of languages; among the languages taught, there can be mentioned English, French, and Russian. Then, in 1956 it became the Foreign Language Department offering the technical in English-Spanish Translation major. In 1973, the Consejo Superior Universitario (CSU) approved the curriculum of the BA in

English Language and the English Teaching for Middle School and High School major. Then, in 2002 the B.A in Modern Languages was also approved by the CSU, in which English and French are taught as Foreign Languages.

French is considered to be among the top 10 (or 15) most spoken languages in the world. Besides, it is considered to be among the top 25 most influential languages in the world, based on the impact on global commerce and trade, and on the lingua franca status around the world. It is not surprising then that the Modern Language Major offered at the FLD has a high demand among students who apply to study in the Foreign Language Department.

Currently, the Modern Languages major has become one of the most demanded majors of the University of El Salvador. Students who choose to study this major have the option, as it was explained before, to choose between studying to become teachers of English and French or to work in the Public Affairs areas.

When students finish their studies of Modern languages, knowing French opens doors for them to work in the national and international job market. There are different companies and institutions in our country, such as call centers, tourism businesses, and schools which offer the opportunity to work with them. Moreover, they can apply to work in their areas of knowledge in other countries where French is spoken.

In order to help students, the Foreign language Department together with the “Alliance Française”, offers this group of students a program which gives them the opportunity to apply for a job as Spanish teachers in France. In the case of students who study the Public Affairs area, they have also the opportunity to work as tourism guides and translators.

In the last two or three years, there has been an increasing interest in people in studying French in the FLD. There may be many reasons why students decide to learn French in the FLD. among others, there can be

mentioned: getting a good job, traveling abroad, knowing another culture, getting a scholarship in a French speaking country, or just for pleasure. Whatever the reason, it is important for learners to acquire a high oral proficiency level in French so that they can perform in that language without much difficulty.

However, people who decide learning French in our country can face some difficulties during their learning process. One of the difficulties is that in El Salvador there are not as many French speakers as there are English speakers. This makes students have fewer opportunities to practice the language with native speakers. On the other hand, even though in El Salvador, there are a couple of Universities (Don Bosco University and University of El Salvador) and some academies (Alliance Française, Academia Europea and Academia Canadiense) where French is taught, there might be one in a million chances for students of these Institutions having the opportunity to interact among themselves to practice the language in a different setting from that of their usual interlocutors.

Another difficulty these students may experience is related to the lack of material written in French available in our country. Even though the above mentioned academies and universities have material in French, not all of them give the opportunity to french language learners to access that material easily. For example, Alliance Française has a library where French learners can borrow books, music and videos to practice and improve their skills in French; but students have to buy a \$20 membership in order to have access to the library.

In the case of the University of El Salvador, there is also a library in which there are some books and material in French, but it is only available for students of the University of El Salvador. This lack of cooperation among universities, schools and academies makes difficult for all the students to have access to the material available to improve their skills in French.

Modern Language students of the FLD are expected to have a given proficiency level depending on the stage they are studying. In order to measure

the level they have reached, different assessment scales are used to evaluate them. By the end of their studies, students are expected to master the language they are learning at a B2 level. They are expected to produce coherent and cohesive discourse, interact with others with ease, express themselves spontaneously at length with a natural flow, and maintain consistent grammatical control of complex language.

There are different scales designed specifically to measure the level reached by learners of foreign languages. These levels differ from scale to scale. Some of the scales that are used to measuring the oral proficiency level are the ACTFL (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), the ILR (Interagency Language Roundtable), and The Common European Framework.

In order to determine the level of oral proficiency of students of the Modern Languages major at the Foreign Language Department, professors use The Common European Framework scale to evaluate the students' oral proficiency in French. Some of the professors use this scale or at least take it as reference to assess their students.

The ACTFL (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages)

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are a description of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. For each skill, these guidelines identify 5 major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels.

The ILR (Interagency Language Roundtable).

The ILR Was Developed by the Federal Government's Inter-Agency Language Roundtable from basic descriptions used by the Foreign Service Institute, the ILR scale is the way in which the US Federal Government defines and refers to language ability. With 6 levels, ranging from 0 (No Practical Proficiency) through 5 (Native or Bilingual Proficiency), with 'plus' levels at each stage that are assigned when proficiency noticeably exceeds one skill level and does not fully meet the criteria for the next level.

The Common European Framework

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (abbreviated as CEFR or CEF) is a standard, international scale of levels for language learning. The common European Framework scale is divided into 6 levels: C2, C1, B2, B1, A2, A1; being the highest level C2 and the lowest A1.

The objective of the 3 scales is to measure the level of student's proficiency however there is a difference in the way they are used to assess, for instance:

CEFR 'describes achievements' of learners of foreign languages, its aim is to provide a method of learning, teaching and assessing.

The ACTFL guidelines 'identify stages of proficiency', as opposed to achievement. They do not measure what individuals achieve through specific classroom instruction, but assess what individuals can and cannot do.

In the ILR scale, grades are assigned to each skill (reading, speaking, listening, writing, translation, audio translation, interpretation, and intercultural communication).The level described on each skill can be represented in an abbreviated way, for example S-1 for Speaking Level 1.

Here is a summarized comparison among the different proficiency levels of the 3 scales.

CEFR	ILR	ACTFL
A1	0/0+/ 1/1+	Novice (Low/Mid/High)
A2	2/2+	Intermediate (Low/Mid/High)
B1	3/3+	Advanced Low
B2	4/4+	Advanced Mid
C1	5	Advanced High
C2		Superior

The Modern Languages major has been designed for students to learn English and French. Regarding the French language learning, students are expected to master certain language skills required on each level they are reaching every year of studies; and once they reach their fourth year of studies, they are expected to be able to perform the four macro skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) required for the level of proficiency B1, independent user, according to the Common European Framework.

According to the scale applied, when students reach their fourth year of studies, they should be able to talk with a wide range of vocabulary to express their ideas; link a series of brief discrete simple elements into a connected sequence of points; initiate, maintain and close face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest and should keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning.

There are different assessments carried out in French classes in order to determine the oral proficiency level that students reach in the different courses they take. However, in order to be able to understand those different levels, it is necessary to define and understand the meaning of oral proficiency and what it implies.

V.1 Defining Oral Proficiency

Different authors define oral proficiency in different ways. In some cases their definitions may agree or differ in some points. As a general definition, according to the American Heritage dictionary of the English language (1978) proficiency means performing in a given art, skill or branch of learning with expert correctness and facility.

Omaggio (1986) states that oral proficiency includes the ability to communicate verbally in a functional (means: adaptable and useful in the various life's contexts) and accurate way in the target language. A high level of oral proficiency implies having the ability to apply the linguistic knowledge to new contexts and situations.

Omaggio's definition of oral proficiency gives the idea that a language learner with a high level of oral proficiency will be able to apply his linguistic abilities to different contexts and situations without prior preparation; that is they do not have the time to organize their ideas when they get into a conversation concerning any topic; they just put in practice what they know about the language.

For Stern (1983), proficiency means the actual performance of a learner in a given language, and it involves the mastery of the forms (grammatical structure), the linguistic, cognitive, affective and socio-cultural meanings of those forms, the capacity to use the language with focus mainly on communication, and the creativity in language use. This definition of oral proficiency includes linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge and the ability to use this knowledge for communicative purposes.

Chomsky (1965), in his transformational generative grammar theory made reference to the term oral proficiency. When referring to the term oral proficiency, he pointed out to these two characteristics: competence and performance. He describes 'competence' as an idealized capacity that is located

as a psychological or mental property or function and 'performance' as the production of actual utterances (the actual use of language in concrete situations). In short, competence involves "knowing" the language and performance involves "doing" something with the language. Taking into account this definition, it can be said that someone "proficient" in a language is anyone who is proficient and performer; that means anyone who knows and can speak the language.

Savignon (1983) also includes the terms competence and performance when making reference to oral proficiency. He simply refers to competence as what one knows and to performance as what one does. He does not include other characteristics mentioned by other authors such as accuracy, fluency and grammar that are relevant when defining oral proficiency.

According to Dulay and Burt (1978), oral proficiency refers to the degree of control a person has over the use of the rules of a language. Dulay and Burt give a simple and short definition of oral proficiency. They consider a person is proficient in a language as long as she has a good usage of the rules of language. The rules of language to which they make reference are related to: grammatical accuracy, and broad vocabulary.

The mandarin.sdcoe.net is a website that serves as a resource to support the teaching and learning of Mandarin Chinese language. It is a result of a U.S Department of Education grant for Foreign Language Assistance Programs. Some contributions to this website come from Dr Norman Leonard, Director of Outreach of the Language Acquisition Resource Center at San Diego University.

According to this website, the simplest definition of language proficiency is a measure of what someone knows and can do (listen, speak, read, or write) in a particular language. This definition gives the idea that a person is considered proficient in a language just by showing what he knows and can do without taking into account the different aspects mentioned by other linguists (fluency, grammatical accuracy, broad vocabulary, comprehension, accent). But

we believe that the aspects mentioned above are a very important part to consider someone is proficient in the language.

Even though the term proficiency refers to the ability to master the different skills (writing, listening, speaking and reading) in the language being learned, in this work specifically the term proficiency is going to be focus only on the oral aspect of that language. In that way, oral proficiency will be understood as the learners' ability to communicate orally mastering different aspects of the language: fluency, accuracy, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation.

V.2 Features of oral proficiency

Fluent, knowledgeable, bilingual, and competent and the like are some of the adjectives attributed to a person who is considered proficient in a given language. Nevertheless, those adjectives do not give a clear definition on what the term proficient really involves. Different researchers among them, Galloway (1987) and McNamara (1996) have talked on this topic but still do not give a concrete definition about it. Noriko Iwashita, Adams (1980), Higgs and Clifford (1982) have conducted some studies exploring proficiency based on scores achieved from rating scales and feedback on ratings collected from teachers and experts employing qualitative approach.

Noriko Iwashita a linguist from the University of Queensland carried out a research in which she describes different features of the oral proficiency established by other linguists. According to her research, Adams (1980) investigated the five factors described in assessing the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) Oral Interview Test of Speaking and the relationship of these factors with the global speaking score. These factors are: accent, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and grammar.

In 1982 Higgs and Clifford established different factors that contribute in Language proficiency at different levels .According to Iwashita's research, Higgs and Clifford provided a description of the role of each of the five component factors making up global proficiency (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency and sociolinguistics).

In the study carried out by Higgs and Clifford, vocabulary and grammar were considered to be the most important among all levels, but as the level increased other factors such as pronunciation, fluency and sociolinguistic factors also became important. The results were then presented to a group of experienced teachers, whose opinions were elicited on the question of the relative contribution of factors at different levels.

The results showed that teachers perceived vocabulary and pronunciation factors to be the most important at lower levels and that fluency and grammar factors contributed little. Contributions from fluency and grammar increased as the proficiency level increased. At higher proficiency levels, four factors (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and fluency) contributed equally, and the sociolinguistic factor contributed relatively less.

This gives the idea that when measuring the different oral proficiency levels, there are various aspects to be considered. In the lower levels the most important aspects taken into account are vocabulary and pronunciation; whereas, in higher levels not only vocabulary and pronunciation but also grammar and fluency are important.

After Noriko Iwashita consulted different studies and contributions from other linguists to the features of oral proficiency, she established four traits of oral proficiency.

1. Syntactic complexity

Noriko Iwashita uses different definitions on her research related to Syntactic complexity. One of them establishes that Syntactic complexity is “the range of forms that surface in language production and the degree of sophistication of such forms” (Ortega, 2003). On the other hand, Bachman, (1990) considers it is an important factor in the second language assessment construct.

The aspects that are used to examine syntactic complexity include length of production unit (clauses, verb phrases and sentences and T-units (shortest grammatically allowable sentences into which writing can be split on minimally terminable units” (Hunt, 1965:20), amount of embedding, subordination and coordination, range of structural types, and structural sophistication.

2. Lexical diversity

As per Iwashita findings on this term, she emphasizes on the definition given by Victoria Johansson, (2008) in which the author defines Lexical diversity as a measure of how many different words are used in a Text. She points out that lexical diversity is measured through a type-token ratio (TTR) which compares the number of different words (types) with the number of total words (tokens).

3. Fluency

According to Noriko Iwashita’s researches on this trait, she points out that the definition of fluency may vary. She mentions that some researchers only focus on some of the temporal features of speech like words or syllables per minute, the length or number of pauses; While others emphasize on what extent

learners are able to produce a second language without attending to rules of the target language grammar.

4. Grammatical accuracy

Iwashita refers to accurate speech as not containing errors or an error free speech. Nevertheless she mentions that in both SLA and language assessment, studies have shown measures of grammatical accuracy in terms of global accuracy; that means considering all type of errors or specific types of errors.

Among all the features described by the different linguists and researchers mentioned above, it seems that all of them agreed that fluency and grammatical accuracy are very important elements to be considered when defining oral proficiency. In the case of Adams (1980), he adds some other aspects such as vocabulary and pronunciation that need to be taken into account when talking about oral proficiency. The degree of importance of those aspects depends on the level of proficiency a student attains.

On the other hand, the linguist Noriko Iwashita makes also reference to Syntactic complexity when referring to oral proficiency in which she considers it is an important aspect to keep in mind when evaluating oral proficiency.

All traits mentioned before summarize and provide a clear notion of what oral proficiency implies and what factors are to be considered in order to determine whether a foreign language student is proficient or not in using the language.

V.3 Theory of Language Acquisition

Language Acquisition is the process by which people learn a language (Rod Ellis). But how does Language acquisition relate to proficiency? Knowing this can provide a better understanding on how proficiency can be attained, and also can help make decisions on how to work in classrooms.

In the book *Teaching Language in context*, Omaggio (pages 19-20) makes references to Ellis contributions to the language acquisition theory in 1985 in which she established the following 4 macro- stages of linguistic development after reviewing the theory:

Stage 1: Interlanguage forms resemble those of pidgin languages, with more or less standard word order, regardless of the target language. Parts of sentences are omitted, and learners use memorized chunks of discourse in their communication.

Stage 2: Learners begin to use word order that is appropriate to the target language and to include most of the required sentence constituents in their speech.

Stage 3: Learners begin to use grammatical morphemes systematically and meaningfully.

Stage 4: Learners acquire complex sentence structures such as embedded clauses and relative constructions and use them with greater facility and precision.

Ellis' view of language acquisition theory helps to understand each stage that the students seem to follow. In addition it can also be of great help to foreign language teachers as it gives step by step how the learning process of a language is attained.

The four stages set by Omaggio help to understand the abilities acquired by students at different level. A relationship can be established between the four macro stages proposed by Omaggio and the levels of proficiency described in The Common European Framework. For example, a student who is placed in the stage 1 and 2 can be considered to have reached level A1 – A2. While a student who is placed in stages 3 or 4 is expected to attain the higher levels of Proficiency (from level B1 to level C2).

Summarizing, this theory can help teachers understand how a student learns another language and gradually becomes proficient in the language they are learning but always taking into account the different characteristics and abilities each student has. Moreover, students will have a better idea of the different stages of their learning process of the language they are learning. In that way they can make a self-evaluation to know the level they have reached and depending on the level they consider they have, they can make decisions on what they need to improve and how.

V.4 Oral Evaluation of Foreign Language Learners: Measurement Scales

As it was previously mentioned, there are some scales that are used to measure the oral proficiency level of learners of a foreign or a second language. These scales are used to describe achievements of learners across Europe and other countries. Some of the scales used to measure the oral proficiency level are the ACTFL (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), the ILR (Interagency Language Roundtable), and The Common European Framework.

V.4.1 the Common European Framework Scale

The Common European Framework categorizes the spoken abilities of foreign language learners in six levels going from the most advanced (C2) which is the highest level students can reach up to A1 being this, the level in which students have many gaps in the development of speaking skills.

The scale described below, is a global scale that describes in detail what the level B1 implies. It is important to emphasize on this level of the scale because that is the level students of the Modern Languages major who are learning French are expected to attain once they are in the fourth year of studies. (To review the whole scale, see annex #1).

Common Reference Levels: global scale

Independent user:

B1: Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Speaking (Oral) Scales

For a better understanding on what this scale measures at each level of spoken production and interaction, a general description of level B1 is presented.

OVERALL SPOKEN INTERACTION

B1

Can communicate with some confidence on familiar routine and non-routine matters related to their interests and professional field. Can exchange, check and confirm information, deal with less routine situations and explain why something is a problem. Can express thoughts on more abstract, cultural topics such as films, books, music etc. Can exploit a wide range of simple language to deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling. Can enter unprepared into conversation of familiar topics, express personal opinions and exchange information on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).

CONVERSATION

B1

Can enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics. Can follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversation, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases. Can maintain a conversation or discussion but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what they would like to. Can express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference.

The scale described above includes a brief description of what students who reach this level of oral proficiency can perform while speaking the language.

It is important to have a better understanding of what the level B1 requires in order to determine whether a student has the abilities described in each level the scale suggests.

V.4.2 The ACTFL Proficiency guidelines 2012-Speaking.

Another scale to measure proficiency is the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. The guidelines include a description of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. For each skill, these guidelines identify five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels.

Find below a description of the ACTFL scale establishes for the advance and advance low level which can be compared to the level B1 (independent user) described by the Common European Framework (CEFR).

Advanced Level

Speakers at the Advanced level engage in conversation in a clearly participatory manner in order to communicate information on autobiographical topics, as well as topics of community, national, or international interest. The topics are handled concretely by means of narration and description in the major times frames of past, present and future. These speakers can also deal with a social situation with an unexpected complication. The language of the Advanced-level speakers is abundant; they have sufficient control of basic structures and generic vocabulary to be understood by native speakers of the language, including those unaccustomed to non-native speech.

Advanced Low Level

Advanced Low speakers can handle appropriately the essential linguistic challenges presented by a complication or an unexpected turn of events.

Responses produced by Advanced Low speakers are typically not longer than a single paragraph. The speaker's dominant language may be evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of that language. At times their discourse may be minimal for the level, marked by an irregular flow, and containing noticeable self-correction. More generally, the performance of Advanced Low speakers tends to be uneven; their speech is typically marked by a certain grammatical roughness (e.g., inconsistent control of verb endings)

Their speech can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may require some repetition or restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

V.4.3 ILR Scale

The ILR scale is the way in which the US Federal Government defines and refers to language ability. With 6 levels, ranging from 0 (No Practical Proficiency) through 5 (Native or Bilingual Proficiency), with 'plus' levels at each stage that are assigned when proficiency noticeably exceeds one skill level and does not fully meet the criteria for the next level.

Similar to the level B1 described by the CEFR, the advance and advance low level established by the ACTFL scale, these two levels can be also compared to the level 2 (limited Working Proficiency) provided by the ILR scale.

ILR Level 2 – Limited working proficiency

- Can handle with confidence most basic social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, work, family, and autobiographical information

- Can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties; can get the gist of most conversations on non-technical subjects (i.e. topics which require no specialized knowledge), and has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions
- Has an accent which, though often quite faulty, is intelligible.

V.5 Factors that prevent students from reaching an oral proficiency level.

According to previous studies that have been carried out by some linguists and researchers in different countries there are different factors that can prevent students from reaching the expected oral proficiency level of the language they are learning. Some of the factors found are mentioned below.

In 1986 Magnan carried out a study at the University of Wisconsin in order to measure the level of proficiency students can reach during the first four years of their studies when learning French. She interviewed forty students of French that were randomly selected from course lists in the first through fourth year of college study. After conducting the study, Magnan explained the lack of congruence between course level and attained oral proficiency in terms of the many sources of variation that exist in language classrooms. Magnan highlighted the prior language study in high school as one of those sources of variation that influence in the level of proficiency a student can reach. It is important to emphasize on this last part where Magnan mentions that a prior language study in High School can influence during the learning process of a foreign language.

According to the study mentioned above, one of the factors that is involved when not reaching the expected oral proficiency level can be the background students have when entering the university. A student that has studied French in high school or in any languages academy learns with less

difficulties and reaches a higher oral proficiency level more easily than a student who has not been in contact with the language before since the former is more familiar with the language.

A study conducted in the Chinese College English Teaching suggests that another factor that can probably prevent students from reaching a higher level of oral proficiency is the lack of practice of the language because students are afraid of speaking in front of a group of people. This fear of practicing the language can be caused by hesitations students make at the time of speaking as they are afraid of mispronouncing words. In addition, students may feel they do not have the vocabulary to keep a fluent conversation in French, so they prefer not participating in classes or not practicing out of the classrooms.

The study conducted about Factors Affecting Students' Oral English Proficiency in Chinese College English Teaching Setting to 5 different majors of Nanjing University of Finance and Economics was carried out to explore the factors which may facilitate or debilitate students' oral English proficiency in college English teaching setting. The results showed that environment and opportunity for oral English practice tends to be the most influential factor affecting students' oral English proficiency in College English teaching setting. So it means that the lack of practice affects in large amount the acquisition of oral proficiency.

In 1970 Savignon carried out a study related to communicative competence in which she pointed out that successful communication depended on the individual willingness to take a risk and express himself in the foreign language, and on his resourcefulness in using the vocabulary and structures under his control to make himself understood by others. Therefore, the students fear to speak or practice a language they are learning can significantly affect their oral proficiency level.

Omaggio (2001), when talking about communicative competence and the notion of proficiency, expresses the following “ across language learners and

language programs, the degrees of proficiency needed, desired, or attained can vary considerably depending on such factors of purpose, motivation for language study, or learning environment". So, it shows that the role of the teachers during the learning process and the student's motivation has a big importance in order to obtain a good level of oral proficiency, and can be considered as another factor that prevents students from reaching a higher level of oral proficiency according to the years they have been studying the language.

The results obtained by the previous studies showed that learning a foreign Language involves different factors that can determine the level of proficiency students attain. According to the studies reviewed, it can be said that: having a previous knowledge on French when starting learning the language, the role of teachers during the learning process, practicing French outside the classroom and students' motivation and willingness to learn the language will make them improve their oral skills and therefore attain a high level of oral proficiency.

V.5.1 Teachers' role during the learning process

No matter what language students are learning, the teacher's role in a foreign language classroom has a great meaning for students. In past years, the teacher was the only responsible in the teaching learning process and students had the role of the passive listener.

Nowadays, that role has changed. The main goal of teachers is to encourage students to use of the language inside and outside of the classroom; that is to promote the students' language learning by means of practicing the language as much as possible. This can be done taking into account the different students' levels of knowledge, styles of learning and the motivation students bring to the classroom.

In the case of French professors' roles at the Foreign Language Department, it must be to help students develop their communicative competences and to create a suitable environment for the students learning.

Professors should:

- Encourage students to express their ideas or experiences as a way of oral activities inside the classrooms.
- Promote class discussions.
- Create a comfortable environment in which students could have the enough self-confidence to speak without the fear of being mocked.
- Make students be aware of the importance of their own learning and encourage them to practice and learn the language by themselves.

The professors role during the learning process is essential to create the conditions of an effective learning and to encourage students create a meaningful learning.

Having a level of oral proficiency B1 (independent user) in French after four years of study will make students communicate in a more efficient way and make them feel confident at the time of speaking. Because of this, it is essential to have a better understanding on what proficiency means and the parameters to assess the oral proficiency level of students.

VI. METHODOLOGY

This research consisted of a diagnosis to know the oral proficiency level reached by the fourth year students of the Modern Languages major in the second semester, of the year 2013; and the activities professors do to help students reach level B1, independent user (according to the common European framework) in French.

The type of research made is descriptive. It was carried out in order to later compare the theory found in different authors with what was going on in classroom in the FLD and how similar or different situations can be in other parts of the world in terms of the learning a foreign language.

VI.1 Steps followed to develop the research.

VI.1.1 Topic Selection and Delimitation of the Study

In order to select the topic, the research team met the advisor to discuss different possible topics that were of interest to us. After thinking of different topics, researchers decided to carry out a research that consisted of a diagnosis to know the oral proficiency level reached by the fourth year students of the Modern Languages major and the activities professors do to help students reach level B1, Independent User in French (according to the Common European Framework).

To our understanding, this topic has not been studied previously in the Foreign Languages Department. Therefore, researchers considered that doing

some research on this topic could be of interest to professors of the Modern Languages major and students so as to have a reference on the oral proficiency level reached by students in their fourth year of studies and the role of educators on that respect.

VI.1.2 Literature Review

After choosing the topic, the literature review was carried out. To do this, different sources of information were checked such as books, magazines and websites. The researchers selected the information that was considered would be useful for the development of the project.

The small field research was carried out in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador among students in their fourth year of studies of the Modern Languages Major. The aim was first to find out the oral proficiency level students in their fourth year of their studies had reached in French; and to find out the role of the teachers in order for them to attain the expected level; that is B1 Independent User (according to the Common European Framework). To do this the following steps were followed:

VI.1.3 Choosing the universe.

The universe for this research was the 80 fourth-year students of the Modern Languages Major at the Foreign Language Department (FLD) of the University of El Salvador.

VI.1.4 The Sample

In order to calculate the sample, the formula described below was used. This formula is commonly used as it is one of the most recommended to carry out research works.

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{E^2}$$

n = the size of the sample

N = The number of the population.

E = The size of the error.

P and Q = The variability.

n =?

$$N = \frac{Z^2 P Q}{E^2}$$

N= 80 = This was the size of the population.

Z = 95% = This was the credibility of the investigation.

E = 5% = This represented the size of the error.

P= .5% = this was the variability of the answer. It could be yes/not

Q = 5%. = This was the variability of the answer. It could be yes/not

$$Z = 95 \div 2 = 47.50 \div 100 = 4750 = 1.96$$

$$N = \frac{Z^2 P Q}{E^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2(.5)(.5)}{(.5)}$$

$$n = 384$$

Adjusting:

$$n = \frac{n}{\frac{1 + n - 1}{N}}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{\frac{1 + 384 - 1}{80}}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{\frac{1 + 383}{80}}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + 4.79}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{5.79}$$

$$n = 66.32$$

n= 66 (SIZE OF THE SAMPLE)

It is important to mention that this formula was used just for obtaining the sample to answer a questionnaire since the purpose of this study was not a statistical analysis, but to carry out diagnosis to know the oral proficiency level reached by the fourth year students of the Modern Languages major and the methods used by teachers to help students reach level B1, Independent User (according to the Common European Framework) in French.

After calculating the sample, the research team decided to divide the sample in two groups. 20 students were randomly selected to be part of the first group. This group was going to be given a diagnostic test to determine their oral proficiency level in French and to find out if fourth year students of the Modern Languages had reached the expected oral proficiency level (B1, Independent User) required when students are in their fourth year of studies.

Since students were not willing to take the diagnostic test, the researchers asked for help to one of the professors from the Department (Lic. Alfredo Lopez) who was teaching to fourth year students that semester to select the students to take the test.

In the end the test was administered to only ten students. It was done so specially for three reasons; first because it was difficult to receive collaboration from students; second, there was only one professor to evaluate them, and third because the professor in charge of passing the test did not work at the University and that made it difficult for him to come to the University in different dates.

In the second group there were 66 students included as part of the sample. This second group was asked to answer a questionnaire to find out information related to the kind of activities carried out in the classroom that they found useful to help them reach the level B1, Independent User, in French and the factors that may be affecting their oral proficiency level.

VI.1.5 Designing type of research and Instruments

In this step the team research decided on the type of research and how this could be approached. This research is descriptive since it was not focused on statistic results. Researchers aim was to identify the main factors that explain and give significant information concerning the oral proficiency level reached by the fourth year students of the Modern Languages major. Different research instruments were designed in order to be applied on our study. The following instruments were used for our research:

VI.1.5.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire to students consisted of the following parts:

- i. The headings Includes general information of the participants
- ii. The purpose of the study: to determine the main difficulties that fourth year students of Modern Languages had to reach the expected oral proficiency level (B1, independent user)
- iii. The instructions: students were asked to answer the questions based on their own experiences as students of the Modern Languages Major
- iv. 7 questions. One question was open while the rest were multiple choice questions all the questions were oriented to find out the different oral activities and difficulties students have to develop their oral skills. (see annex 2)

VI.1.5.2 Class Observation guide

This instrument is part of another important technique to develop this research with the purpose of obtaining information directly from the classroom about student's oral performance and how teachers encourage practice in their classes.

To design the observation guide, researchers took as reference different samples used in other researches. It consisted of the following parts:

- i. Heading: Includes general information of the participants
- ii. Directions: Includes explanation on how to complete the instrument.
- iii. Statements: This part consisted of 17 statements were divided in two parts: ten statements referred to the teachers' performance and the activities they carried out in order to improve students' oral proficiency, and 7 had to do with the students' participation in classes and the interest shown in the different oral activities the teacher asked them to perform

To determine the level of frequency with which the activity was observed, the researchers used three evaluation criteria: 1. not observed. 2. More emphasis recommended and 3. Accomplished very well.

- iv. The instructions: Researchers had to select the number that best represented the activity included in the observation sheet, and if applicable, they could write some comments to provide feedback or suggestions to the activities observed.

Besides the observation guide, (see annex 3) researchers also used a camera to take pictures of the students who were part of the sample, (see annex 4).

VI.1.5.3 Interviews to Teachers

The formal interview was addressed to French teachers in order to know their points of view towards their students' oral skills. The researchers selected four French teachers of the Foreign Languages Department of the University of El Salvador to interview them using a guide containing 10 open questions. The objective of the interview was to know their opinions regarding oral proficiency reached by fourth year students of Modern Languages. Two of the questions were related to the type of activities teachers do in the classrooms in order to improve the students' oral proficiency and how those activities motivate students' participation. The rest of the questions were designed to know the point of view teachers have about the current oral proficiency level students have and to know their opinions on the possible factors that prevent some students from reaching the expected level. (See annex #5).

VI.5.4 Tests

The purpose was to determine the level of French oral proficiency of the fourth-year students of Modern Languages. Ten students of the fourth year of the Modern Languages Major were chosen to pass them an oral test to determine the level of proficiency they had. The test was given the second semester, 2013. In order to determine their oral proficiency level, researchers asked a French teacher of the "Alliance Française" to assess the students. The test passed was the one designed by the Common European Framework to measure the level B1 (independent user) in French.

The oral exam was divided in 3 parts. The first one consisted of an oral interview in which students had to introduce themselves and talk about their interests, their past, present and future plans.

The second part consisted on an interaction exercise. Students had to choose a topic among some that were provided by the evaluator, and then each student had to do a role-play together with the evaluator based on the topic selected.

In the third part, the evaluator gave students two topics related to social problems. Then, students had to choose one of them and give their point of view regarding the topic they chose. At the end, the evaluator asked them questions related to the topic.

The last step was to analyze and interpret the data; then to write and present the final report containing the findings, conclusions and recommendation.

VII. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

As part of this research, some students in their fourth year of studies of the Modern Languages Major of the UES were asked to participate in the research in order to find out the level of oral proficiency they had reached at this level of their studies and if they had reached the expected oral proficiency level (B1, independent user; according to the Common European Framework).

In order to find their level when they reach fourth year of learning French, different instruments were used: a diagnostic oral test, a questionnaire, a class observation and some interviews addressed to French professors.

VII.1 Diagnostic test analysis

First, an oral test was administered to the group who were taking the two courses required at the fourth year of the major, that is: Tourism in French and Literature in French I.

Ten students of fourth year of the Modern Languages Major were given an oral test in French. The objective of the oral test was to determine the level of oral proficiency in French they had. The test administered was the one used to evaluate the level B1, independent user, (according to The Common European Framework) since it is the level fourth year students are expected to reach. (See annex 6)

In order to administer the oral test, the researchers asked for the help of a teacher of the “Alianza Francesa”, who has previous experience on evaluating this type of tests.

The oral exam was divided into 3 parts. The first one consisted on an oral interview in which students had to introduce themselves and talk about their interests, their past, present and future plans.

The second part consisted of an interaction exercise. Students had to choose a topic among some that were provided by the evaluator, then they had to present a role-play based on the topic selected. The topics were concerning to daily life.

In the third part, students chose a topic from two different options and after a brief analysis they had to express their point of view regarding the topic chosen. At the end of the presentation, the evaluator asked questions to the students related to the topic they presented and the questions were based on what was expressed by the students. The topics to be presented in this part were related to social problems.

The evaluator used an evaluation sheet that included different evaluation criteria to determine the level of the student. According to the evaluation sheet, students who obtained a score above 7 reached the level being tested while the rest of the students that obtained a score below 7 can be classified in lower levels.

In the first part all students showed few difficulties to introduce themselves in French, talk about their interests, their past, present and future plans.

In the second part, students had to be able to use the language to any unexpected situation they could face in their daily lives.

In this part students had to demonstrate the ability to answer any question the evaluator asked during the interaction. The results showed that most of the students hesitated and had trouble using French when expressing their ideas related to the situation provided.

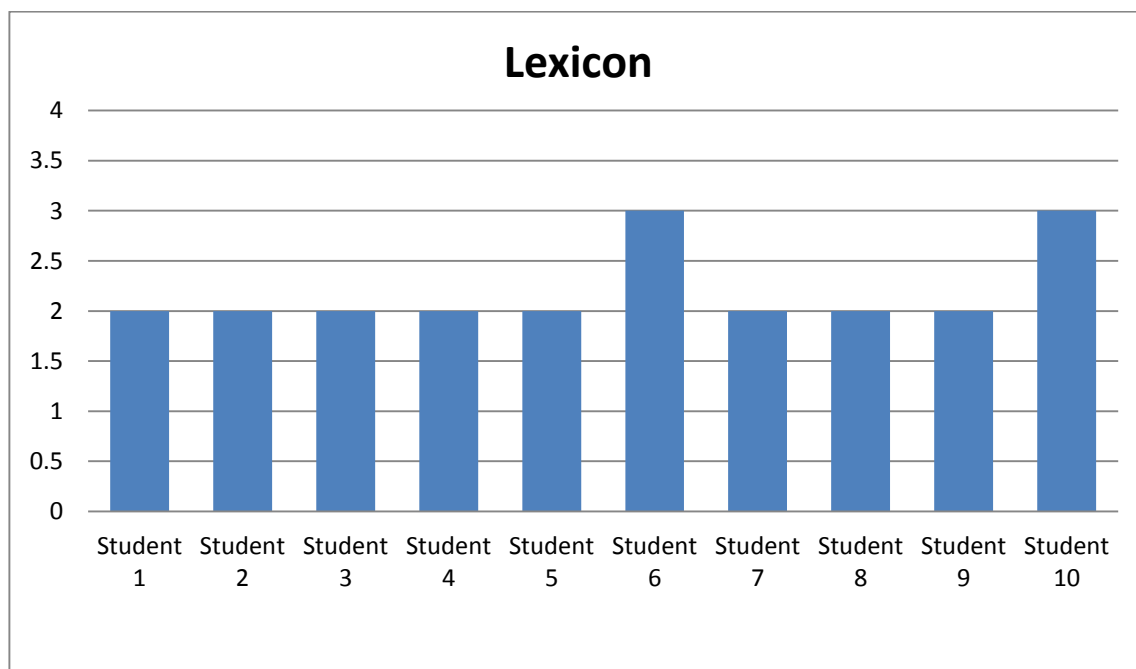
In the third part, the most common mistakes students made were found when students had to present and explain the main ideas of a topic they had to choose.

VII.2 Aspects Evaluated

Below, there is a brief description of each aspect being evaluated and a description of the results obtained (according to B1 level of The Common European Framework scale).

VII.2.1 Lexicon

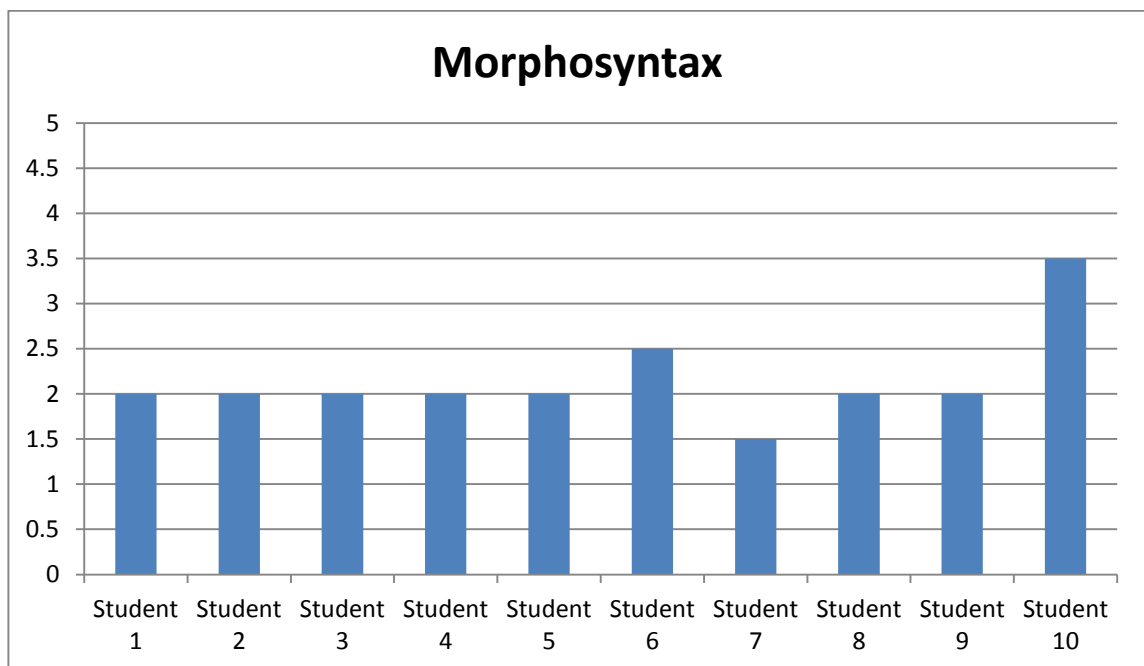
Student uses a variety of vocabulary and uses it appropriately to the topic presented. Student only has a few mistakes when he has to give a point of view regarding a more complex topic.



According to the results, the highest score students got was 3 out of 4 points and was only achieved by two out of ten students that took the test. The rest only obtained 2 points. These results showed that most of the students had a low range of vocabulary and had difficulties to use it when expressing their ideas related to a specific topic.

VII.2.2 Morphosyntax:

Learners can use simple sentences and some complex sentences while expressing their ideas. Student shows a good usage of the language with a few influences of their native language.

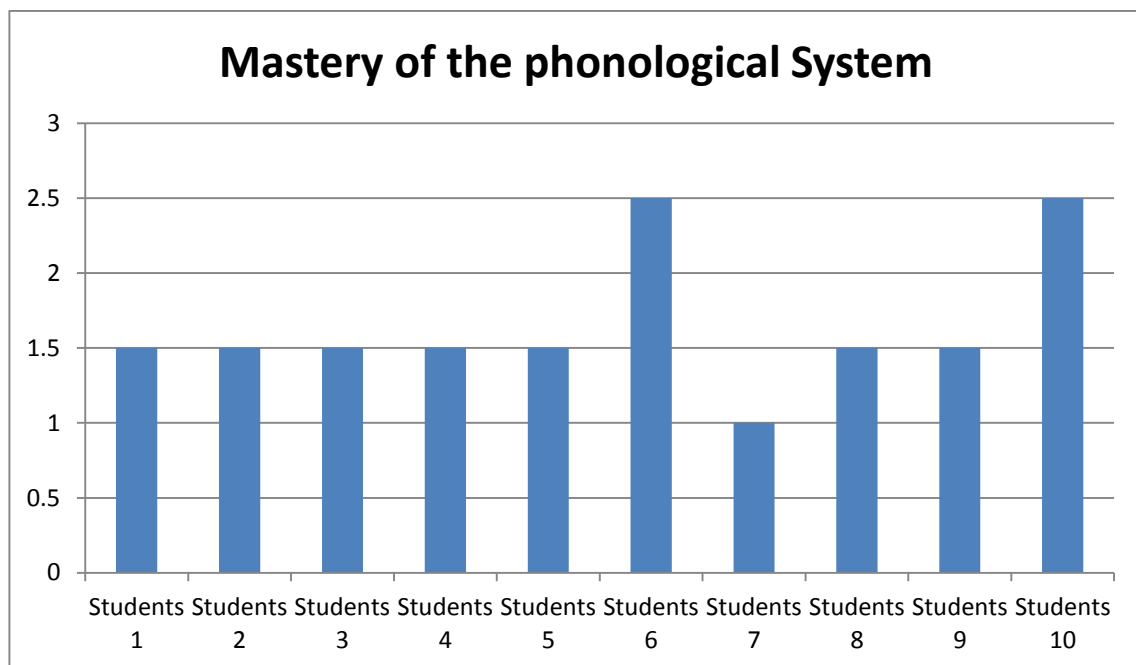


The results show that only one student got 3.5 points out 5, which was the highest score, and one student got 2.5. The rest of the students only got 2 points. It can be said that most of the students cannot use simple and some complex sentences when expressing their opinion related to the topic presented and still have some influences of their native language while speaking in French.

VII.2.3 Mastery of the phonological system

Learners can speak in French fluently (without any help), despite a few pauses. They show a speech that is occasionally hesitant.

Pronunciation is understandable with occasional mispronunciation and misuse of intonation.



According to the results, two students were able to reach a score of 2.5 out of 3 points; one student got a score of 1 and the rest got a score of 1.5. Therefore, these results showed that only few students can speak French fluently with only a few pauses and mispronunciation of some words do not affect them while speaking. Moreover, the results proved that most of the students still have problems of fluency and pronunciation that makes it difficult for them to be understood while speaking in French.

As a general conclusion and based on the results it can be said that only 2 out of 10 students tested were able to obtain the score needed to reach the level B1 (Independent User) of oral proficiency. According to the evaluator Josue Abrego (professor of the Alianza Francesa) the remaining eight students reached the level A2.

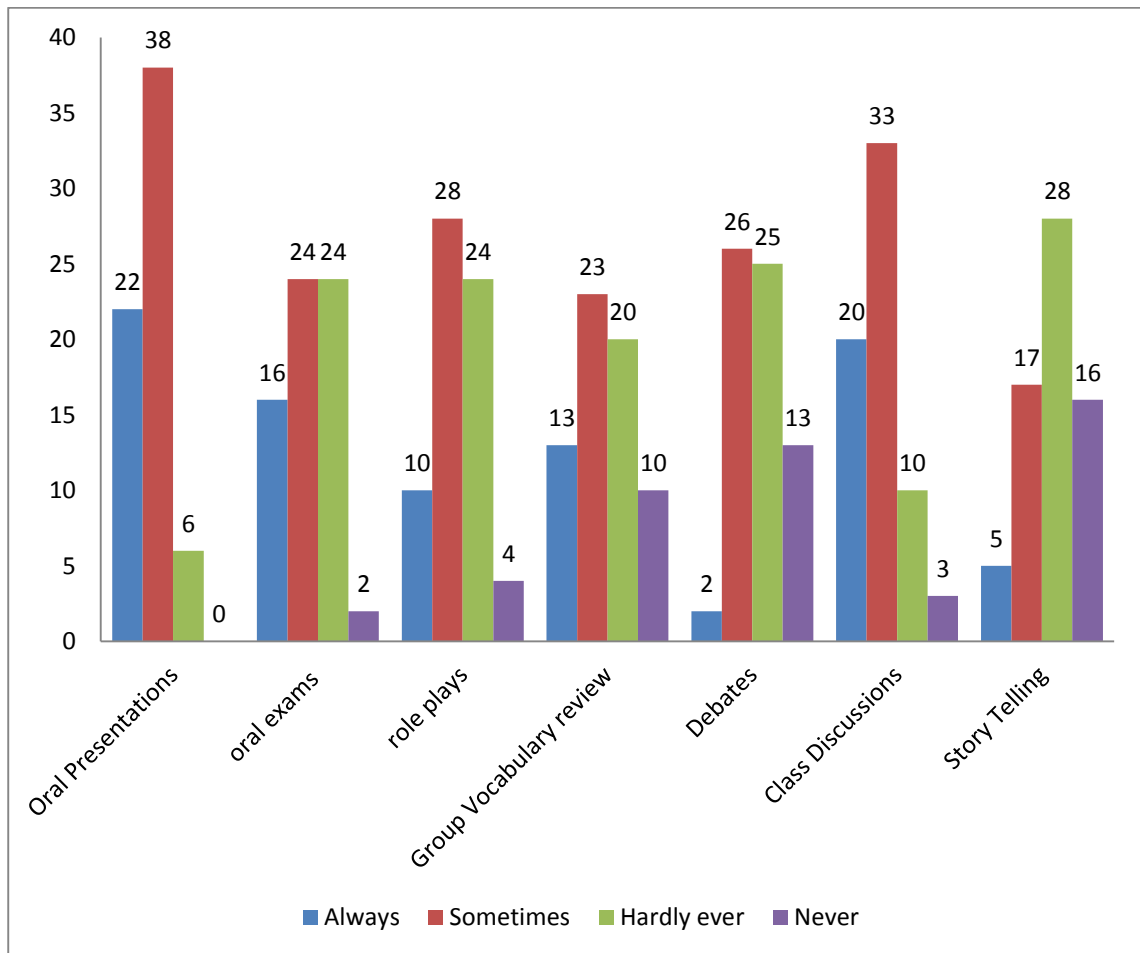
VII.3 Questionnaire

Once the test was administered, it was necessary to find out if the students had the expected level of oral proficiency level (B1, independent user) in French and if not to research which factors were preventing them from reaching that level. It was also important to know if the factors previously described from other studies made by other researchers and linguists about oral proficiency were similar to the ones that were going to be found during the research.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the main difficulties that fourth year students of Modern Languages Major have in their learning process when learning the French language. The questionnaire was composed of 7 questions that students had to answer by choosing the best options based on their own experiences as students of the Modern Languages Major. (see annex 2)

VII.3.1 Graphics and analysis from the students' questionnaires

1- Which of the following activities do your teachers do in order to make you practice French in the classroom, and how often do you practice them?



In order to determine what is the activity students perform the most in the classroom we gave more priority and importance to the frequencies with which each activity was carried out: always and sometimes.

According to the results gotten from the questionnaire administered to fourth year students of Modern Languages Major it can be said that 55 % of them consider that the activity they do the most in the classroom is oral presentation since 22 students answered that Oral presentations is the activity they always do while the 95% (38 students) said that they do it sometimes, only a 15%(6) said they hardly ever do it and no one said that they never do it.

The second activity students consider they do the most is class discussions; 50% (20 students) answered they always do it, 82.5% (33 students) said they sometimes do it, in contrast with the 25 % (10 students) said they hardly ever do it and only a 7.5 % (3 students) said they never do it.

The third activity students do the most is oral exams 40% (16 students) of them said they always do it, 60% (24 students) said they sometimes do it, another 60% (24 students) said they hardly ever do it and only a 5% (4 students) said they never do it.

Students consider that the fourth activity they do the most is group vocabulary review, the 32% (13 students) answered that they always do it, 57.5% (23) said they sometimes do it, 50% (20) answered they hardly ever do it, and 25 % (10 students) of them said they never do this activity.

The fifth activity students do the most is role plays 25% (10 students) answered that they always do it while 70% (28 students) said they sometimes do it, 60% (24 students) of them said they hardly ever do it and a 10% (4 students) said they never do it.

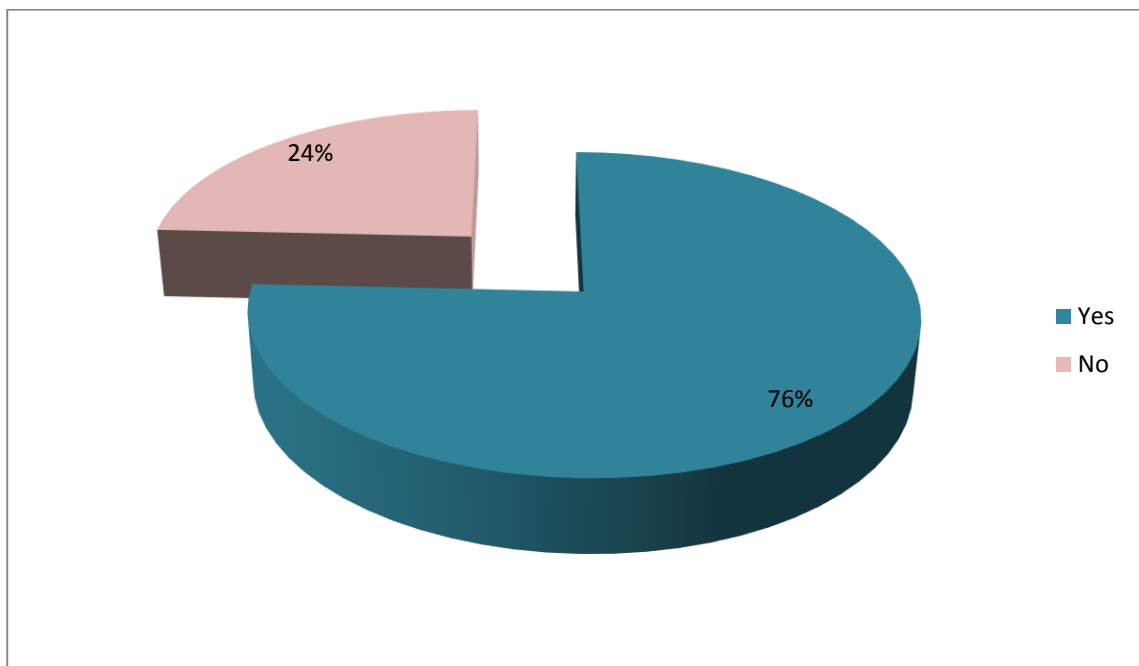
The sixth activity students do is story telling since only 12.2% (5 students) answered they always do it, 42.5% (17 students) said they sometimes do it, 70% (28 students) said they hardly ever do it along with the 40% (16 students) that said they never do it.

The seventh activity students do is debates because even though only 5% (2 students) said the always do it and 65% (26 students) said they sometimes do it,

65% (25 students) answered they hardly ever do it along with the 32% (13 students) that said they never do this activity in class.

In brief, it can be said that the activity teachers do the most in classrooms is oral presentations; it is also the most practiced activity. This makes us believe that oral presentations enhance students' oral skills in French. On the contrary, a debate is considered to be the activity that is less practiced in classes.

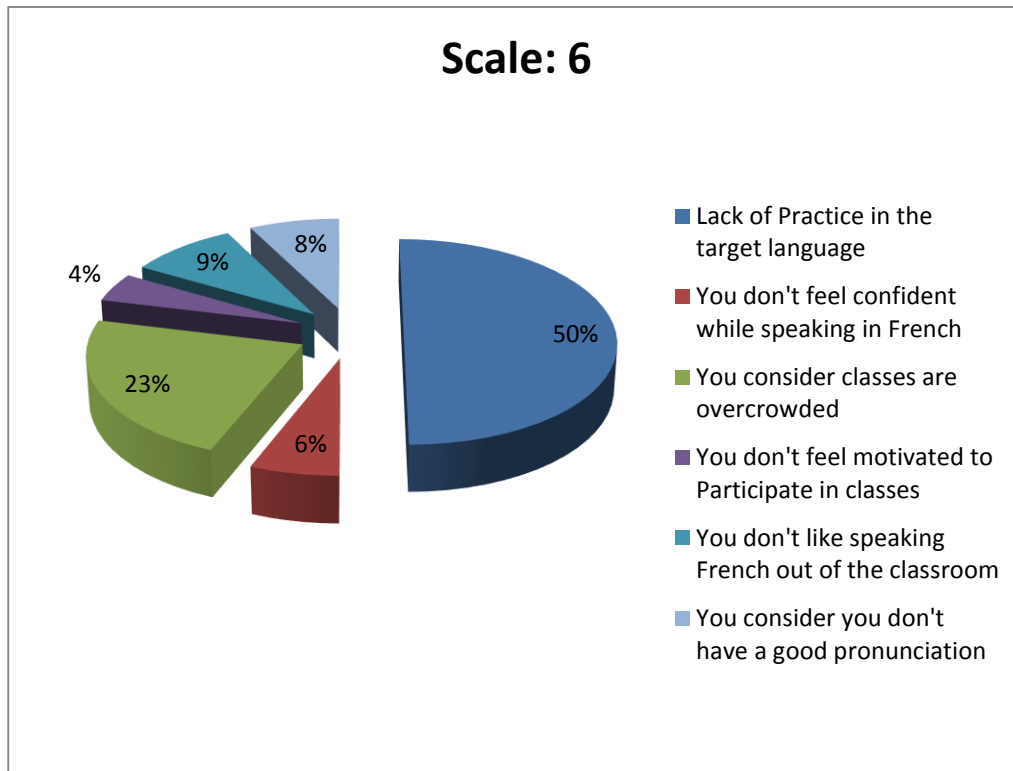
2- Do you think the activities you usually perform in the classroom are useful to improve your oral proficiency in French?



According to the results gotten from the questionnaire administered to fourth year students of Modern Languages it can be said: 76% of them think that oral activities teachers perform in the classroom are important since it allows them to practice more the target language and in that way to improve their oral proficiency.

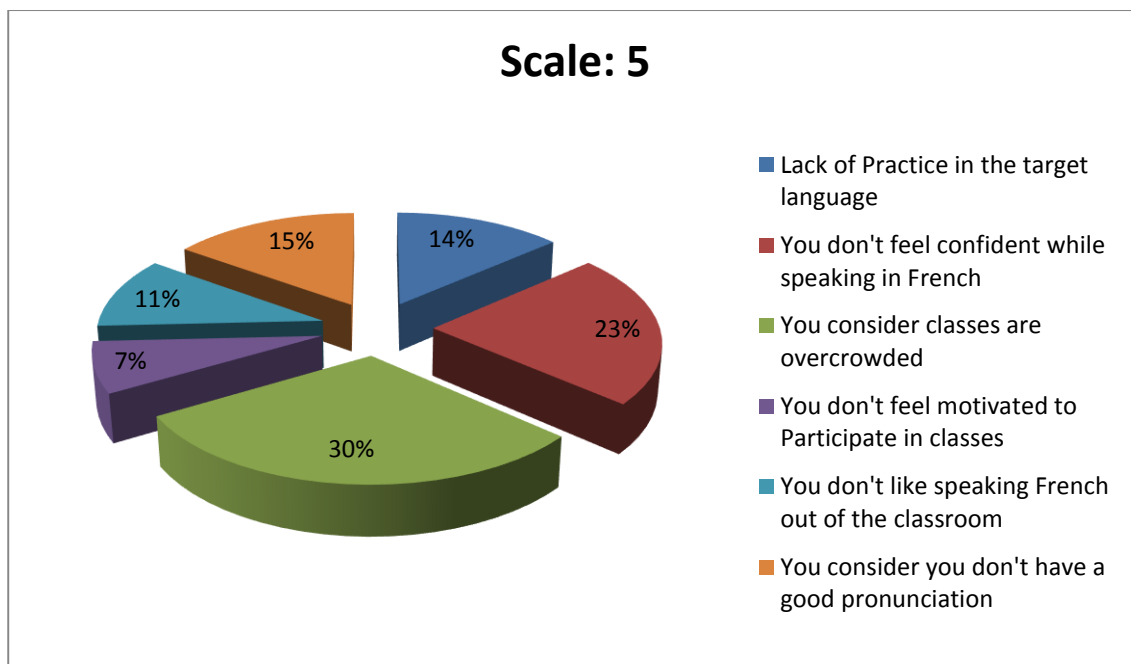
The other 24% consider oral activities do not help them at all to improve their oral proficiency.

**3- Which of these factors do you think affect your oral proficiency?
Number them in a scale from 1 to 6, being 6 the one that affects you the most.**

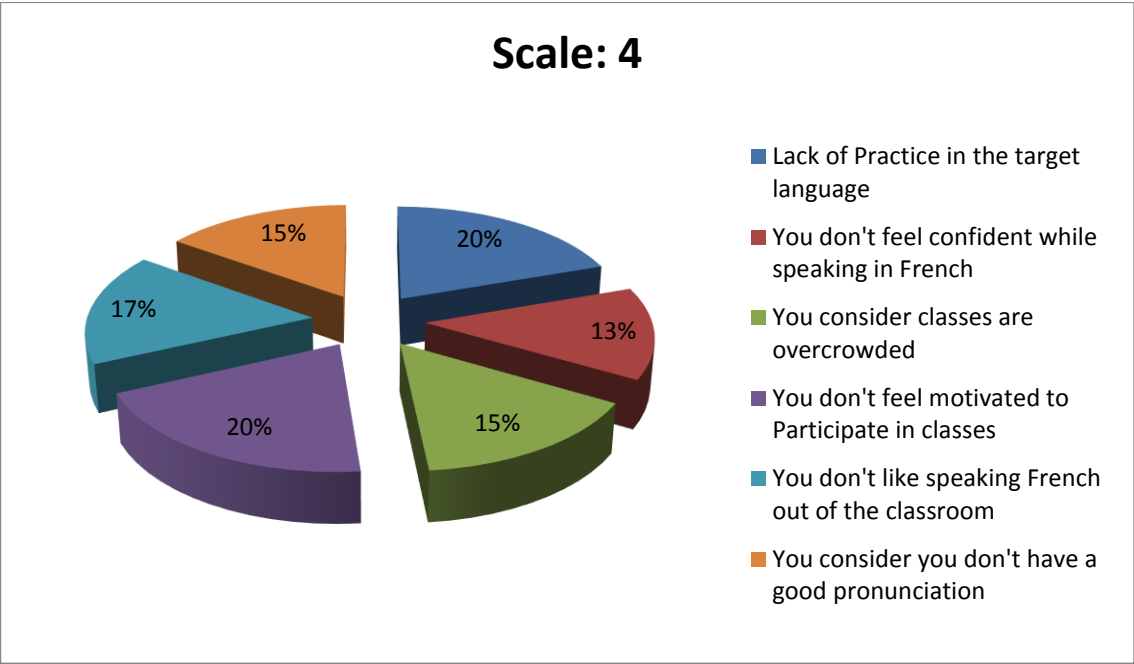


Many factors can affect students' oral proficiency and as a result they have trouble communicating their ideas effectively. Based on the answers gotten from fourth year students of Modern Languages Major it can be concluded that: 50% of them consider the factor that is extremely influential on their oral proficiency is the fact they don't practice in the target language. 23% of students think that overcrowded classes affects their oral proficiency improvement because they do not have too many opportunities to speak in classes and when they do teachers do not have enough time to correct each one of them. The 9% answered they don't like speaking French out of the classroom. The factor "You

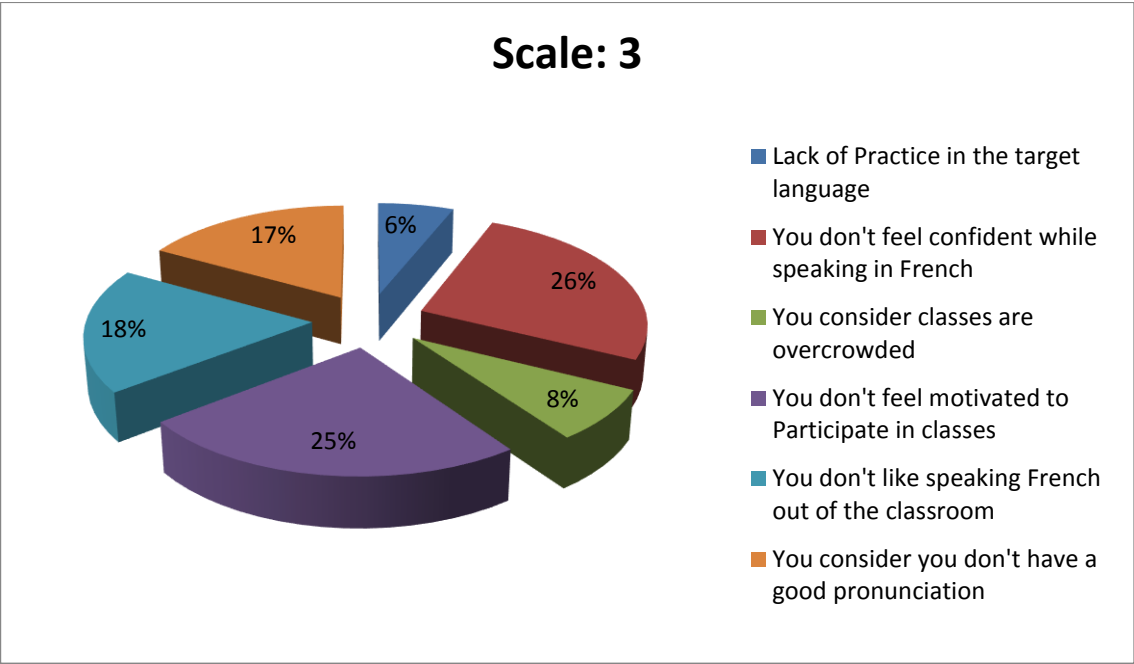
consider you don't have a good pronunciation" obtained 8% of the answers. Motivation to participate in classes had a 4% out of 100%.



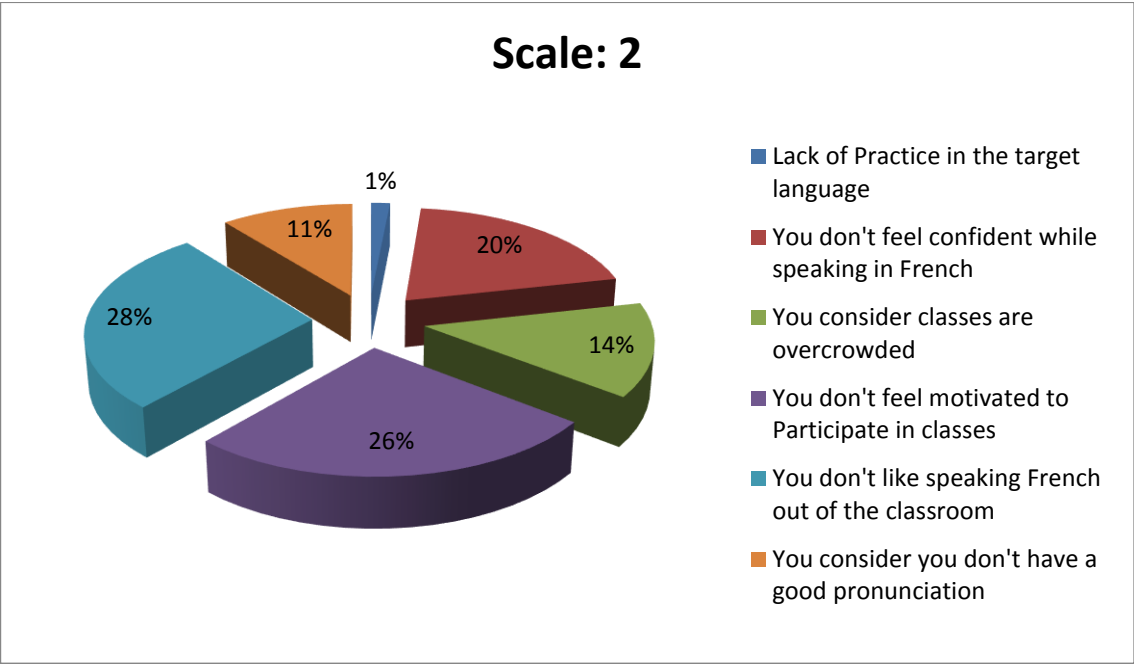
Following the scale designed on the third question, the factor that students rated the most is that they considered classes are overcrowded getting a 30% out of 100% of the students surveyed. Based on the results, it can be said that large groups do not allow all students to participate in classes, and that makes them difficult to correct mistakes while speaking in French. The 23% said the factors affects the most is that they do not feel confident while speaking in French. The 15% stated that the factor "you consider you do not have a good pronunciation" has a very influential effect on them. The 14% of the students considered it is lack of practice in the target language. The 11% answered the factors is very influential in their oral proficiency is that they do not like speaking French out of the classroom. The factor that obtained the less percentage was that students considered they do not feel motivated to participate in classed.



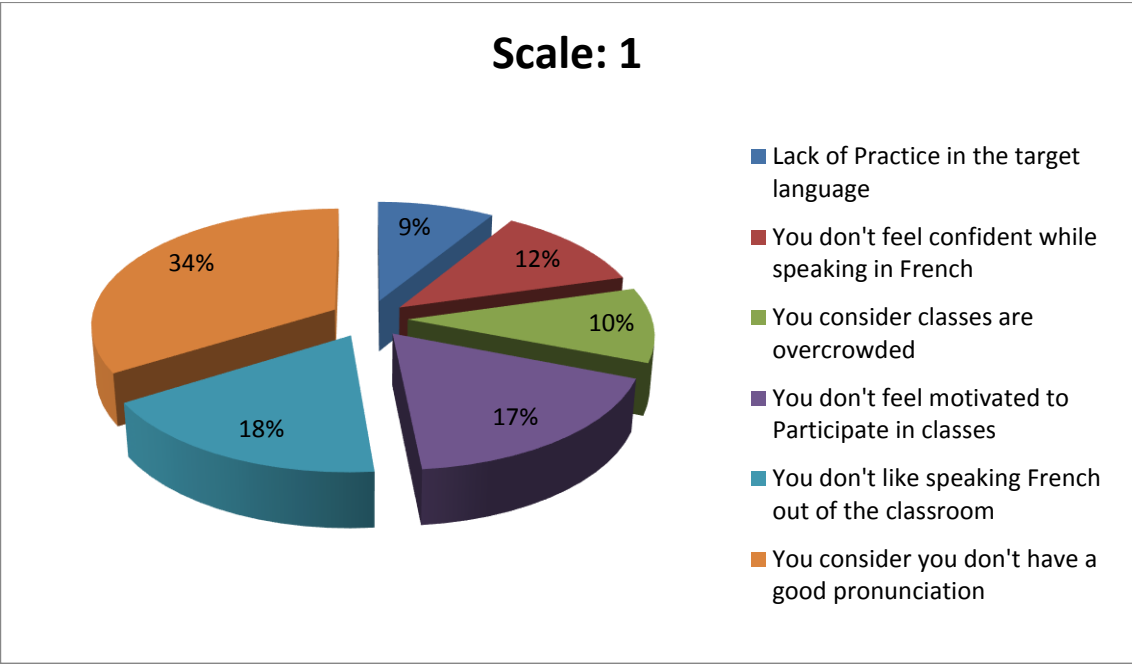
Based on the scale 4, the 20% said that both lack of practice in the target language and classes are overcrowded are the factors with a moderately influential effect on their oral proficiency in French. Follow by a 17% corresponding to “You don’t like speaking French out of the classroom”. A 15% consider they don’t have a good pronunciation in French; the same percentage is for “classes are overcrowded”. And the smallest percentage (13 %) is for “you don’t feel confident while speaking in French”.



According to answers gotten, it can be said that: students don't feel confident while speaking in French is the common answer obtaining a 26%. Then, with a 25%, it is the factor "you don't feel motivated to participate in classes". The 18% of the students don't like speaking French out of the classroom. While a 17% consider that not having a good pronunciation has a somewhat influential effect in their oral proficiency. An 8% considerer the factor "classes are overcrowded" as the one is affecting them. Finally, lack of practice in the target language obtained just the 6%.

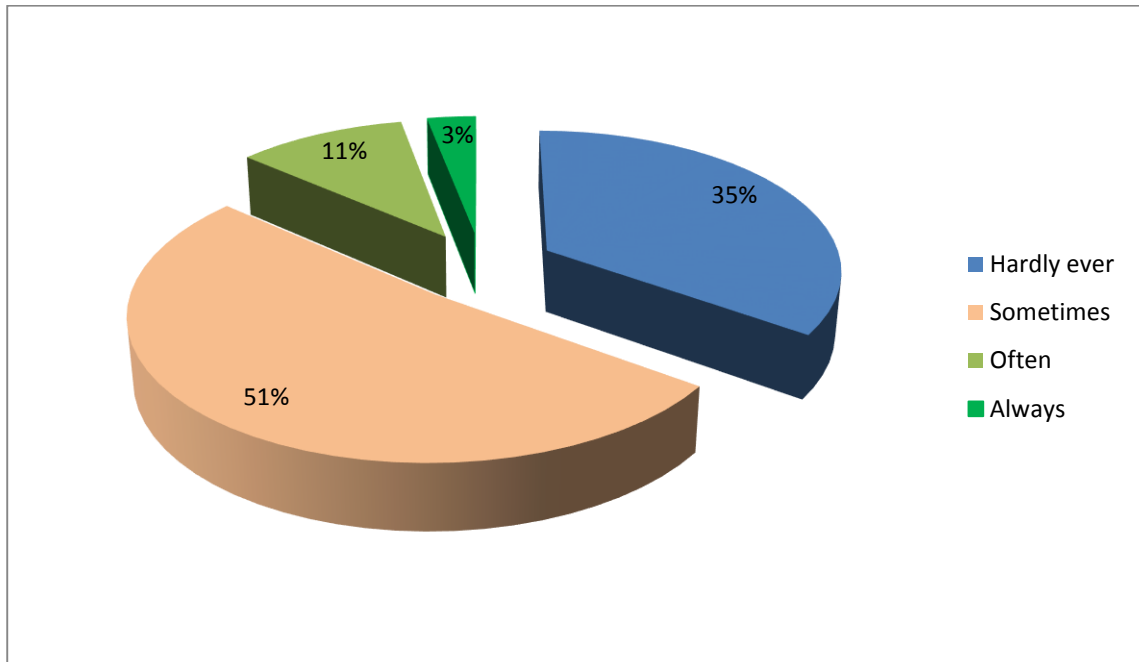


According to the results obtained, the 28% rated the factor “you don’t like speaking French out of the classroom” in the scale 2 having an attribute of somewhat influential effect. The motivation students have to participate in classes obtained the 26%. The 20% of the students said the factor that has a somewhat influential effect is “you don’t feel confident while speaking in French”. The 14% answered it is “classes are overcrowded”. The factor with the lowest percentage was the lack of practice in the target language with a 1%.



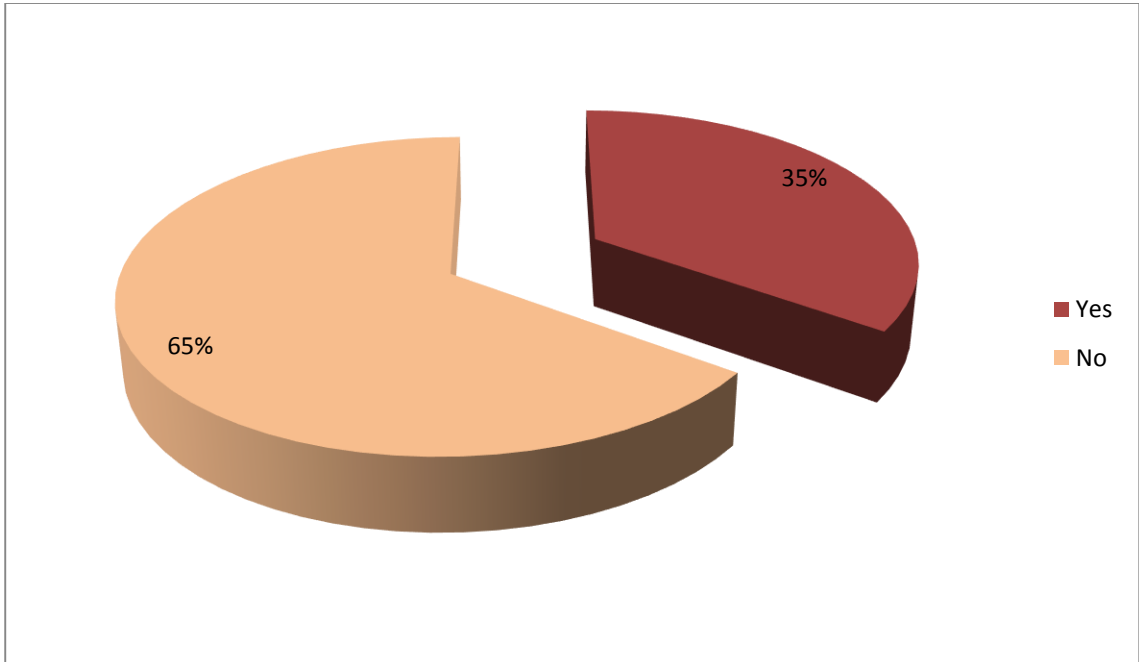
Following the scale 1 corresponding to not at all influential, the 34% of students consider the factor “you consider you don’t have a good pronunciation”. This shows that having a good pronunciation does not have a great effect on students. The 18% of the students don’t like speaking French out of the classroom. Students consider the motivation they have to participate in classes has not at all influential effect on them. A 17% of the students answered classes are overcrowded. Self – confidence while speaking in French obtained a 12% of all answers obtained. The lowest percentage corresponds to lack of practice (9%).

4- How often do you practice French out of the classroom?



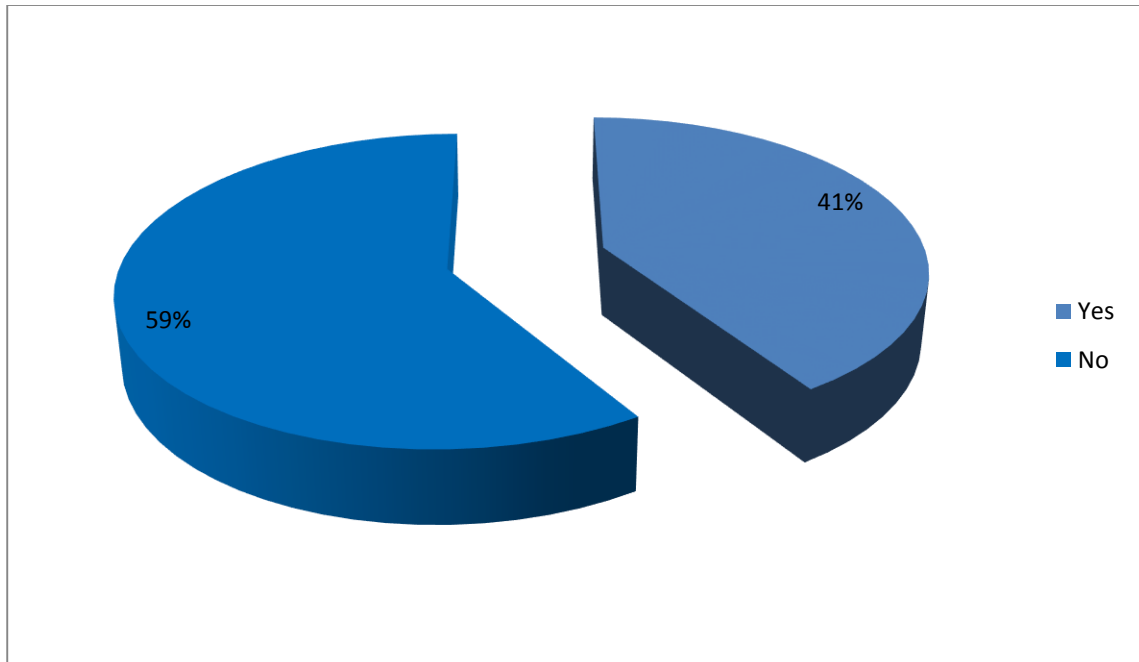
Considering that the process of language learning is continuous and individual; it is important to mention that practicing the target language in a constant way is essential for developing and improving oral competences. When students were asked to say how often they practice French out of the classrooms, most of the students surveyed, specifically the 51%, said that they sometimes practice French out of the classroom, 35% hardly ever do it, a 11% often practice French while only the 3% affirms that they always practice French not only when they are in classes but also outside the classrooms.

5- Did you have some knowledge of French before starting your studies here? What level did you have?



Based on the results obtained, the 65% of the students said that they did not have any previous knowledge about French language before starting to study Modern Languages Major at the Foreign Languages Department while a significant percentage (35%) said already had some knowledge on French.

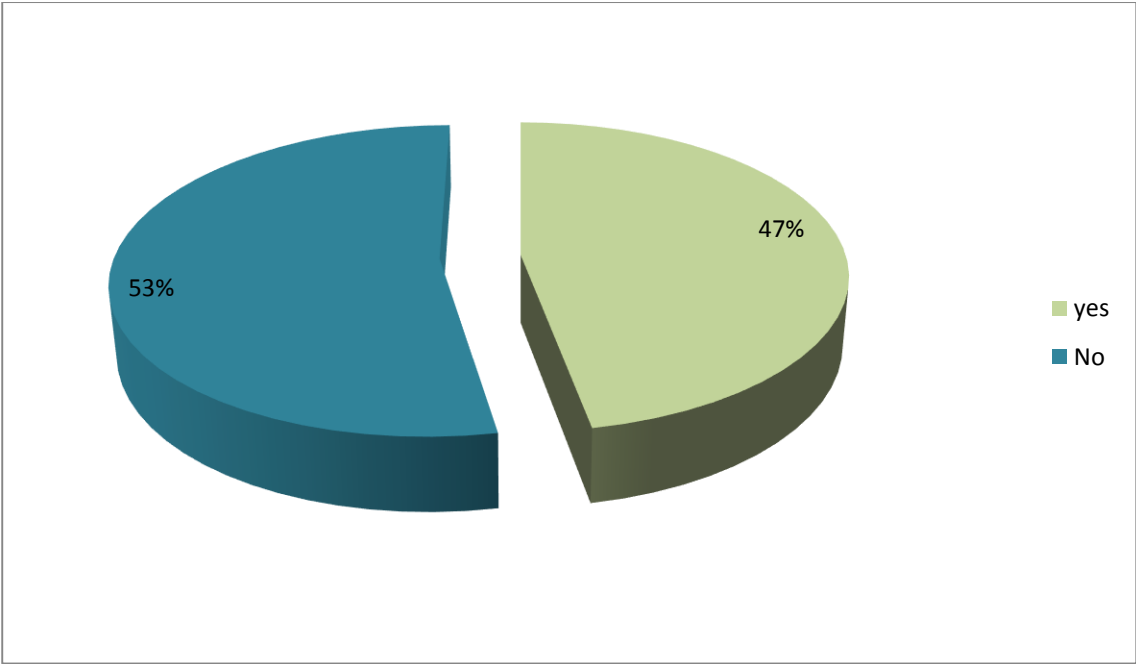
6- Do you feel the learning environment motives and makes you feel confident when you speak French in classes?



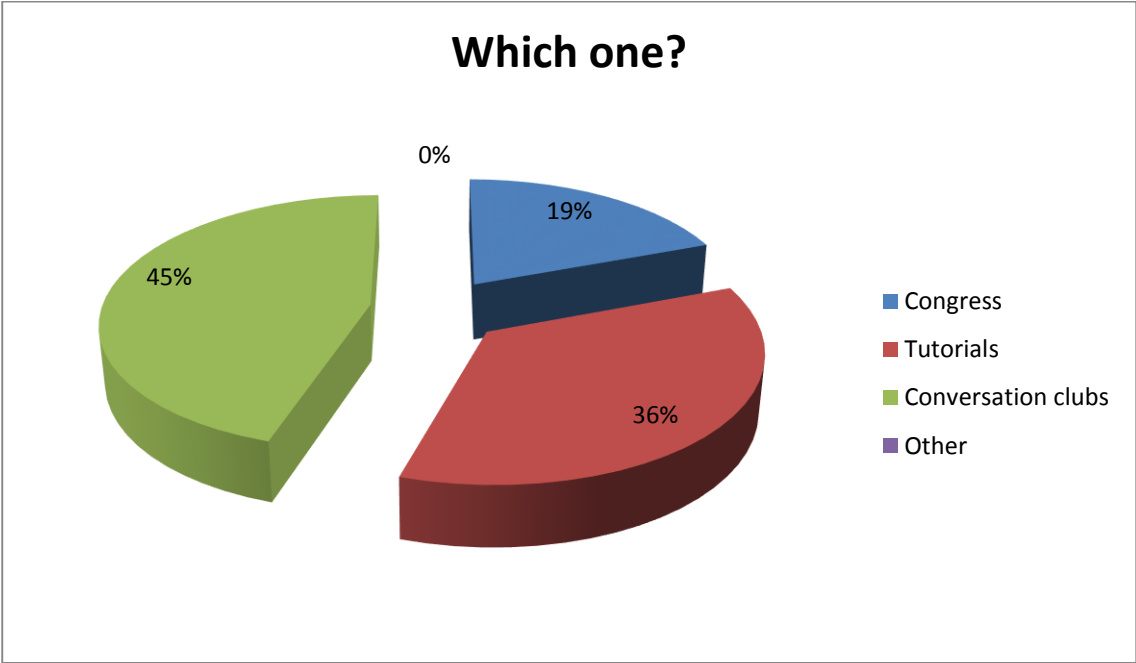
As shown in the chart above, 59% of the students state that the learning environment does not motivate them and does not make them feel confident when speaking in French in the classroom.

In addition, although the common answer was negative, there is a significant part of the students that think learning environment motives them and make them feel confident when they speak in classes. From the results obtained, it seems that the learning environment influences on the oral performance of every students. If the students feel comfortable in classrooms, they will feel more confident to participate in any oral activity asked by their teachers.

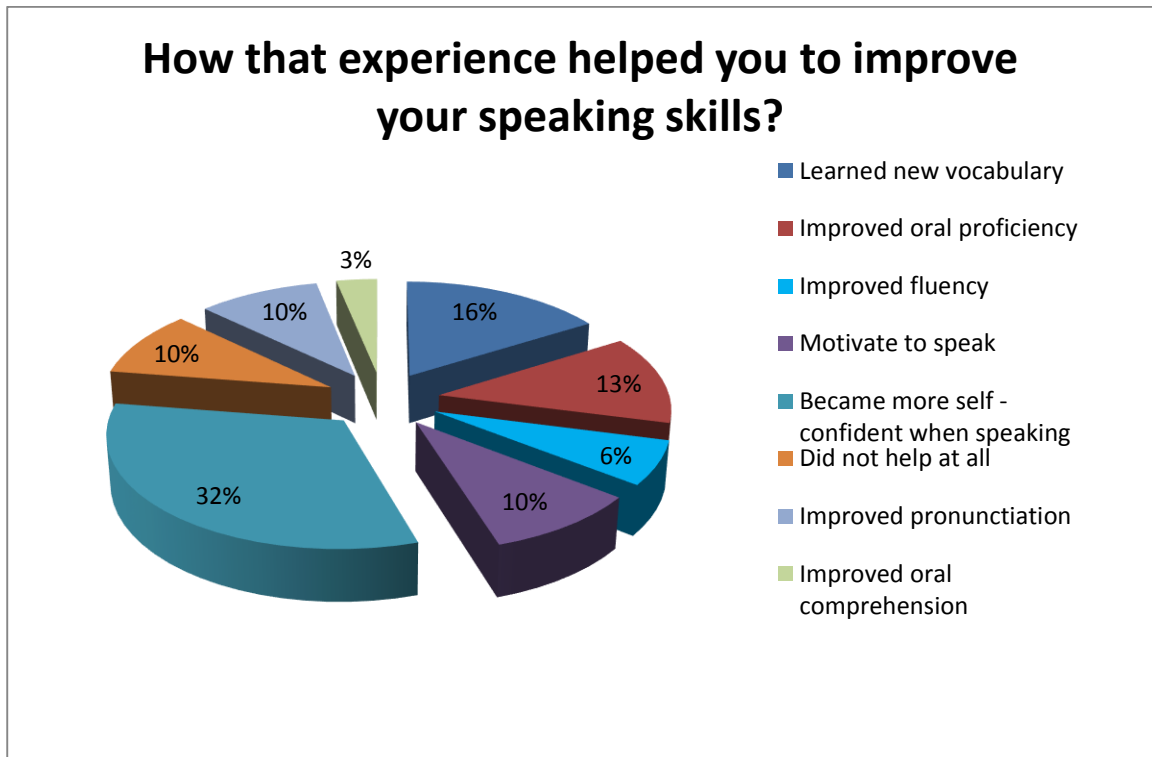
7- Have you ever participated in any of the following extracurricular activities?



Most of the students (53 %) affirm have not participated in any extracurricular activity while the rest (47%) stated has participated in some.



When students who answered having participated in any extracurricular activity were asked to mention the activity or course they participated, the 45% of the students surveyed answered they attended conversations clubs. A 36% said they have participated in tutorials. The 19% said they participated in Congresses.



According to the results obtained the 16% of students said that attending to an extracurricular activity helped them in learning new vocabulary. A 13% of students answered that such activity helped them to improve their oral proficiency. The 6% said that their fluency in the target language improved. A 10% of students said they noticed that the extracurricular activity motivated them to speak. 32% of students perceived they became more confident when speaking in the target language. The 10% said that those activities did not help them at all. The 10% think they improved their pronunciation. And a 3% of students perceived that they improved in oral comprehension. Overall, students who participated in extracurricular activities were positive thinking that those activities help them in different ways to improve their oral skills.

VII.4 Class observation

Different classes were observed in order to know the activities professors develop so they can help students improve their oral proficiency level. Some of the activities that were observed are mentioned below:

Teachers' Role

1. Professors always listened to all students' questions and comments they made

During the class observation it could be observed that professors always listened to any question students asked regarding the topic being studied. However, it was also observed that not all the students had enough time to participate when they were asked to do it, or when they decided to do it voluntarily. Besides, when teachers asked questions that required a more complex answer, students showed no interest in participating, and as a result professors ended up giving the answer themselves. There were only some few times in which they pushed students to try to give an answer by themselves.

This makes us think that even though professors gave students the opportunity to comment or ask questions, most of the students were afraid or simply not willing to participate. One of the reasons why not all the students participated or answered the questions could have been the fear students have to make mistakes in front of others while speaking in French. Another reason that might have affected students' participation was that the topic being studied was not of interest to them, and, if professors noticed that students were not interested or willing to participate, to propose alternatives ways to make the class more interactive.

2. Professors communicated with their students effectively

Another activity that was observed in both courses was the teachers' communication with their students. They did it very clearly and effectively to the level students were required to have (B1, independent user).

One activity that was not observed in the Tourism course was that the teacher did not apply any technique to correct mistakes students made while speaking in French. Most of the class, the teacher just paid attention to the students' participation but did not try to correct them every time they made mistakes while speaking. In regards to the French Literature course, this characteristic was rarely observed. There were few times when the teacher corrected his students when they made mistakes while speaking in French.

It is necessary to emphasize on this activity as it is considered of great importance to pay attention to the students' progress of the language and to correct them if necessary so they can avoid making those mistakes in the future and that will help them improve their oral proficiency level.

3. Professors constantly asked questions to monitor students' progress

Professors constantly asked questions to monitor students' progress. In both courses professors asked their students questions related to the topic being studied, so they could make sure students understood what was being discussed in class.

Another aspect observed was the teachers' eliciting information and encouraging students to speak in French. In the Tourism course this was sometimes observed. While in the Literature course this aspect was accomplished very well. During the Literature class, the teacher was always encouraging the students to participate and speak in French. For example, he asked students to read a story aloud; then he asked them to get into groups of

five and gave them a questionnaire, which they had to discuss and answer based on the book. The professor walked around the classroom and approached every group to make sure all students were discussing and participating in the activity and at the end he asked every group to share with the others what they had discussed.

4. Professors integrate knowledge of language with communicative skills and encourage students to answer difficult questions

We consider the theory-practice integration important when learning a second or foreign language. Therefore, another aspect to be observed was how professors integrated students' knowledge of the language to their communicative skills. It was observed that in both courses professors tried to make students answer difficult questions. For example, in the Tourism course the professor asked students to work in pairs and to present a role play in front of the class related to tourism. After every role play, the professor asked students to do an analysis on the role play presented taking into account different terms related to tourism, which were previously studied. Most of the students found difficulties doing the analysis; however, the professor tried to encourage them to share what they had discussed with the other students and gave them examples on how to do it, so it could be easier for them to present it.

Students' Role

The second part of the observation guide was focused on observing the students participation and their interest in the oral activities in class. One of the characteristics to be observed was students' willingness to speak in French

during class sessions. This aspect was hardly observed in both the Tourism and Literature courses.

During the class observation there were only few times where students participated in classes voluntarily or during the activities like groups discussions that require speaking in French. The reason why students did not show willingness to participate could be that they were afraid of speaking in French or perhaps they did not have much information related to the topic being discussed.

Another important aspect sometimes observed was that most of the students hesitated when they were speaking in French, for example when they were participating in an oral activity like group discussions and role plays, or when the professor was teaching the class and then he asked students to participate. The hesitations students made when speaking in French could be due to the lack of vocabulary related to the topic studied or the fear to make mistakes when speaking in French.

During the class observation, it was observed that sometimes students asked the teacher questions related to the topic being discussed. However only few of them showed willingness to ask questions and every time the teachers asked them if they had any comments or questions, the same people participated. The rest seemed to pay attention to the topic discussed in class, but they preferred not to participate.

It was also observed in both classes that every time the teacher did an oral activity, students were not motivated enough to participate. There are different reasons why probably students were not motivated to participate in the oral activities. One of the reasons may be that students could feel unconfident when speaking in French; therefore, they preferred not to participate. Another reason for this behavior might be because the topic studied was not of interest to the class or perhaps students did not know about the topic being studied; therefore, they did not participate when they were asked.

An aspect that was also observed in both courses was the students' reluctance to speak in the target language. That is, most of them did not try to speak in French during activities proposed by professor in charge of the course. For example, in the French Literature course, the teacher asked his students to work in groups to discuss a question guide he provided. In the groups observed, most of the students spoke in Spanish and there were very few students who tried to speak in French. Most of the students preferred to speak in their native language, that is, in Spanish. Probably it was so because they felt more confident doing in it that way or maybe they were afraid of making mistakes while speaking in French.

Even though the purpose of both courses is to introduce them to the Tourism field and to the different literary movements in France we consider that Professors should take advantage of the courses and do more oral activities in order to emphasize the practice and improvement of the oral skills among students. These courses can and should give students more opportunities to put into practice the French language students have learned. Since most of the oral activities are related to class discussions, professors should encourage students to speak and practice the language more.

In the case of students, they should take this as an opportunity to practice their oral skill and learn new vocabulary in areas such as tourism and literature. That will help them not only to improve their oral skills in French but also to enrich their vocabulary, and be able to use the language in different situations and contexts.

As a conclusion for this part, it can be said that students overall, hesitate and are reluctant to speak in the target language in front of their classmates probably because of fear of making mistakes and being laugh at. It can also be said that there are not many oral activities included in the French Literature and Tourism classes that can help students improve their oral proficiency skill but that they should be included to provide students the opportunity to keep on practicing their oral skill as much as possible.

VII.5 Teacher's Interview

An interview was done to four FLD French professors with the purpose of knowing their points of view related to their students' oral skills, the oral proficiency level they considered fourth year students of the Modern Languages Major reach and what they do to help their students improve their oral skills.

The interview consisted of a guide containing 10 open questions. The questions were related to the professors' academic background, the type of activities they do in the classrooms in order to help students improve their oral proficiency and how those activities motivate students' participation. It also included aspects related to find out the point of view teachers have about the current oral proficiency level students had and their opinions on the possible aspects that prevent some students from reaching the expected level.

The interview was made to 4 professors of the Modern Languages major: MsD. Odir Alexander Mendizabal (Intensive french professor), MsD. Alfredo Lopez (French Litterature professor), Lic. Lourdes Azucena (Intensive French professor), and andLic. Miguel Umaña(Tourism professor).

First of all, professors were asked to briefly mention their academic level. Two of the professor, Odir Alexander Mendizabal and Alfredo Lopez, said that they have a Master's Degree in Didactics. Whereas, the other two, Lic. Lourdes Azucena and and Lic. Miguel Umaña, said they each have a BA in Modern Languages and that they graduated from this Major at the University of El Salvador.

Inside and Outside Classroom Activities

In order to know the type of activities that teachers assigned students to be carried out of the classroom to help them improve their oral proficiency and how those activities motivate students' in-class participation, professors were

asked to describe the activities and explain how they helped their students in their performance.

Three of the professors answered that the activity they usually asked their students to do is role plays. They stated it helped students overcome the fear of speaking in front of others and to improve their oral skills. Only one of the teachers interviewed said that due to the nature of the course he teaches, (French literature I) the activities he can do to help his students practice their oral skills are very few.

He pointed out that most of the activities that can help students improve their oral skills are carried out in the first three years of study. He said that in the fourth year, students only take specialization courses (French Literature and Tourism). Therefore, the oral activities performed are limited. In his case he said what he does to help students oral proficiency improvement is to ask them to read aloud.

Motivation

As part of the research, motivation was taken into account in order to know how this element can influence on the students' participation and to find out the teacher's opinion regarding this matter.

Related to students' motivation toward the oral activities performed in classes, two of the teachers answered that students are always motivated whenever they do oral activities in classes. In contrast, the French literature teacher, Alfredo Lopez, assured students are not motivated at all as they feel afraid of speaking in French in front of the class. He said most of the time he has to push them to speak.

On the other hand, Professor Odir Alexander Mendizabal stated that motivation depends on students' attitude (willingness, interest in the language, attendance to every class) and the previous knowledge they have about French. He considered that some students who already have some knowledge about the

language seem to make them willing to participate in any oral activity such as role plays, class discussions and presentations. He also mentioned that students who have previous knowledge break the fear barrier, different from other students who do not have previous knowledge in the language; this other group is afraid of participating and is reluctant to do it.

Expected Oral Proficiency Level

Another question included in the interview was related to the teachers' opinions regarding the problems students may have to reach the expected level. All of them agreed that students do have problems reaching the level B1 (independent user) and they attribute this to the students attitudes and the quality of teaching.

When teachers were asked the level of oral proficiency fourth year students should have, three of them agreed that the expected level was B1 while only one said it was B2.

Aspects that may affect students' oral proficiency

Professors mentioned that the following aspects are some of the factors that affect the students' oral proficiency development:

- ✓ Attitude
- ✓ Aptitude
- ✓ Lack of practice
- ✓ Quality of teaching
- ✓ Lack of motivation

The professors' interviewed mentioned different factors that could influence on the students' oral proficiency level. However, there are some other aspects that we consider can also affect the students' oral proficiency. For example: lack of confidence when speaking French, students' fear to speak

French because they are afraid to make mistakes or mispronounce words while speaking.

Criteria for evaluating

The criteria French teachers used to evaluate or determine the level students have in French language are based on the oral evaluation designed by the common European Framework which include aspects like: fluency, pronunciation and comprehension.

Three of the teachers interviewed, affirmed they recommend students some activities to do out of the classroom in order to help them improve their oral skills such as:

- ✓ Reading aloud: by means of readings students can improve pronunciation, grammar and fluency.
- ✓ Oral exercises
- ✓ Use of internet
- ✓ Books consultations

Professor Miguel Umaña said that he can help students if they ask for. The evaluations he applies to his students, he explains, are the only tool he uses to have a perception about the oral level their students have.

Oral Proficiency Level Reached by Students

Teachers were asked if all students reach the expected level (B1). All of them have different opinions on this respect. Lic. Alfredo Lopez (Professor of Literature Course) assures that unfortunately most of the students do not reach the expected level. He expressed that around the 10% has already the level B1 and the rest of the students have reached the level A2. Miguel Umaña

(Professor of French and The Tourism) said that most of the students reach level B1 once they are in the fourth year. Lic. Lourdes Azucena (Professor of Intermediate French) also agreed that most of the students may reach B1; however, she said she has not taught fourth-year students. Lic. Odir Mendizabal (Professor of Intermediate French) said that probably only some students reach B1 and others do not, but he also pointed out he is not teaching to fourth year students, so he could not assure if all of the students reach the expected level.

Books used to teach

When teachers were asked if the books used for teaching French courses were the appropriate ones to make students reach an oral proficiency level B1 during their learning process, only one of them agreed completely that the book used, which is ECO, is the best book that can be used to teach French and to help students improve their oral skills. Professor Alfredo López stated that the book currently used is not the appropriate one to make students speak as it has a lot of vocabulary to learn and activities to do, but it does not have enough activities to improve oral skills. The other two said the books used provide some activities that can help students develop their oral skills. However, they said those exercises are not enough and considered students should be given more oral exercises to practice.

Previous Knowledge

Teachers were asked to tell if having a previous knowledge on the French language makes some students reach faster an oral proficiency level B1. From all answers obtained, it can be said that all the interviewed agreed that having previous knowledge of French can make them reach the expected oral proficiency level (B1) more easily and makes them feel more confident while speaking in French.

However, they said there may be some cases in which students with previous knowledge do not push themselves to reach a higher level, and therefore that makes them show no interest in classes as they may feel they already know what is being taught. As a result, at the end of the course they will be at the same level of the other students that did not have previous knowledge on French when they started their studies of the language.

Resources to Evaluate Students

Finally, professors were asked to mention the kind of resources they use to evaluate the students' oral proficiency level. They answered that they evaluate their students' oral proficiency level in different ways; for example, students participate in contests, or have reading aloud exams, and other types of oral exams according to DELF (English: Diploma in French Studies) which include interviews, role plays, the argumentation evaluations.

The conclusion reached based on the interview was that teachers consider most of the fourth-year students of the Modern languages Major in the second semester 2013, do not have the expected oral proficiency level (B1, independent user). All interviewed professors consider that one of the factors that influence most of the students not to reach the expected level is the lack of motivation.

Motivation can significantly influence the oral proficiency level students reach. A student learning French will develop his oral skill in a better way depending on how motivated he is.

The term motivation refers to the attitudes or willingness that students show towards activities performed inside or outside the class (the interaction with other French students not only in their study environment). Therefore it can be an important factor to determine the success when learning a foreign language, in this case French language.

In addition, professors also agreed that the lack of practice is another factor that affects a lot the students' oral proficiency improvement.

It is known that practice is an important aspect of the learning process. If students do not take enough time to practice, they will not achieve high levels of proficiency in the language they are learning.

The students' reluctance or unwillingness to practice the language can be caused by different factors, for example: Students may feel that they lack confidence to speak in French. Some others can say that they do not have a broad vocabulary to hold/handle a conversation in the language being learned. And finally, students can say that the topic of the conversation is not interesting for them.

Finally, the interviewed pointed out the necessity to provide professors with more material that includes oral activities to do in classes, so students can have more opportunities to practice French. A way to provide professors with the material mentioned before would be updating the books used to teach French can also make students feel more motivated to participate in oral activities and therefore improve their oral skills.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Oral proficiency is one of the most important skills during the learning process of a foreign language. The oral proficiency level reached by learners can vary depending on different aspects. Some of the Aspects involved are related to motivation, lack of practice, previous knowledge and the like. Previous studies made on this topic and that were mentioned in this research agreed that all the aspects above influence the oral proficiency level learners reach.

Despite the limitations researchers had to administer the test that was going to support the research such as unwillingness of students to take the test and schedules conflicts of the professor that would evaluate students, the results obtained showed that many students had difficulties when speaking French and that this might prevent them from reaching the expected oral proficiency level required at the fourth year of the Modern Languages major, that is B1 independent user).

According to the results, some students in their fourth year of studies of the Modern Language major have reached level B1 while the rest of the students can be classified in level A2.

In spite of the fact that we could not get a more representative sample due to the lack of cooperation shown by students, still from the results obtained in our research, it can be concluded that what other researchers have found in their own environments can also be applied to what happens in classrooms in the FLD of the UES, where French is taught as a foreign language. Among those aspects that can affect students' performance, there can be mentioned the following ones:

- 1) Lack of practice is the main aspect that affects fourth year students' oral proficiency.

- 2) Motivation is of a great importance in the learning process. If students are motivated enough, they will put much more effort on learning a language.
- 3) Most of the students do not show willingness to participate in any oral activity proposed by the teacher.
- 4) Overcrowded classes limit students' participation in class. Therefore students' oral skills development is affected.
- 5) Only few students attend extracurricular activities related to oral skills improvement.
- 6) Most of the teachers interviewed consider the books used to teach French do not have many exercises for improving the oral proficiency level.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

After carrying out the research and taking into account the results obtained, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Teachers of the Modern Languages Major should make a diagnosis every year on the oral proficiency level students have and determine if the level students attain fills the expectations according to the level required each year of study.
2. Teachers should provide the students with more oral activities that can help them improve their argumentative skills.
3. The Foreign Languages Department should create courses with the purpose of preparing students for taking the DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française) examination since this diploma certifies the students' knowledge in French language.
4. The Foreign Languages Department should reduce the number of students accepted in each group, so that they can have more opportunities to practice the language being learned and develop their oral skills according to the required level.
5. Students should take seriously the role of active learners since the time for the class is not enough to develop their oral skills. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage students to practice more their French out of the classroom.
6. The Foreign Languages Department should make an agreement with the Embassy of France to have French native teachers supporting in some classes. In this way, students would have the opportunity to practice the

language with native speakers and this will help them improve their pronunciation, fluency, grammar structure and the like.

7. It is important to motivate students to participate in extracurricular activities such as: conversation clubs, tutorials, congresses, and other extracurricular activities.
8. Teachers of the Modern Languages Major should make an analysis of the books used to teach the different levels of French to determine if they are the appropriate ones to help students improve their oral skills.
9. Provide students with a learning environment that motivates them and makes them feel confident when speaking in French.

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XI. ANNEXES

Annex 1

The Common European Framework, abbreviated as CEFR, is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, in other countries. Its purpose is to provide a method of learning, teaching and assessing that can be applied to all languages.

Common Reference Levels: global scale

Proficient user:

C2: Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources; reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

C1: Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/her fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices

Independent user:

B2: Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can

produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options

B1: Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Basic User:

A2: Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need

A1: Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Annex 2

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



Objective: To determine the main difficulties that fourth year students of the Modern Languages Major have during their learning process of French.

Directions: Answer the following questions based on your own experience as student of Modern Languages Major.

1- Which of the following activities do your teachers do in order to make you practice French in the classroom, and how often do you practice them?

Activity	Always	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
Oral presentations				
Oral exams				
Role – plays				
Group vocabulary review				
Debates				
Class discussions				
Storytelling				
Others: _____				

2- Do you think the activities you usually perform in the classroom are useful to improve your oral proficiency in French?

yes__ No__

3- Which of these factors do you think affect your oral proficiency (oral skills)?
 Number then in a scale from 1 to 6, being 6 the one that affects you the most.

Lack of practice in the target language	
You don't feel confident while speaking in French	
You consider classes are overcrowded	
You don't feel motivated to participate in classes	
You don't like speaking French out of the classroom	
You don't have a good pronunciation	
Others: _____	

4- How often do you practice French out the classroom?

Hardly ever	
sometimes	
Often	
always	

5- Did you have some previous knowledge of French before starting your studies here?

What level did you have?

Basic ___ Intermediate ___ other _____

6- Do you feel the learning environment motivates and makes you feel confident when you speak in classes?

yes___ No___

7- Have you ever participated in any of these extracurricular activities?

Congress _____

Tutorials _____

Conversation clubs _____

Other: _____

If yes, did that experience help you to improve your speaking skills?

Annex 3

OBSERVATION GUIDE

Classroom Observation Guide

Teacher _____ Date _____
Course _____ Number of students present _____
Evaluator(s) _____

Directions:

Select the number at the right that best represents your response. Use the comment space below each section to provide more feedback or suggestions.

1 = Not observed

2 = More emphasis recommended

3 = Accomplished very well

Teacher's characteristics	1	2	3
The teacher elicits information and encourages all students to speak in the target language.			
The teacher uses techniques to indicate and correct errors and mistakes students make while speaking French.			
Listens to student questions & comments			
The teacher increases student's talking time			
Communicates clearly and effectively to the level of the students (B1,			

independent user)			
Creates conditions for students to integrate knowledge of language with communicative skills			
Asked questions to monitor students' progress			
Encouraged students to answer difficult questions			
Supported lesson with useful classroom discussions and exercises			
Use of didactic material to support oral activities.			

comments

Students' characteristics	1	2	3
Students show willingness to speak in French			
Students hesitates while speaking in French			
Students avoid to			

Speak in their native language			
Students ask questions related to the topic being discussed.			
Most of the students participate in every oral activity.			
Students show interest in answering the teacher's questions.			
Students are motivated to participate in every oral activity			

Comments:

Annex 4

CLASS OBSERVATION

FRENCH LITERATURE I

This is a sample of a class observation made on the second semester to fourth year students of the Modern Languages Major.



TOURISM

It can be observed how the teacher asks students directly to participate in a class discussion.



It can be observed the students' participation during the development of oral activities in class.

Annex 5

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



INTERVIEW FOR PROFESSORS OF FRENCH

Objective: To know the professors' opinions regarding the oral proficiency level reached by fourth year students of Modern Language Major and the activities they do to help their students improve their oral skills.

1- Do you have a master's degree?

Yes _____ No _____

2. What is your major in?

3- What kind of activities do you apply to help your students improve their oral proficiency?

4- Do you think these activities motivate students to participate more in classes?

5- What oral proficiency level are students expected to have when they reach their fourth year of studies?

6-Do you think that students have problems to reach that level?

7- What factors do you consider affects students' oral proficiency?

8- What do you do as teacher to help students reach that level?

9- What is the criteria used to decide the level they should have at this point of their studies?

10- If you find that students haven't reached the expected level, do you do something to help students overcome the situation?

If yes, what do you do?

If not, why not?

11- Do you think students reach the expected level B1 after four years of study?

12- Do you think all students reach that level?

13- Do you think the books used for teaching French courses are the appropriate ones to make students reach an oral proficiency level B1 during their learning process?

14- According to your experience as a teacher, can you tell us if having a previous knowledge on French language make some students reach faster an oral proficiency level B1?

15- What kinds of resources do you use to evaluate the students oral proficiency level?

Annex 6

DOCUMENT RÉSERVÉ AUX EXAMINATEURS

Grille d'évaluation de la production orale

1ère partie- Entretien dirigé

Peut parler de soi avec une certaine assurance en donnant informations, raisons et explications relatives à ses centres d'intérêt, projets et actions.	0	0.5	1	1.5	2
Peut aborder sans préparation un échange sur un sujet familier avec une certaine assurance	0	0.5	1		

2ème partie- Exercice en interaction

Peut faire face sans préparation à des situations même un peu inhabituelles de la vie courante (respect de la situation et des codes sociolinguistiques)	0	0.5	1		
Peut adapter les actes de parole à la situation.	0	0.5	1	1.5	2
Peut répondre aux sollicitations de l'interlocuteur (vérifier et confirmer des informations, commenter le point de vue d'autrui, etc.)	0	0.5	1	1.5	2

3ème partie- Expression d'un point de vue

Peut présenter d'une manière simple et directe le sujet à développer	0	0.5	1	1.5		
Peut présenter et expliquer avec assez de précision les points principaux d'une réflexion personnelle.	0	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5
Peut relier une série d'éléments en un discours assez clair pour être suivi sans difficulté la plupart de temps	0	0.5	1	1.5		

Pour ensemble des 3 parties de l'épreuve

Lexique (étendue et maîtrise)									
Possède un vocabulaire suffisant pour s'exprimer sur des sujets courants, si nécessaire à l'aide de périphrases ; des erreurs sérieuses se produisent encore quand il s'agit d'exprimer une pensée plus	0	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4

complexe.											
Morphosyntaxe											
Maitrise bien la structure de la phrase simple et les phrases complexes les plus courantes. Fait preuve d'un bon contrôle malgré de nettes influences de la langue maternelle	0	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Maitrise du système phonologique											
Peut s'exprimer sans aide malgré quelques problèmes de formulation et des pauses occasionnelles	0	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3				
La prononciation est claire et intelligible malgré des erreurs ponctuelles											

NOTE SUR 25

TOTAL :