UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR

FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

RESEARCH PROJECT:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' ENGLISH BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE AND THEIR ORAL PROFICIENCY LEVEL IN READINGS AND CONVERSATION I COURSE OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH WITH EMPHASIS IN TEACHING IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR SEMESTER II, 2017.

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FINAL RESEARCH REPORT TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH WITH EMPHASIS IN TEACHING

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By Efraín Arturo Rodríguez Escoto

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INTRODUCTION

a. Brief description of parts of the research project profile:

The research was held with students of the course Readings and Conversation I from the Bachelor of Arts in English with Emphasis in Teaching in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador semester II, 2017. This research is descriptive since the researchers describe characteristics of the population or phenomenon that was studied in order to determine if there exists a relation between English background knowledge and their English Oral Proficiency. Regarding the communicative competences this research also presents information that can help to know if it is needed to set linguistic knowledge requirements for future students who want to apply to study the major in English Teaching in the Foreign Language Department at UES.

b. Methodology in general terms:

It is necessary to give a brief explanation of the methodology used in this research project. The method that was used in this study is descriptive since researchers aimed to provide more information about the relationship between students' English background knowledge and their oral English proficiency level. The research explains the effects of being a true or false beginner when starting the English major. The Population of the research was students from the University of El Salvador; the ones who were studying the third year of the Bachelor of Arts in English with Emphasis in Teaching in the Foreign Language Department, year 2017. The researchers considered to take as sample students who were legally registered and actively taking the Readings and Conversation I course since they were the students who had already finished their English Courses. The instruments to be used were three: **A short questionnaire** made by the researchers, **a placement test** based on the parameters that the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) offers and **an interview protocol** which includes different topics to be developed orally, in order to rate students' oral proficiency making use of a rubric form the Oral Proficiency Interview, (OPI) (2012) from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Besides that, the

data was analyzed by comparing results and focusing specifically in the oral part. The results of the English oral proficiency level (A1, A2, B1, B2 and so on) between true beginners and false beginners were compared in order to determine if English background knowledge influenced the oral proficiency that they reached at the end of their Intensive English courses.

c. Summary of the research project:

The research project has as main goal to determine if there exists any relationship between students' English background knowledge and their oral English proficiency level at the end of Readings and conversation I courses in the Bachelor of Arts in English with emphasis in Teaching at the University of El Salvador during semester II-2017. To do this, a placement test and an interview took place in order to rate students' oral proficiency making use of a rubric form the Oral Proficiency Interview, (OPI) (2012) from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). In addition, the research provides a description of the strengths and weaknesses of students with no English background knowledge regarding communicative competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic). Besides that, a proposal of establishing new knowledge requirements for future students of the B.A in English is provided.

d. Purpose of the study:

This study determines if there exist any relationship between an individual`s English background knowledge and his or her English Oral proficiency level when finishing their intensive English courses.

e. Conclusions:

The results determine any relationship between students' English background knowledge and their oral English proficiency level. In addition, the research provides a complete description of the strengths and weaknesses of students with no English background knowledge regarding to communicative competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic).

CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

1.1 Statement of the problem

English has become the medium in every domain of communication" (Pathom, 2010), but not everybody gets the ideal language proficiency level. In the latest years, Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has become a necessity for Salvadorian people. However, "Latin America is the weakest of all regions, with an average English proficiency score barely surpassing the low proficiency cutoff", (Bell, 2011). This weakness on English proficiency levels could be the result of many factors such as learning strategies, teacher`s methodologies and others. However, not many people pay attention to the background knowledge that a person has about English before starting a major related to it, and how this is related to the oral proficiency that a person gets at the end of his or her major.

It has to be mentioned that for a non-native speaker it is difficult to reach an advanced oral proficiency level of a second language. As the U.S. government states: "a limited English proficient student is one who comes from a non-English background and who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language. In fact, in the University of El Salvador, specifically in the Foreign Language Department there is a need of controlling who knows something about the second language (false beginner) and who doesn't know about the second language at all (true beginner) before starting the teaching major, for these individuals to have the opportunity of reaching a similar Oral Proficiency level.

1.2 Objectives

General:

- To determine if there exists any relationship between students' English background knowledge and the oral proficiency level they reach at the end of their Intensive English courses.

Specific:

1. To evaluate to what extent English background knowledge affects the oral proficiency level that a student reaches when finishing their Intensive English courses.

2. To identify the previous English oral knowledge of students from the Bachelor of Arts in English with Emphasis in Teaching, in the Foreign Language Department.

3. To describe the strengths and weaknesses of true and false beginners regarding the communicative competences.

4. To analyze the need of establishing linguistic knowledge requirements for future students of the B.A in English Teaching in the Foreign Language Department.

1.3 Research questions

General research question

- What is the relationship between students' English background knowledge and their oral proficiency level in Reading and Conversation I course of the Bachelor of Arts in English with Emphasis in Teaching in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador semester II, 2017?

Subsidiary research questions

- To what extent English background knowledge affects the oral proficiency level that a student reaches when finishing the Intensive English courses?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of true and false beginner learners regarding to communicative competences?

- Why is it necessary to have an understanding the level of English Proficiency for students who start the B.A in English Teaching in the Foreign Language Department?

1.4 Justification

The following research is presented with the aim of determining any relationship between an individual's English background knowledge and their oral proficiency level in Readings and conversation I courses in the Bachelor of Arts in English with emphasis in Teaching at the University of El Salvador during semester II-2017.

In the latest years, learning English as a foreign language has become a necessity for Salvadorian people. In the University of El Salvador, English with Emphasis in Teaching, for example, is one of the most popular careers chosen by students. However, not all the students who decide to take this major have English background knowledge before choosing it. The following research shows that having English background knowledge before starting a major related to it influences the English oral proficiency level that a student can get after they finish their English courses.

There are many reasons why it is important to pay attention to the English background knowledge that a student has. So as to mention some of those reasons, first of all, we can say that by doing so, teachers can tailor the lessons to students needs based on what they already know. It is important for teachers to know the English background knowledge that their students have in order to avoid topics which can be boring to students and in this way gain much more of their attention. As well, if teachers are aware of what their students know, they can tailor the topics, activities and other different tasks that are assigned to students for them to be able to enhance their knowledge and learn new things. Secondly, students can be challenged by learning new things and relate to their background knowledge. It is important to pay attention to the English background knowledge that a student has for them to be able to relate the new input with the one they already have and by relating new things with the old ones they will know more and get to be more proficient in English. Finally, students can get to develop higher level or English oral proficiency by the end of their major. At that point of their major, students will have built a strong knowledge and will develop a solid and advanced level of English oral proficiency.

People should be aware of the importance of having English background knowledge before starting a major related to the language. However, not many people consider the matter so important; consequently, the situation becomes a huge problem. For instance, let's analyze the understanding of the language inside the classrooms. If students can understand the teacher's instructions properly, they will be able to follow them and complete the classroom activities and homework assignment with none or less hassle. On the other hand, if the students are not paying attention or do not understand what they are asked to do, they will be disoriented, they might not be able to complete the task properly and even more, they may get lower grades than students who already had English knowledge.

To sum up, the following research will be beneficial not only for the researches to this investigation; but also, it will contribute to the future students that the FLD will have, in order to be aware that having English background knowledge might be useful for them to reach a higher level of oral proficiency at the end of the major.

1.5 Limitations

Even though, we had the change to achieve all the aims our research was scheduled for, there were some inconvenient that were not expected. We consider the time for the research was not enough to cover all the fields in a complete manner. The types of outcome students might have at the end of certain level takes a little bit of more time to be fully understood. Some communicative skills would have been easier to appreciate in the environment, if more time had been applied to asses them.

Also, there were some extra difficulties during this project. It was challenging for us to apply the instruments to our main research population. This was because some of the teachers in charge did not really help us to organize a schedule with students or they did not even let us get into their classroom to talk to them.

We faced also that members' schedule were different and whenever we had to get on a meeting to discuss certain points, we were required to reschedule the meeting.

At the end of the research, one of the investigators was removed of the researcher project. It became quite difficult to get in touch with her. After we finished the instruments application some research documents were sent to her inbox so she can take a look, but we never received any feedback. On July, 2018 the group tried to enroll her in the thesis project again asking her to meet with our thesis advisor Lic. Balmore Lipe but she never showed up. Those were the reasons why rest of the group took the decision to remove her from the research project. On top of that a letter was sent to the coordinator of graduation process Lic. Mauricio Contreras to mention such an action taken.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Definition of key terms

a) **English background knowledge:** This term in this research refers to "what a person already knows about a topic", (ASCD, 2016). In this case the topic is the knowledge about English language that a student from the B.A in English Teaching has before starting the major.

b) **Oral proficiency:** According to Swender (2012) "It involves the use of language skillfully and with accuracy, efficacy and effectiveness". Therefore, this term is used to refer to the competence students have when speaking English.

c) **True Beginner:** Podgornik (2012) states that true beginners are "learners who are coming across English for the very first time"; thus, in this research the students that don`t have English background knowledge before starting the B.A in English Teaching are going to be called true beginners.

d) **False beginner:** It can be said that this category refers to learners that "can participate in a simple English conversation" (Nayar, 1997). It means that in this research this term refers to those students that know something about the English language before starting their major.

e) **CEFR:** Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, this is the academic organization which leads and states the developments of the research from the theory up to the instrument design.

f) **Communicative language competence**: This term is the stilt of the theoretical framework and it refers to all the things a language user can do with the language for communication purposes. These communicative competences are divided into three areas which will constitute the theory for evaluating and assigning a level for the students' oral proficiency. Based on the Common European Framework of reference for Languages these three areas are: **Linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences.**

g) **Constructivism:** It is a didactic approach which is used to support the importance of background knowledge for the learning process.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Background knowledge

This part of the research gives more information to clarify some aspects that need to be considered. The term background knowledge sometimes sounds unfamiliar for many people and others relate this term to prior knowledge. Some studies have been carried out to consider the importance of background knowledge and how it works. Most of them guide us to the Teaching of English. For example, Herrmann (2013) shows many techniques on how to activate students´ prior knowledge and how to build this background knowledge.

The focus of this study lies on student's English background knowledge and how this either helps or complicates their oral proficiency at the end of their English courses at the University of El Salvador. Marzano (2004) states a fact: "What students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to the context." This has helped in order to prove that background knowledge not only helps in the acquisition of the new language but on the oral proficiency gathered at the end of their Intensive English courses. Prior knowledge determines what we learn from experience (Hermann, 2013). It is important to mention that is not necessary to have only English academic background knowledge but experiences that help learners to be proficient. There are three types of past experiences that might have some influence on their oral proficiency.

A) Traveling abroad

At the University of El Salvador there might be students who have had the opportunity to travel to foreign countries. There exists the possibility of traveling to countries which do not have the same spoken language. For example: The United States where English is the official language. If students have had the opportunity of traveling to countries like this, they may have had the opportunity *to talk or listen to a native speaker* of the language. This background knowledge may be acquired by these experiences, Language interaction-talking and listening to others (Marzano 2004).

B) Study English before starting the university

Nowadays in our country, El Salvador, there are many institutions that are teaching English as a foreign language such as academies, universities, private and public schools and others which work by their own benefits. Some students from the B.A in English with Emphasis in Teaching have probably studied English before starting this program. They might have advantages over the students who have not studied English before. Students who have a great deal of background knowledge in a given subject are likely to learn new information readily and quite well (Marzano, 2004). This applies to the reality that sometimes students who have English background knowledge may participate more in classes; as a result, they feel free to use the language and have better oral proficiency in the classes and at the end of their English courses.

C) Watch T.V in English

The mass media has a big influence on people´s lives. Whenever television appears you can probably find some ads that are in English. Most of the television programs and series are transmitted from other countries. Sometimes, educational programs really help to activate and acquire knowledge. They help students to learn things, also to put their background knowledge into practice. Programs in English will help their contact with the language and become users of this. Watching television significantly enhances the development of such knowledge (Marzano, 2004).

In order to clarify this, it is necessary to take into account the theory of constructivism "people actively construct or create their own subjective representations of objective reality. New information is linked to the prior knowledge, thus mental representations are subjective" (Marx, 1970). This study helps in order to have an idea of how background knowledge is used and acquired. It can be mentioned that in every learner this may be different, thus if a person has had different experiences their performance may work different.

What if a person does not have any background knowledge?

When someone starts learning a program related to second languages, they have previous knowledge. The problem is that sometimes their previous knowledge is not adequate to the level they are studying, but at least they know some words or can solve some issues. Hermann (2013) expresses "All humans that have lived have background knowledge." This

is true; we can experience this in every field of our lives. In the University of El Salvador, we can find both cases: people who have background knowledge due to previous experiences, and students who have not had any kind of contact with the new language they are learning. Marzano (2004) states "What seems to be critical is not sheer amount of experience but rather what one has been able to learn from and do with experience". Thus, this expresses the idea that background knowledge can be built and used through past experiences. On the other hand, if it is not used properly by the students, it may affect negatively in their English oral proficiency.

Students who don't have English background knowledge or who don't have many experiences with the language will probably not put into practice what is really needed. The background knowledge can be a key to succeed in their English development.

2.2.2 Studying English in El Salvador

Studying English in El Salvador might sometimes be a huge challenge; especially if the school in which a person is learning is not competent in teaching the language. That is the case of a lot of public schools in this country. Lack of teachers, deficiency in authentic English material, and few technological tools are some of the reasons why English in public schools is not at the same level compared to English in private ones.

First of all, let's mention the lack of "real" English teachers that most of public schools have. Having good English teachers help students a lot, not only to become very good speakers, readers and listeners; but also, to start thinking in English, rather than translating every single word from the mother tongue. By checking the reality in Salvadorian public schools, there are a lot of institutions that, even in this year, do not have an official English teacher in the school staff. While interviewing some students that finished their studies at a public school, some of them even mentioned that the school did not offer English as a subject, or if they had it, it was only a 45 minutes' class per week; which is not an appropriate time to develop all the skills needed. On the other hand, in private schools, English is an important subject that you must approve to graduate. Besides that, some of the interviewees mentioned that they had English classes from three to five class hours per week,

which gives us a total of around 12 to 15 hours a month, a reasonable time to learn some communicative skills.

As a second point, it is necessary to mention the lack of authentic English material that some public schools have in order to teach English. Having good materials help a lot, not only to teachers, but also to students because it gives real context, examples and definitions that may help to increase vocabulary and skills. The difficulty of using authentic material such as books, articles among others, could be the high prices that students need to pay in order to have access to them. In public schools, some of the books are chosen because of the prices rather than the accuracy and authenticity level they might have. In contrast to private schools, the material is chosen based on students' needs, and sometimes the price is not an issue because students can afford it.

Finally, the little access to technological devices or tools affects public schools in a serious way. It is not a secret anymore that technology offers a lot of tools to learn and improves a second language. However, if the school does not have access to them, it could result in lack of opportunities. Some interviewees mentioned that the public school in which they studied did not have access to a computer, projector, or even a CD player at the time they studied. This affects in a negative way because if students do not have the opportunity to listen the correct pronunciation, to have good reading access, or to practice in some web tools, the task to learn a second language could be more complicated. In the case of students that finished their studies in a private one, they said that this was not an issue because they could easily access these resources in their classrooms.

To sum up, the lack of English teachers, the deficiency in authentic English material, and the few technological tools are some of the reasons why English in public schools is poor compared to English in private ones. However, it is important to mention that students' attitude and self-learning can break this bonder easily.

2.2.3 Oral Proficiency

Many people are interested on the oral proficiency of English speakers. It has been proved that this helps in many fields and it is required by many institutions as standardized;

Academies, Call centers, Universities, etc. are some examples. This oral proficiency can play an important part in learning a new language. Now let us point out the importance of the English language proficiency on students.

It has it bases in many articles. In general terms, it can be said that there exist five English language proficiency standards. Lisboa, et al (2004) "The five English language proficiency standards are identical for the *classroom and large-scale* state assessment frameworks."

Moreover, it is mentioned that they communicate in English for *social and instructional* purposes within the school setting. English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of *language arts*, and in order to communicate in content areas such as *mathematics*, *science* and *social studies* as well. It is important to meet these five English proficiency standards, so that the focus of the investigation shows us what field has been chosen.

Lisboa, et al (2004) describes the "four language domains" which are found as Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. In this case the use of language arts, where the speaker must communicate with accuracy in the new language. The combination of these skills is crucial this means that they are connected; no matter if the focus is on a specific skill, they are related to each other as bias of complement for proficiency.

Hilton (2014) describes language proficiency as the extent to which and individual possesses the linguistic cognitions necessary to function in a given communicative situation, in a given modality. These modalities are related to the skills mentioned above. It is to say that a proficient speaker must manage these four skills with accuracy, not only management but the application in the different areas being asked "Speaking" and "writing". We can say that in every experience that a Second Language learner lives, it is necessary to combine these four skills even though the focus is in the oral proficiency.

The CEFR (2001) argues that the language learner/user's communicative language competence is activated in the performance of the various language activities. This involves the input and output which are known as receptive and productive skills. For an oral proficient student, it is necessary to know that through reading they can acquire background

knowledge. "Many adults who do not have the resource to travel extensively know a great deal about other countries because they read about them." An oral proficient speaker is the one who is able to comment or give an opinion on a topic or for example when reading a newspaper and give the opinion of the weather of today and a variety of different topics.

In this investigation, the oral and written parameters of English were studied in order to obtain the student's oral proficiency. Larsen-Freeman (2003; as cited by Iwashita, 2010) made a research where he focused on these two fields: "Investigation on the development of proficiency by analyzing the oral and written data of five Chinese learners of English".

As it has been mentioned before, oral language proficiency is the combination of both language knowledge and the production of this. Through our lives we live many things, good and bad experiences that are meaningful for us.

No one can tell us if we are a proficient user of the language or we are a basic user. Which really finds out the proficient level of the language are standardized proficiency tests. This investigation was based on the CEFR parameters. This guide provided detailed description of different levels of proficiency, the parameters included to evaluate and assess students' proficiency, and the communicative language competences to be measures in order to test their oral proficiency. This guide entails the system for evaluating the communicative competences for oral proficiency of an individual in three factors which are:

1.   Linguistic competence
2.   Sociolinguistic competences
3.   Pragmatic Competences

The oral proficiency is based primarily in social and communicative aspects. That is why these aspects are taken into consideration to find out students' oral proficiency at the end of their courses. The CEFR test, the Global Scale of proficiency and the parameters described above were used in order to measure students' oral proficiency in the CEFR test and the oral interview.

When a student reaches a level where he/she is able to understand the uses of every domain, can read long texts, recognize implicit meaning, whether he/she is able to express him/herself fluent and spontaneously effortless in social, academic and professional purposes, is able to produce well-structured and detailed texts that show controlled use of organization patterns and use of connectors, the student becomes a *proficient* user of the language. Thus, this gives the answer that oral proficiency is not only the use of vocabulary or being fluent but the way in which this language is used and processed.

English proficiency is an important issue and because of that there are many institutions that take the responsibility of measuring this linguistic aspect such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL, 2001) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012). Besides that, it is necessary to mention that Oral English proficiency is going to be developed in this chapter taking into account three areas of communicative language competences stated by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL, 2001): linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences. It is necessary to mention that these areas of communicative competences were subdivided in order to have a better understanding of each of them.

Each of these aspects mentioned above were developed by analyzing existing theory taken from the following sources: Trim, et al. (2001), Brown (2015), Bell et al. (2011), Hudson (2013), Swender, et al. (2012), Herrmann (2013), Roschelle (2004) and Crossley, et al. (2012). This was done by comparing theory with the empirical knowledge of the researchers.

2.2.4 Communicative language competences

Students need to have different kind of competences in order to communicate in a new language. They always deal with communicative situations in which previous experiences knowledge is needed. It is well known that communication is one of the most important human capacities and because of that Trim, et al. (2001) has developed a kind of system for evaluating the proficiency level of an individual. This research focuses its

attention to the competences that an English user has to meet for communicating effectively and proficiently.

Hymes (1966), the father of communicative competences states that "it involves knowing what to say to whom in what circumstances and how to say it", it is clear that these competences have their bases on the knowledge of the language. However, it can be said that not every speaker meets all these aspects because one can know what to say, but also cannot know the circumstances in which that person can say it or even how to say it and to whom. Yule (2010), argues that communicative competence is "the general ability to use language, accurately, appropriately and flexibly." Basically, this definition has some similarities with the first one, we can easily relate the term "knowing what to say" with accuracy, "to who in what circumstances" with appropriacy and "how to say it" with flexibility. Therefore, these definitions that have been mentioned lead to the three sub competences that according to Trim, et al. (2001) are contained inside the communicative competences which are: Linguistic, Sociolinguistic, and Pragmatic competences.

2.2.4.1 Linguistic competence

Ficher (1984), as cited in Nouar (n.d.), provides a very simple and understandable definition of this competence stating that "linguistic competence may be thought as the learner's knowledge of the structures and vocabulary of the language and the ability to produce and comprehend well-formed sentences in the language". In fact, here we can mention again one of the relations written above, a speaker must know what to say; that is, to have linguistic competence and it can be described just with one word: *accuracy*. The message that a speaker transmits has to be meaningful and of course well- formed and at the same time this speaker has to be able to comprehend what other speakers produce. This means that linguistic competence comprises more elements inside it and they are listed according to what Trim, et al. (2001) points out:

- ✓ Lexical competence

- ✓ Grammatical competence

- ✓ Semantic competence

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- ✓ Phonological competence

- ✓ Orthographic competence

- ✓ Orthoepic competence

2.2.4.1.1 Lexical competence

Lexical competence according to Crossley, et al. (2011) "comprises breath of knowledge features (i.e., how many words a learner knows), depth of knowledge features (i.e., how well a learner knows a word) and access to core lexical items (i.e., how quickly words can be retrieved or processed)". Lexical competence is not that easy because a speaker may know thousands of words, but he probably may not know the meaning, the function or the context in which the word has to be used. Sometimes it can be difficult for a nonnative speaker to retrieve or process a word as a native speaker does. Consequently, this lexical competence implies having a complete or at least almost complete knowledge of the language, having a good register and having the ability to produce or process the words quickly.

Lexical and grammatical elements integrate the lexical competence. The first element includes fixed expressions and single word forms. Regarding to the second element it includes the closed word classes such as: articles, quantifiers, demonstratives, personal pronouns, question words, relatives, possessives, prepositions, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions, and particles.

The Trim, et al. (2001) provides an illustrative scale in which describes a proficient learner in this area as someone that "has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning". Based on empirical knowledge, it can be said that the most difficult part is to reach a good command of colloquialisms and to show awareness of connotative levels of meaning. This is because the nonnative speaker does not live in a context where he or she can experience this kind of language or expressions day a day. Therefore, to reach a high level of lexical proficiency is really challenging for nonnative speakers, but as Velazco (2007) states "many differences across speakers go unnoticed as long as communication is not disrupted."

2.2.4.1.2 Grammatical competence

This competence is directly related to the use and knowledge of the grammar of a language. Grammar should be seen as a set of principles which allow the organization and construction of sentences. This grammatical competence is no more than "the ability to understand and express meaning by producing and recognizing well-formed phrases and sentences in accordance with the principles" (Trim, et al.2001). Grammar is complex by nature; consequently, its study is complicated no matters the language being studied.

Unfortunately, many people are scared about grammar; however, they do not realize that every day they use it when they speak, write, or read. Constructing and organizing phrases or sentences is essential in order to maintain and effective and understandable communication. Moreover, when a person is proficient in this area he or she is expected to "maintain a consistent grammatical control of complex language" (Trim, et al.2001). To maintain control over grammar is not an easy task, that is why an English speaker must know about the grammatical rules and principles of such language.

Here we present the grammatical organization that the CEFR (2001) provides:

- Elements: morphs, morphemes-roots and affixes, words.

- Categories: number, case gender, concrete abstract, etc.

- Classes: conjugations, declensions, open word classes, etc.

- Structures: compound and complex words etc.

- Processes: nominalization, affixation etc.

- Relations: government, concord, valence.

It is important not to forget that morphology and syntax are two important parts of the grammar competence. In the case of morphology, researchers are referring to it is in charge of the internal organization of words; on the other hand, syntax has to do with "the

organization of words into sentences in terms of categories, elements, classes, structures, processes and relations involved" this is mostly presented as a set of rules.

2.2.4.1.3 Semantic competence

In this competence, a learner must be aware and to have control of the organization of meaning (Trim, et al.2001). Meaning can be sometimes confusing and misunderstood. A good characteristic of a speaker is to be a good listener or a good reader and writer, maybe you can ask why? It is because in this way he can learn to express what he wants and to comprehend perfectly a written or spoken message.

The semantic competence is divided into three categories as (Trim, et al.2001) points out: "*lexical semantics, grammatical semantics, and pragmatic semantics.*" Lexical semantics has to do with questions about the meaning of a word, for example the relation that a word can have to the general context, references, connotations collocations and so on (Trim, et al.2001). On the other hand, grammatical semantics is more related to the meaning as its name says of grammatical elements. Finally, pragmatic semantics is only about logical relations.

2.2.4.1.4 Phonological competence

This has to do with the perception and production of good pronunciation elements. A proficient user in this area is described as someone who "can vary intonation and placed sentence stress correctly in order to express finer shades of meaning" (Trim, et all.2001). It is well known that for nonnative speaker's pronunciation is one of the most difficult parts of learning English. It can be inferred that the difference between English and Spanish sounds is the main reason why reaching a high phonological competence is quite difficult for nonnative speakers. Besides that, we Spanish speakers do not use to speak with the level of exaggeration that English speakers do; thus, it is kind of complicated to vary intonation and place sentence stress appropriately. Therefore, the perception and production of good pronunciation elements is a great challenge for nonnative speakers.

2.2.4.1.5 Orthographic competence

In this case, the competence in this area is related to write correctly punctuation, symbols, spelling and so on. This implies knowing contracted forms in English, the kind of symbols they use and also the way the words are written. It is important to take into account that punctuation is a little bit different in English and Spanish; therefore, the speaker has to know the way punctuation is used in that language to write or in other case to read correctly according to the punctuation marks.

2.2.4.1.6 Orthoepic competence

When a student reads a text aloud and finds unknown words for him and produces the correct pronunciation is to have orthoepic competence. According to Trim, et al (2001) this competence "involves the knowledge of spelling conventions, the ability to use a dictionary and a knowledge of the conventions used there for the representation of pronunciation, ability to resolve ambiguity."

2.2.4.2 Sociolinguistic competences

It is one of the tree competences that every speaker of a langue must manage with accuracy in order to communicate effectively. "It refers to the knowledge and skills involved in using language functionally in a social context." (*CFER*, 2004-2007). It does in true takes into account the socio-cultural aspects but it is focused primarily on the language use. "Since language is a social phenomenon, its use requires sensitivity to social norms and customs…" (Trim, et al.2001). This means that in order to communicate is important to follow different rules which sometimes can vary from one culture to another. Trim, et al. (2001) provides these terms to be taken into account:

2.2.4.2.1 Linguistic markers of social relations

Trim, et al (2001) states that these markers are related to:

- The use and choice of greetings:

On arrival, e.g. *Hello! Good morning!*

Introductions, e.g. *How do you do?*

Leave-taking, e.g. *Good-bye . . . See you later*

- use and choice of address forms:

Frozen, e.g. *My Lord, Your Grace*

Formal, e.g. *Sir, Madam, Miss*, *Dr, Professor* (+ surname)

Informal, e.g. first name only, such as *John! Susan!* no address form

Familiar, e.g. *dear, darling;* (popular) *mate*, *love*

Peremptory, e.g. surname only, such as *Smith! You (there)!*

Ritual insult, e.g. *you stupid idiot!* (often affectionate)

- Conventions for turn taking

Yule (2012) expresses that there are different expectations of conversational style and different strategies of participation in conversations." Many times, we have seen people that keep waiting for having a chance of speaking and it never comes, we can say that he is shy. On the other hand, there are people that interrupt the other speaker in order to point out their opinions, they are called rude. This is very important because it helps a conversation to be fluent.

- Use and choice of expletives (e.g. *Dear, dear! My God! Bloody Hell!* etc.)

The way you speak placed you in a particular social group for example: "One feature that seems to be a fairly stable indication of lower class and less education, throughout the English- speaking world is the final pronunciation of –ing with [n] rather than [ŋ] at the end of the words such as sitting and drinking." A person that utters this pronunciation is associated with the working- class speech.

2.2.4.2.2 Politeness conventions

According to Yule (2012) "We can think of politeness in general terms as having to do with ideas like being tactful, modest and nice with other people." It means being empathetic, respectful, thankful, kind and so on. These conventions involve the "co-operative principle" which Grice (1975) (as cited in Yule, 2012) states in the following way: "make your

conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." This is supported by something that Yule (2012) calls the "Grice maxims":

The quantity maxim: Make your contribution as informative as required.
The quality maxim: Do not say that which you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence.
The relation maxim: Be relevant.
The manner maxim: Be clear, brief and orderly.

2.2.4.2.3 Expressions of folk-wisdom

This refers to the knowledge and use of fixed formula expressions such as proverbs, idioms, familiar quotations, and clichés (Trim, et al.2001). Unfortunately, these expressions are very complicated for nonnative speakers and they probably may know some proverbs in their language, but not many in English because this is a matter of personal learning due to the fact that in schools or academies they do not teach them in a deep way.

2.2.4.2.4 Register differences

These differences have to do with the levels of formality. It is known that depending on the place, the people and the topic the speaker choses his or her vocabulary or way to speak. You should be careful because it is necessary to know each of the levels of formality. This is because it can lead to misinterpretation and ridicule if you do not know well how and when to use it. The levels that Trim, et al (2001) presents are:

Frozen, e.g. *Pray silence for His Worship the Mayor!*
Formal, e.g. *May we now come to order, please.*
Neutral, e.g. *Shall we begin?*
Informal, e.g. *Right. What about making a start?*
Familiar, e.g. *O.K. Let's get going.*
Intimate, e.g. *Ready dear?*

2.2.4.2.5 Dialectic and accent

This is no more than the ability of identifying and recognizing the linguistic markers of other speakers, in fact, Trim, et al (2012) provides this list:

• Social class

• Regional provenance

• National origin

• Ethnicity

• Occupational group

A person that is competent in this area is able to know if he is speaking with a lower-class person, an Italian, Spanish, German person, or with a doctor, a journalist or a teacher. Therefore, studying each the terms before mentioned we can realize the importance of taking into account the "Social dimensions of language use" (Trim, et al. 2001) in the oral proficiency.

2.2.4.3 Pragmatic Competences

To understand pragmatics let us mention a very simple definition "it is the ability to use language in context" (Rover, 2005). But also, Yule (2012) says that pragmatic is "how we recognize what is meant even when it is not written." Thus, pragmatic goes beyond what the speaker can see. Trim, et al. (2001) expresses that it also involves the knowledge that a learner has of the principles according to which messages are:

a) Organized structured and arranged ('discourse competence').

b) Used to perform communicative functions ('functional competence').

c) Sequenced according to interactional and transactional schemata ('design competence').

Besides these kinds of messages, Trim also provides the different competences that integrate this pragmatic competence, here we give a brief description of each of them:

2.2.4.3.1 Discourse competence

Here the speaker has to be able to produce a sequence of sentences in order to have coherent stretches of language (discursive units). In an illustrative scale that Trim, et al. (2001) presents about discourse competences, he describes a proficient user of the language in this are as someone that "Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to give emphasis, to differentiate according to the situation, interlocutor, etc. and to eliminate ambiguity".

2.2.4.3.2 Functional competence

Trim, et al. (2001), states that it **"**is concerned with the use of spoken discourse and written texts in communication for particular functional purposes", this does not mean that learners are just going to know the functions, they have to know how to interact by using them, making exchanges and leading to conclusions. This competence has some elements that are mentioned below:

- **Micro functions:** For example, imparting and seeking factual information
- **Macro functions:** For example, description, narration, commentary, exposition
- **Interaction schemata:** Here we can mention:

Question: answer

Statement: agreement/disagreement

2.2.5 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has been created as a guideline used to describe all the different types of achievements that learners can reach with a foreign language. This guideline was put together by the Council of Europe as the main part of the project "Language Learning for European Citizenship" between 1989 and 1996.

"The CEFR is the result of developments in language education that date back to the 1970s and beyond, and its publication in 2001 was the direct outcome of several discussions,

meetings and consultation processes which had taken place over the previous 10 years" (Cambridge ESOL, 2011).

According to Using the CEFR, Principle of good practice (2011), "The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) was created by the Council of Europe to provide a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It was envisaged primarily as a planning tool whose aim was to promote 'transparency and coherence' in language education." Basically, the CEFR has been classified as a set of rules, guidelines and requirements that determine the level of English that a person can reach. This principle is very useful for everyone that is learning a second language such as English; not only to describe acquisition levels, but also to provide examples and methodologies for each of their classifications.

Cambridge ESOL (2011) states that The CEFR is a comprehensive document, and, individual users can find it difficult to read and interpret. The Council of Europe has created a number of guidance documents to help in this interpretation. "The Framework aims to be not only comprehensive, transparent and coherent, but also open, dynamic and non-dogmatic." (Council of Europe, 2001).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) describes language learners' ability in terms of speaking, reading, listening and writing at six reference levels.

These six levels are named as follows:

- **English Basic User (A1, A2)**
  - A1 (Beginner)
  - A2 (Elementary English)
- **English Independent User (B1, B2)**
  - B1 (Intermediate English)
  - B2 (Upper-Intermediate English)
- **Proficient English User (C1, C2)**
  - C1 (Advanced English)
  - C2 (Proficiency English)

CEFR English levels are used by all modern English language books and English language schools (Track Test, 2012). These six reference English levels are widely accepted as the global standard for grading an individual's language proficiency.

Using the CEFR, Principle of good practice (2011) agreed that "these common reference levels, the CEFR provides a Descriptive Scheme of definitions, categories and examples that language professionals can use to better understand and communicate their aims and objectives. The examples given are called illustrative descriptors and these are presented as a series of scales with Can Do statements from levels A1 to C2." All of those levels classify different competences that a student can do and how-to performance the ability of speaking.

"These scales can be used as a tool for comparing levels of ability amongst learners of foreign languages and also offer a means to map the progress of learners. The scales in the CEFR are not exhaustive. They cannot cover every possible context of language use and do not attempt to do so. Whilst they have been empirically validated, some of them still have significant gaps, e.g. at the lowest level (A1) and at the top of the scale (the C levels). Certain contexts are less well elaborated, e.g. young learners." (Using the CEFR, Principle of good practice, 2011)

Even though the CEFR is not an international standard or seal of approval, it is one of the most recognized parameters in textbooks and curriculum designers. One of the most important ways of adapting the CEFR is the production of language-specific Reference Level Descriptions. "These are frameworks for specific languages where the levels and Descriptors in the CEFR have been mapped against the actual linguistic material (i.e. grammar, words) needed to implement the stated competences" (Cambridge ESOL, 2011).

2.2.5.1 Common reference levels description *based on Common Reference Levels: global scale* from Chapter 3 of the CEFR

Like other frameworks, the CEFR covers two main dimensions: a vertical and a horizontal one. The vertical dimension of the CEFR shows progression through the levels as explained below:

C2

Students can:

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

C1

Students can:

- Understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning.
- Express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.
- Use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes.
- Produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

B2

Students can:

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

Students can:

- Understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.

- Deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken.
- Produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest.
- Describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

A2

Students 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).
- Communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.
- Describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

A1

Students can:

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

2.2.5.2 Defining how long it will take to reach each CEF level

According to Teacher`s Guide to the Common European Framework (2001) one of the main concerns of teachers is how long it takes to reach each level. "This might seem to indicate that each level should be achieved in an equal amount of time. But learning a language is like climbing a mountain, the ascents gets harder the higher you climb. It does not take the same amount of time to reach each level." However, not everyone develops his

or her language skills in the same way or at the same pace; "it is difficult to define the exact amount of time needed to reach each level." The Association of Language Testers of Europe (ALTE), whose members have aligned their language examinations with the CEF, provides guidance on the number of guided teaching hours needed to fulfill the aims of each CEF level:

A1	Approximately 90- 100 hours
A2	Approximately 180- 200 hours
B1	Approximately 350- 400 hours
B2	Approximately 500 - 600 hours
C1	Approximately 700 - 800 hours
C2	Approximately 1000- 1200 hours

Guided teaching hours are the hours during which the learner is in a formal learning context such as the classroom. The number of hours needed for different learners varies greatly; depending on a range of different factor such as environment, background and motivation, among others.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

During this research, the approach used was the Qualitative. The qualitative research approach is mainly an exploratory research, meaning that it can be used to understand reasons, opinions, and motivations. Also, it provides tools to discover trends in thought and opinions and helps dive deeper into the problem.

By applying the qualitative research, the researchers evaluated the students using the (CEFR) test where they will develop the "communicative language competences" from a set of questions from the particular skill to be developed. The (CEFR) provides the different levels: A1, B1, and C1; thus, the students that were evaluated were also placed in one of these categories depending on their performance.

Using this research approach helped the researchers determine if there exists a relationship between previous English background knowledge and the results that students may get after finishing their major.

3.2 Type of study

The type of study used in this research was descriptive. According to the Educational Communications and Technology "A descriptive research does not fit neatly into the definition of either quantitative or qualitative research methodologies, but instead it can utilize elements of both, often within the same study. The term descriptive research refers to the type of research question, design, and data analysis that will be applied to a given topic." Based on this, this research was qualified to be descriptive due the fact that the topic had a main goal and objective to determine if there exists any type of relationship between previous English background knowledge and the results that students got. Educational Communications Technology also points out that "descriptive statistics tell what is, focusing in cause and effects situations".

3.3 Research design

The method used in this study was descriptive. "Descriptive research involves gathering data that describes events, and then it organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection" (Glass & Hopkins, 1984).

What this research embraced was to look for the most accurate answer in regard to the relationship that previous English knowledge has with oral English proficiency when students are on a certain level of their major. This method was planned to cover as much testing as it can be to achieve the research goal.

In order to collect the data, the researchers evaluated the students using the (CEFR) test, where they developed the "communicative language competences" from a set of questions from the particular skill to be developed. The (CEFR) provides the different levels: A1, B1, and C1; thus, the students evaluated were placed in one of these categories depending on their performance.

Also, the oral placement test was taken from Cambridge ESOL's Main Suite exams (2009) from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, (CFER). In this process, the researchers used a page which included different questions based on the contents and tasks that the speakers were supposed to perform at each of the levels.

The interview was carried by one of the researchers and the other ones recorded the conversation, and also, they were allowed to make questions to the participant when necessary. In addition, the researcher managed the interview asking the first questions and then while listening to the speaker the researcher adapted the next questions according to the level that the interviewee is showing, for example if the interviewee showed difficulty to answer a question the interviewer made the question simpler. This action provided more time for analyzing the conversation and put the students into the right level of proficiency.

3.4 Population and sample

The participants were students from the University of El Salvador the ones who were studying the third year of the Bachelor of Arts in English with Emphasis in Teaching in the

Foreign Language Department. The sample was the students who were legally register and are actively taking the Readings and Conversation I course.

3.5 Instrument

The researchers made use of three instruments based on the result of over twenty years of research, the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment" (CEFR) is exactly what its title says it is: a framework of reference. It was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency.

The CEFR describes foreign language proficiency at six levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. It also defines three 'plus' levels (A2+, B1+, B2+). Based on empirical research and widespread consultation, this scheme makes it possible to compare tests and examinations across languages and national boundaries. It also provides a basis for recognizing language qualifications and thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. This is a reliable source; therefore, the instruments that it provides are going to be use in this research and they are described below:

3.5.1 A short questionnaire

It is a short survey with a maximum of twelve questions related to personal information, academic background and previous experiences about English. This questionnaire was useful to know if the sample had or not previous English knowledge before starting the major. (See annexes section, page. 83-84).

Procedure: The questionnaire was passed before the oral interview, to the specific sample. Students were asked to answer twelve short questions based on their own criteria.

3.5.2 A placement test

  The selected population was evaluated in Grammar, Listening, and Reading English areas. A series of questions for each area were given based on the parameters that the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) offers. The whole test took 45 minutes and every student was taken to the Computer Center of the foreign Language Department. Any given score was provided at the end of the task. This type of test helped the researchers to gather and measure the population's English accuracy and proficiency in certain topics; in other words, it gave them the result of what level they have reached so far according the course they were. This included the evaluation of the competences listed on the literature review. It helped to facilitate the investigators and noticed the different levels of proficiency the students perform. (An example is provided on the annexes section page.89-91)

3.5.3 An interview protocol

  For this activity, one of the researchers interviewed students one by one. During this interview, students were asked random questions and depending on the response given by the students, the interviewer scored them based on the categories on a rubric taken from the Cambridge ESOL's Main Suite exams (2009). These categories scaled students on their own level of English proficiency. It included different topics to be developed orally in order to rate the students' oral proficiency level making use of a rubric from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, (CFER). (See annexes section, page.85-88).

3.6 Procedure

  In order to collect the data, the researchers evaluated all students using the CEFR placement test on listening, writing and reading, here they will develop the "communicative language competences" from a set of questions from the particular skill to be developed. The CEFR provides the different levels: A1, B1, and C1; thus, the students that were evaluated were placed in one of these categories automatically depending on their average points.

Also, the oral placement test was taken from Cambridge ESOL's Main Suite exams (2009) from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, (CFER) was used. In this process, the researchers used a page which include different questions based on the contents and tasks that the speakers are supposed to perform at each of the levels.

The interview was done by one of the researchers and the other ones recorded the conversation, also, they were allowed to make questions to the participant when necessary. In addition, the researcher managed the interview asked the first questions and then while listening to the speaker the researcher adapted the next questions according to the level that the interviewee was showing, for example some interviewee showed difficulty to answer questions the interviewer made the question simpler. This action provided more time for analyzing the conversation and put the students into the right level of proficiency using the rubric for oral performance. (Annexes section, pag.88).

3.7 Data analysis

According to the results of the CEFR test and interview, the researchers were classified as true and false beginners dividing them into two groups. After doing this, the results of the written test and the oral interview were analyzed in accordance with the three areas mentioned in the topic proposal: Linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence.

The researchers checked the group that got better results in each of the aspects stated in the literature review. Here, they noticed what were the strengths and weaknesses of true and false beginners regarding to the competences mentioned before. Finally, the results of the oral proficiency level (A1, A2, B1, B2 and so on) between true beginners and false beginners was compared in order to determine if English background knowledge influenced the oral proficiency they reached at the end of their Intensive English courses.

3.7.1 Short questionnaire analysis

The first instrument applied to the research population was the survey which seeks to discover who were true and false beginners. In the carried-out survey, some questions were encouraging to divide the population into two groups; true and false beginners. Then, the following questions helped the researchers to know more about the English background knowledge of the population.

With the following question the researcher could identify when the first contact that students had with English as a subject was.

1. When was your first contact learning English?

   ☐ Elementary School   ☐ High School   ☐ University

First contact	Students
Elementary School	39
High School	19
University	2
Total	60
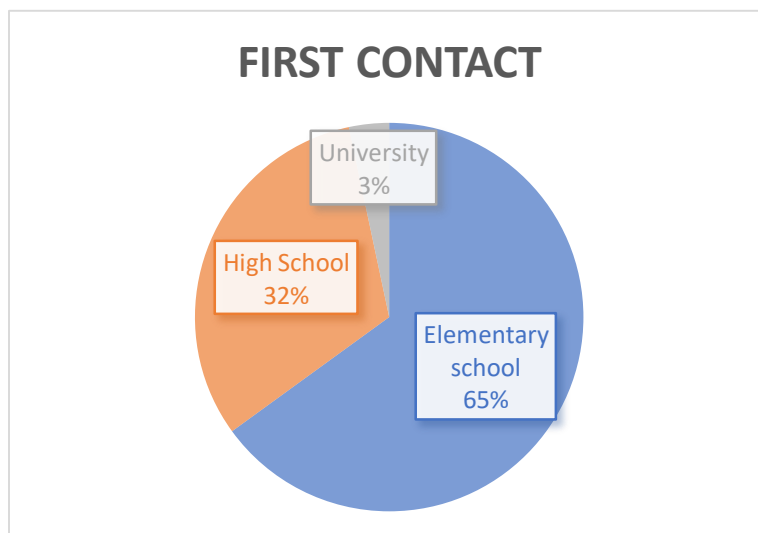
According to the results, most of the population had their very first English language contact in the elementary school level. This question also showed how few students experienced contact with the target language at the University level.

The following questions were encouraged to identify the place and the time exposure to English by students before starting the major at the University.

2. Where did you study the High School?

☐National School ☐Private School ☐ City ☐ Rural

Place	Students
National School/city	46
National School/rural	1
Private School/city	13
Private School/rural	0
Total	60
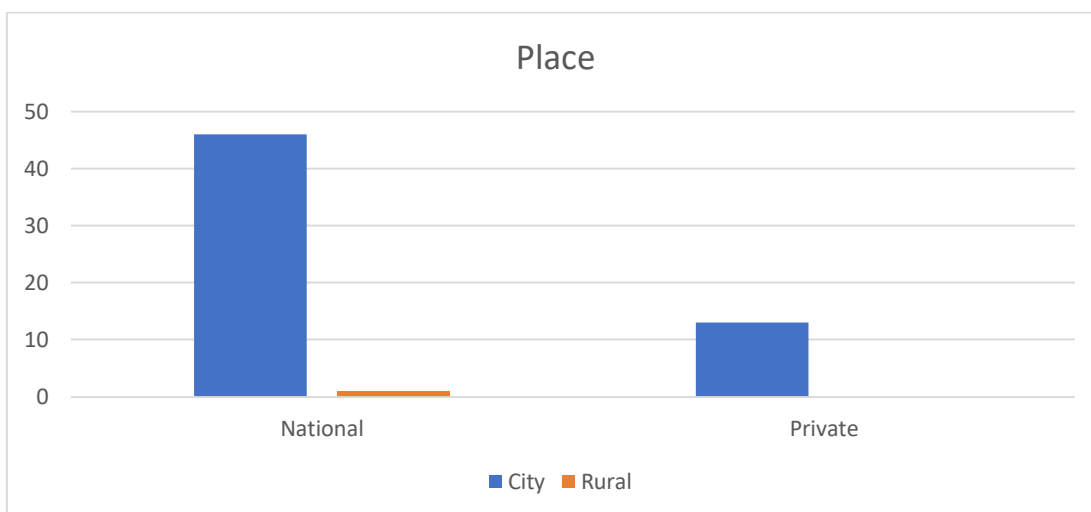
In these research results, two different areas were notable. As it is shown, most of students studied their high school level at public institutions in the city area, while a low percentage did it in a private institution of the same area. It is important to mention that in public institutions they base their English class in grammar, and complete the book and workbook,

2.1 How many hours did you study English during the week? _____

Hours	Students
0-3	20
4-6	29
7-10	11
Total	60

HOURS

7-10 Hours
7%

0-3 Hours
38%
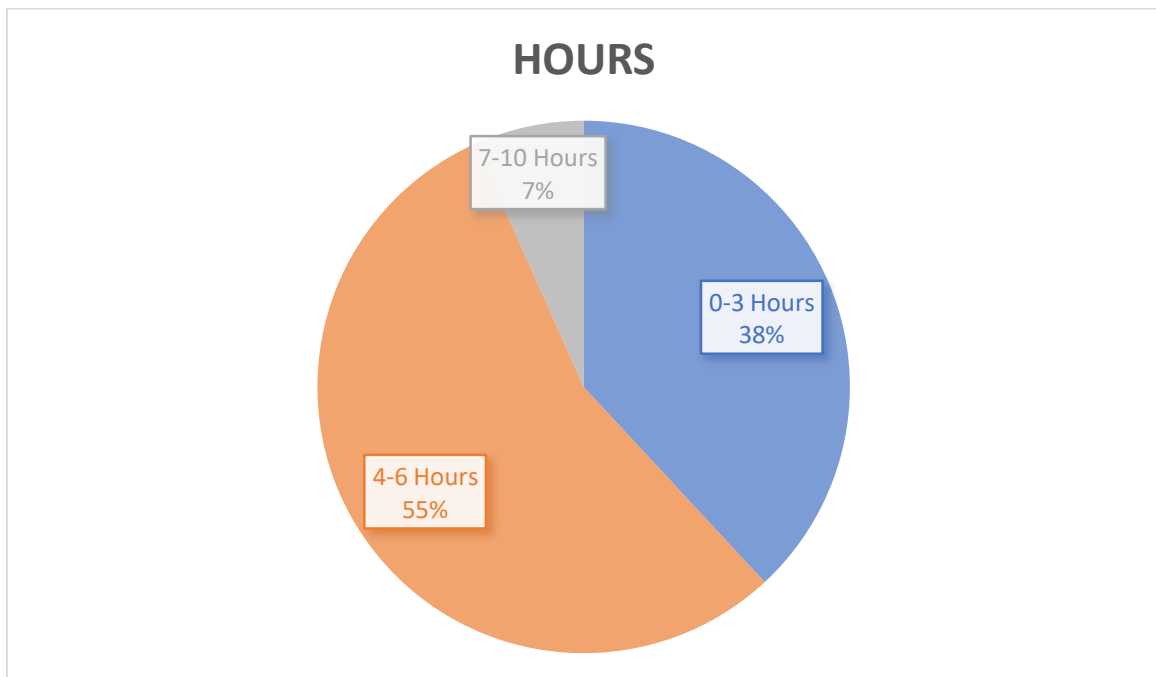
4-6 Hours
55%

Most of the whole population with fifty-five-percentage answered that they studied from 4 to 6 hours approximately. A thirty-eight-percentage studied from 0 to 3 hours per week. And only the seven-percentage answered that studied from 7 to 10 hours accordingly.
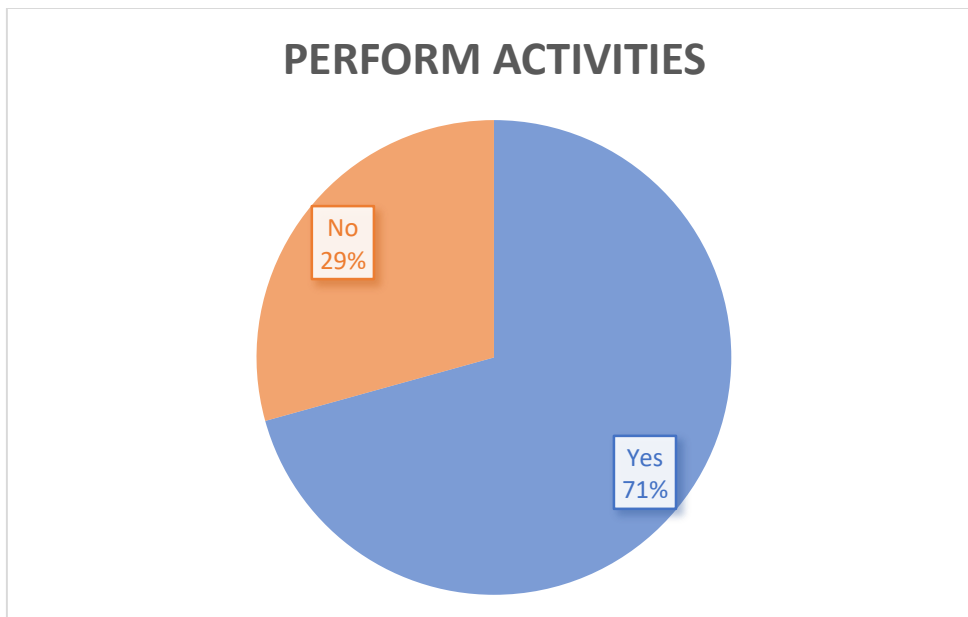
Some question helped to find out if students had the opportunity to improve their oral proficiency before starting the major at the University.

2.2 Did you perform any oral activities during the class?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Perform activities	Students
Yes	43
No	17
Total	60

PERFORM ACTIVITIES

Most of the population answered that they did perform oral English activities during their courses prior to enter the university. While the other left percentage answered they did not perform these types of activities. According to this result, the researchers considered that the twenty-nine percent of students did not have contact with the oral English performance, because students said that they did not perform any oral activity.

2.3 What types of oral activities did you perform?

☐Role plays   ☐Presentations   ☐ Conversations Oral☐xams

| Activities performed	Students
Role play	9
Presentation	24
Conversation	10
Oral exam	1
None	16
Total	60
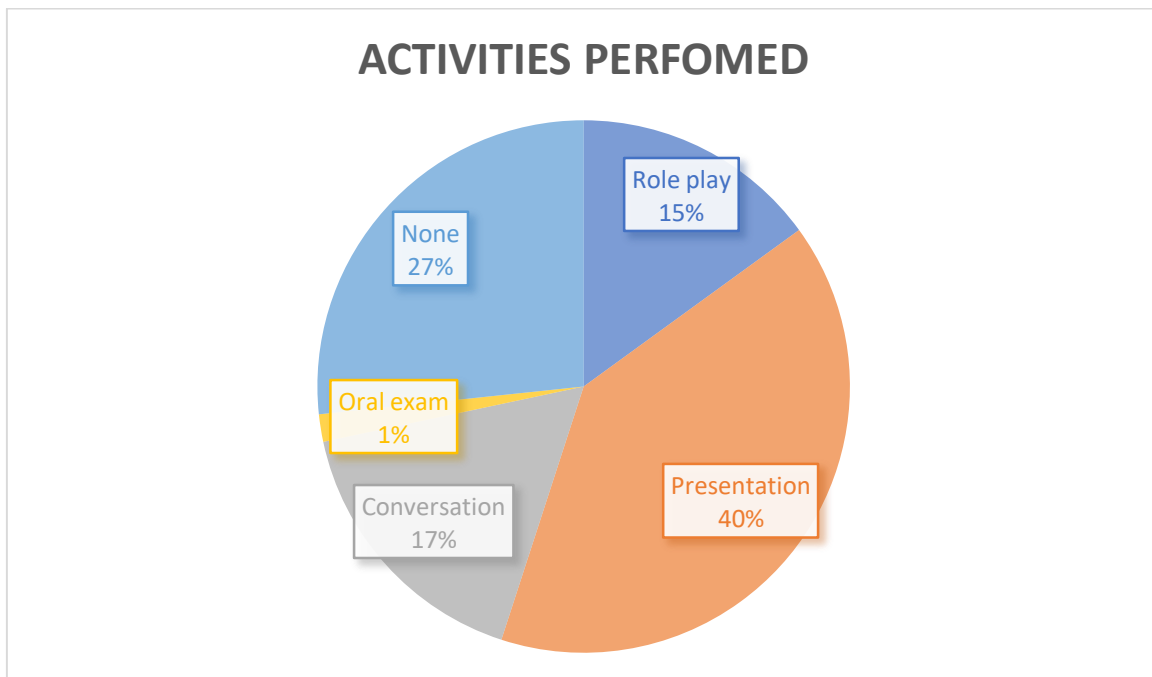
Most of the population assessed stated that they performed oral activities like presentations; followed by a twenty-seven-percentage who answered none. The seventeen-percentage performed conversation activities, and a fifteen-percentage did role-play activities on their English classes.

2.4 How often did you perform oral activities?

☐Every day   ☐Once a week   ☐ Once a month

Frequency	Students
Every day	4
Once a week	23
Once a month	17
None	16
Total	60
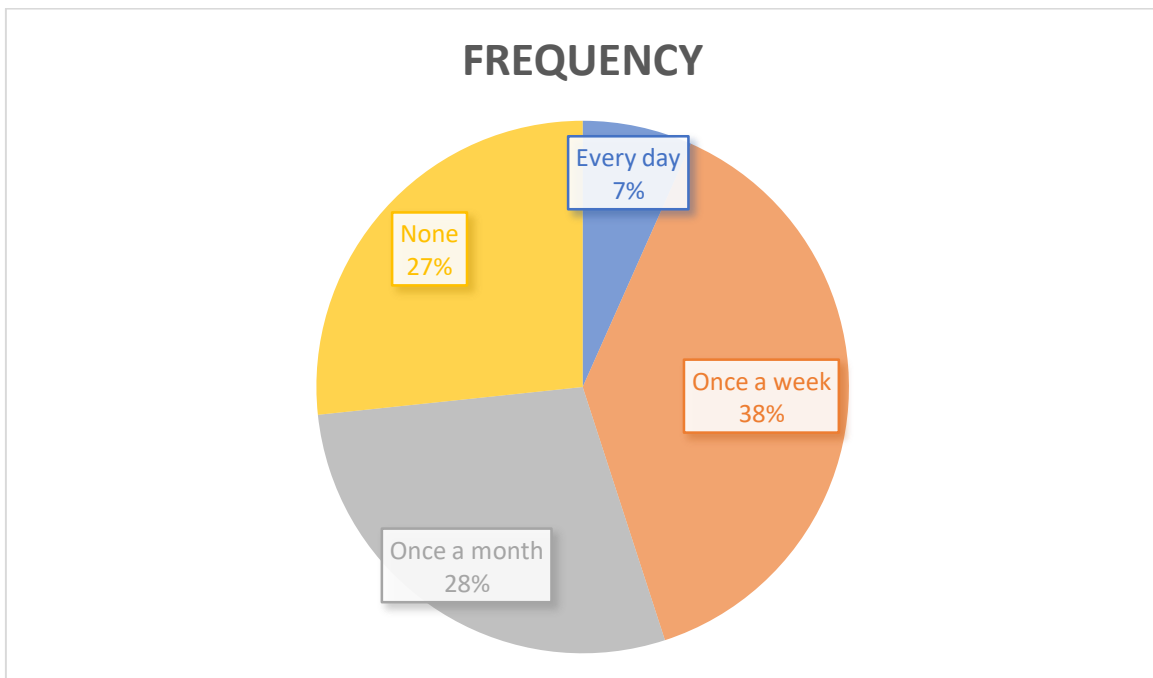
A third part of the population answered that they performed activates very often. As well, this is followed by a twenty-eight-percentage, almost the same percentage of population, who stated that they performed nearly no oral activities. Likewise, the conclusion of this is that only the seven-percent of the students had a frequency contact with the oral English performance.

Question to identify true and false beginners.

3. Did you study any English course before starting this major?

☐ Yes ☐ No

| Study English before	Students
Yes	25
No	35
Total	60

STUDY ENGLISH BEFORE

Yes
42%

No
58%
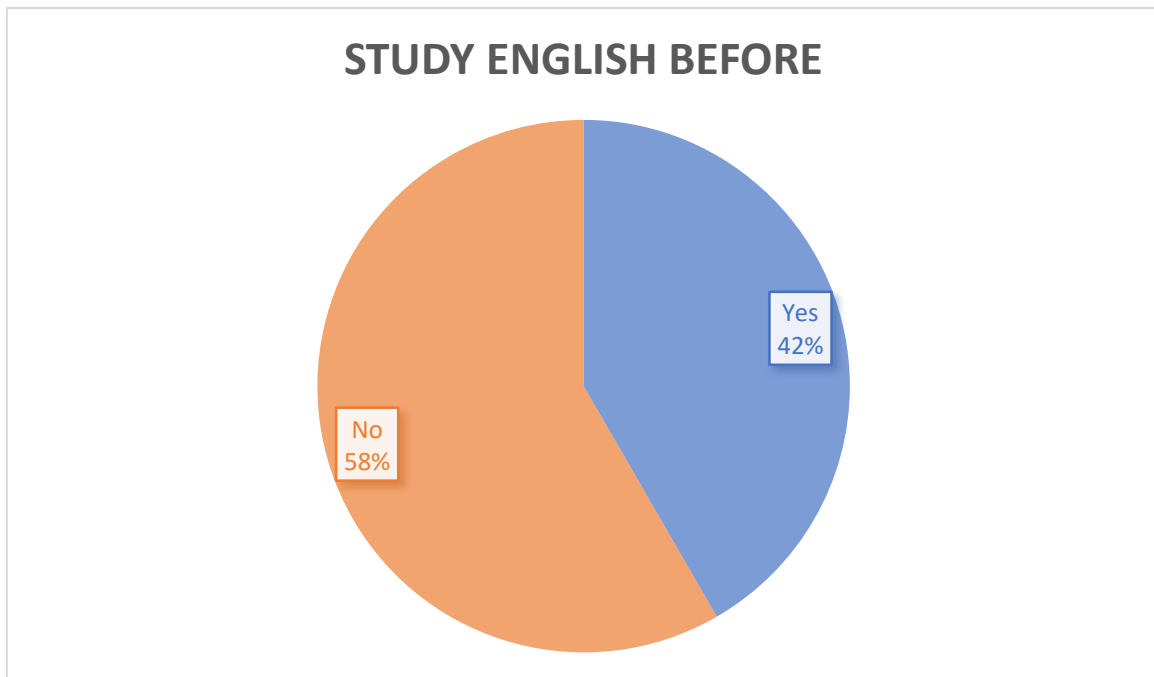
It is clearly observed that a big percentage of the test population did not take any English course before the major with a fifty-eight percentage accordingly. This question helped the researchers to divide the population into two groups, true and false beginners. According to the study, the true beginners were the students who did not take any English course before starting the major at the University, and the false beginners, students who took an English Course.

The following questions were answering by the students that are going to be considering as false beginners.

3.1 If your answer was YES, how long did you study English?

English time study	Students
1-6 months	8
7-12 months	6
13-18 months	1
19-24 months	10
Total	25
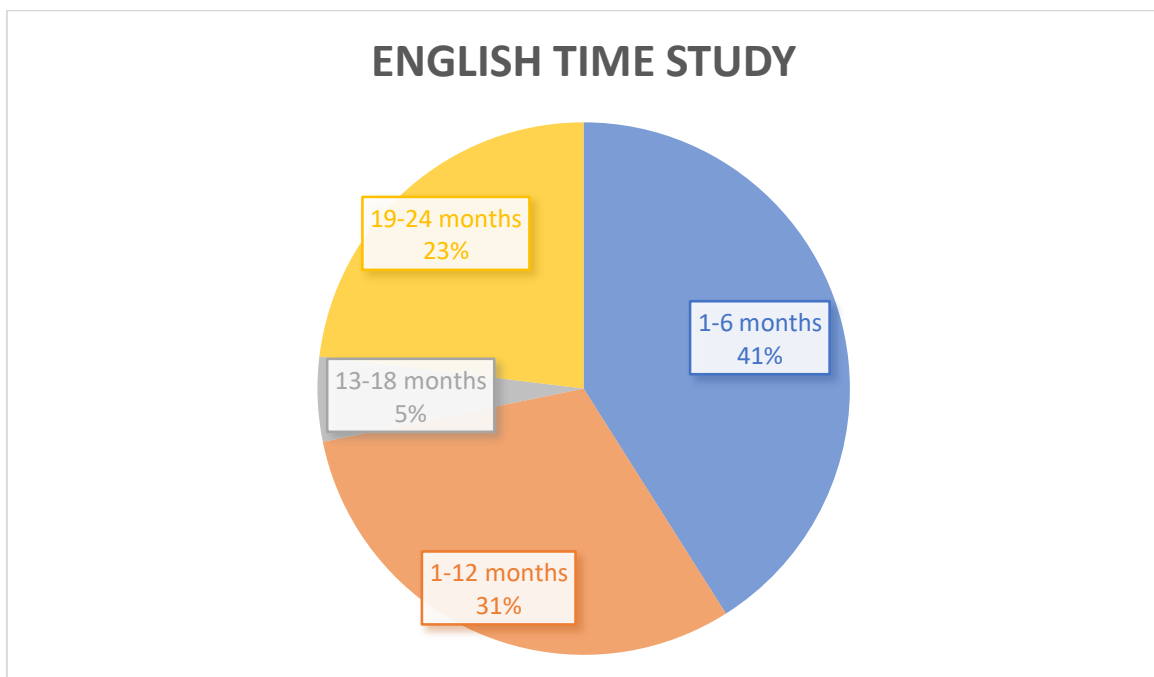
An outstanding forty-one-percentage of students studied from one to six months followed by a thirty-one percentage from thirteen to eighteen months. A low percentage of 23 studied from nineteen to twenty-four months.

3.2 Were you able to conclude with the whole English course?

Concluded the whole English course	Students
Yes	14
No	11
Total	25

CONCLUDED THE WHOLE ENGLISH COURSE

No 44%

Yes 56%
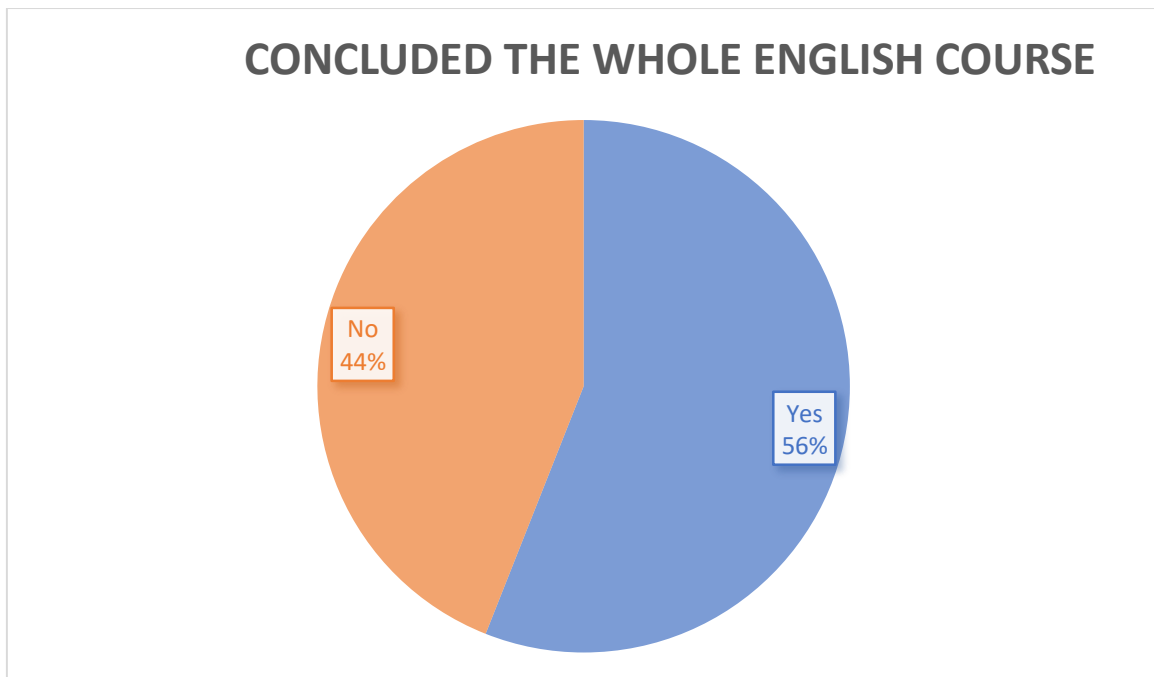
According to the result, the fifty-six percent of the students who took an English course were able to conclude the whole course, and the forty-four percent did not finish the course.

3.3 What level of English did you reach?

| English reached by course	Students
Basic	7
Intermediate	13
Advanced	5
Total	25
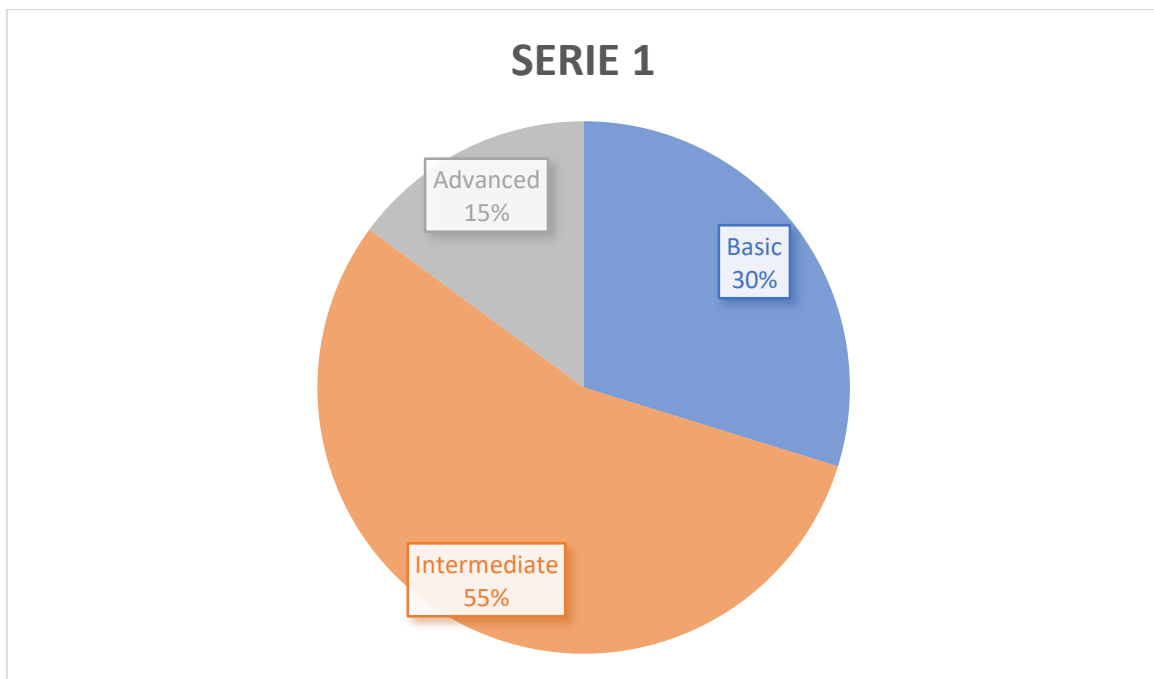
This question was made in order to obtain the information of which level students considered they reached in their English courses. The 30% of the students who takes an English course before starting study at the University said "basic"; the 55% "intermediate; and the rest 15% said advanced.

This question confirms that the researchers cannot consider as true beginners, students who took any English course before to start to study at the English major at the University of El Salvador.

4. If you didn't learn English before starting the University, do you think that if you had learned English before starting the University, your oral performance would have been better? Yes_____ No_____

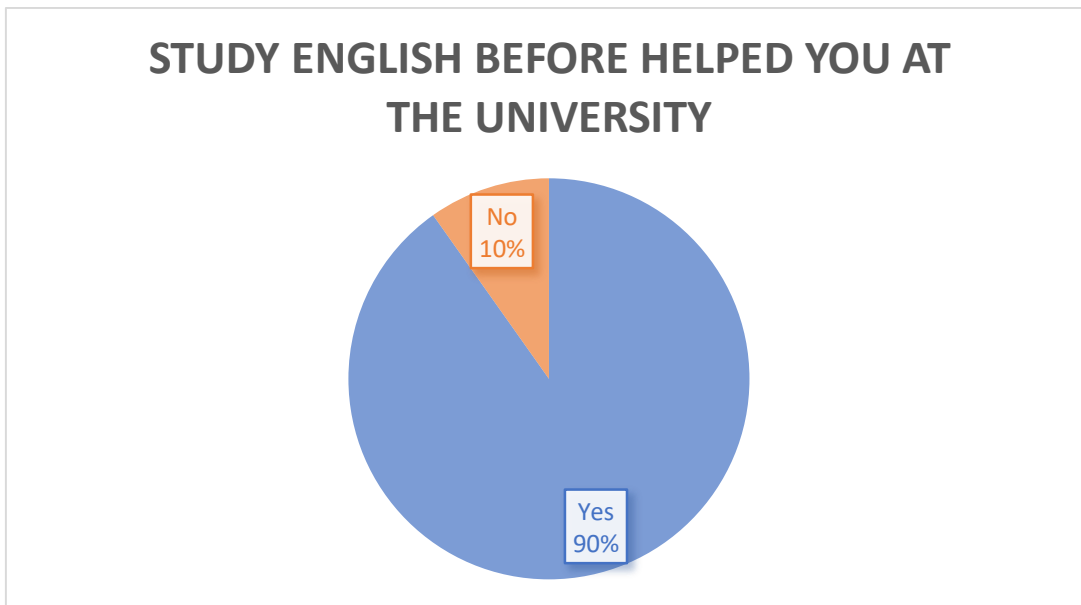| Study English before could help you at the University	Students
Yes	34
No	1
Total	35

STUDYING ENGLISH BEFORE COULD HAVE HELPED YOU AT THE UNIVERSITY

No 7%

Yes 93%
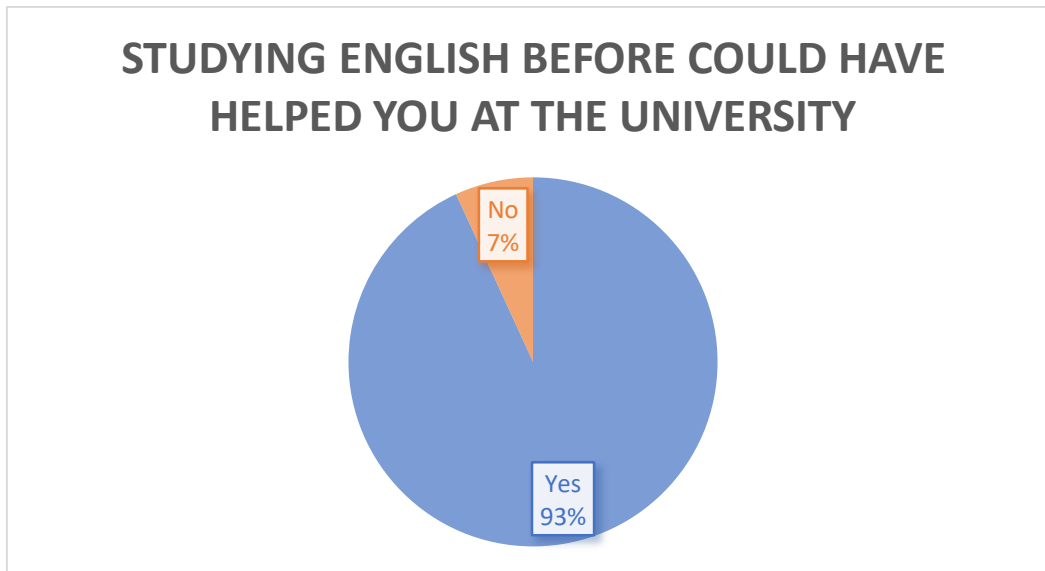
The 93% of students who did not study English before starting the major affirm that if they had had the opportunity to study, it could have helped them in their oral performance at the University. And the 7% said that it could not have helped them.

A. Explain why?

According to the students' explanation; they said that previous English knowledge could have helped them to have more vocabulary, experience, fluency, and confidence at the moment that they developed oral presentations in the English major.

5. If you learned English before starting the University, do you think that it helped you in your oral performance at the University? Yes_____ No_____

Answer	Students
Yes	23
No	2
Total	25

STUDY ENGLISH BEFORE HELPED YOU AT THE UNIVERSITY

No
10%

Yes
90%

According to the result of this question, the 90% of students who study English before to start the major affirm that it helps them in their English oral performance at the university, and just the 10% said that it did not help them.

A. Explain why?

The interviewees considered that having previous knowledge helped them to develop oral performance, because they already have previous vocabulary, and experience at the moment of taking classes. Also, they said that they felt confidence when teachers asked to participate in class activities.

3.7.2 Oral interview analysis

        The data analysis was done with the help of an oral interview and in this case the elements that were taken into account were 5 aspects evaluated in the rubric provided by the CEFER which are: **range, accuracy, fluency, interaction and coherence**. Also, in this analysis, it the communicative language competence performance of each group of students was included. The group was divided into true and false beginners ir order to make the information more comprehensible.

Range true beginners

TRUE BEGINNERS	
Range level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	6
B1	4
B2	6
C1	4
C2	0
Total	20
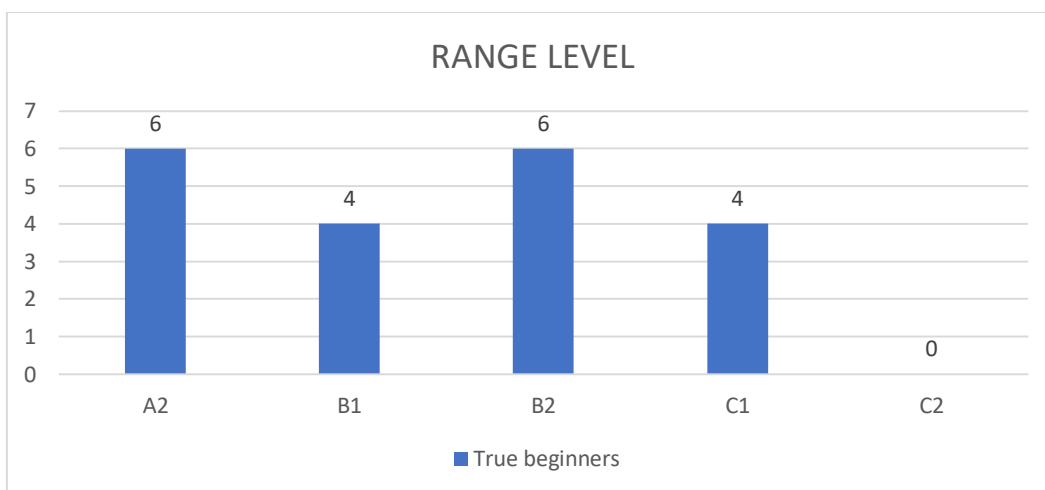
According to the results, it can be concluded that the population of this research considered as true beginners has a different variety of levels according to the CEFR. Six students out of twenty have an A2 level, which is considered a basic level. Besides that, ten students have an intermediate level divided in two levels B1, and B2. On the other hand, based on the results, four students have an advanced English level, the four of them in C1 level.

Range false beginners

FALSE BEGINNERS	
Range level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	2
B1	4
B2	10
C1	4
C2	0
Total	20

By checking the results from false beginners, it can be noticed that students have some higher levels according to the CEFR. Only two students out of twenty have an A2 level, which is considered a basic level. Besides that, fourteen students have an intermediate level divided in two levels B1, and B2. On the other hand, based on the results, in the case of the false beginners group, four students have an advanced English level; the four of them have a C1 level.

**Range result comparison**
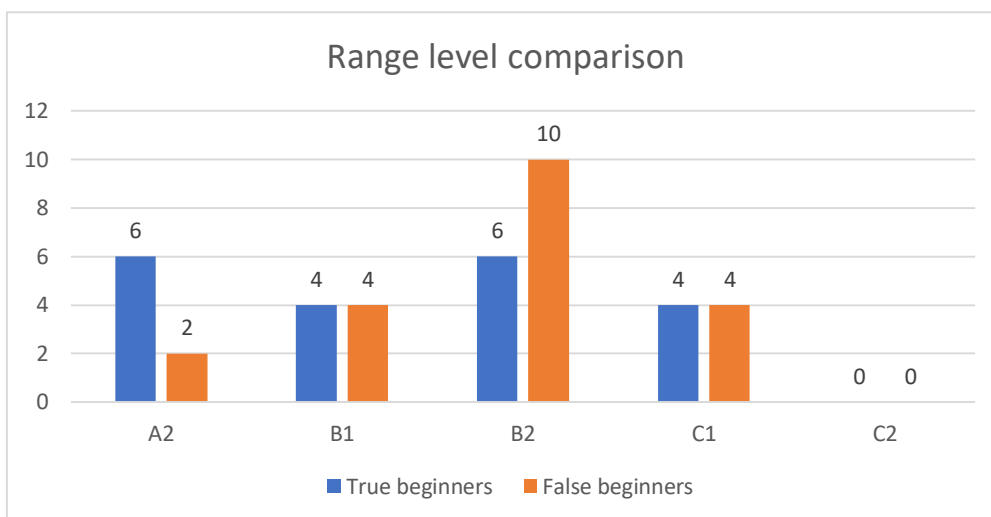
The results show that the majority of true beginners reached around A2 and B1 level of proficiency in relation to range, being able to talk about topics such as family, hobbies, interests, work, travel and current events. Then, these students found confidence using basic patterns to talk about limited information on the topics mentioned above. On the other side, the false beginners who are basically placed on the B2 and C1 level of range were able to talk with great flexibility using the language.

The statistics show that ten true beginners reached around B2 and C1, while fourteen false beginners reached higher levels than those reached by true beginners. This contrast is being made based on the flexibility of language use in and the specific vocabulary performed by the speaker in the interview. In conclusion, all students from the Readings and Conversation were able to talk about academic topics while having some weaknesses at the time of speaking about specific topics, vocabulary and structures aimed to give opinions and ideas on other topics out of academic contexts.
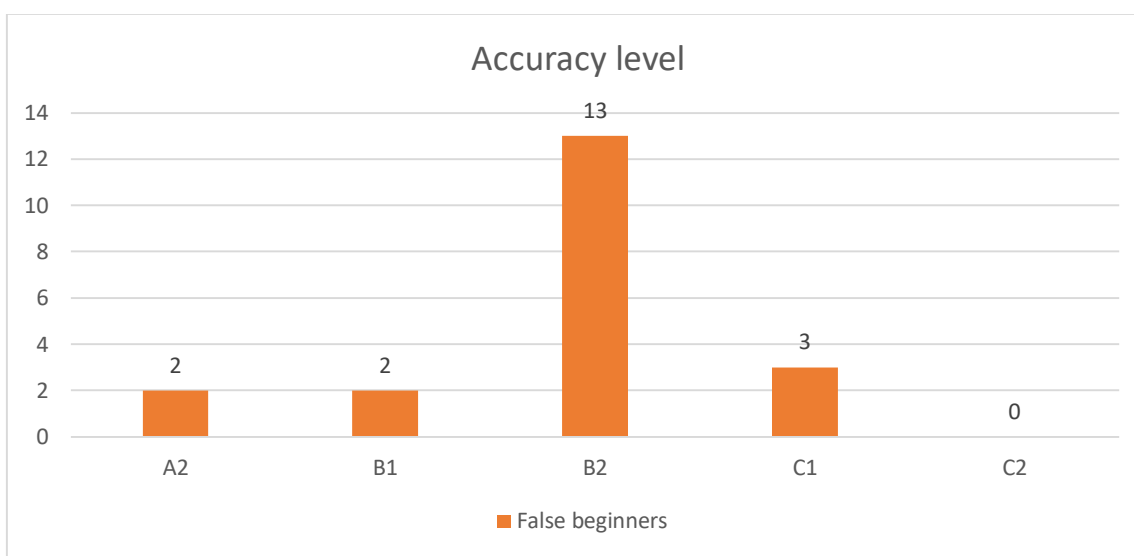
Accuracy true beginners

TRUE BEGINNERS	
Accuracy level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	7
B1	8
B2	4
C1	1
C2	0
Total	20
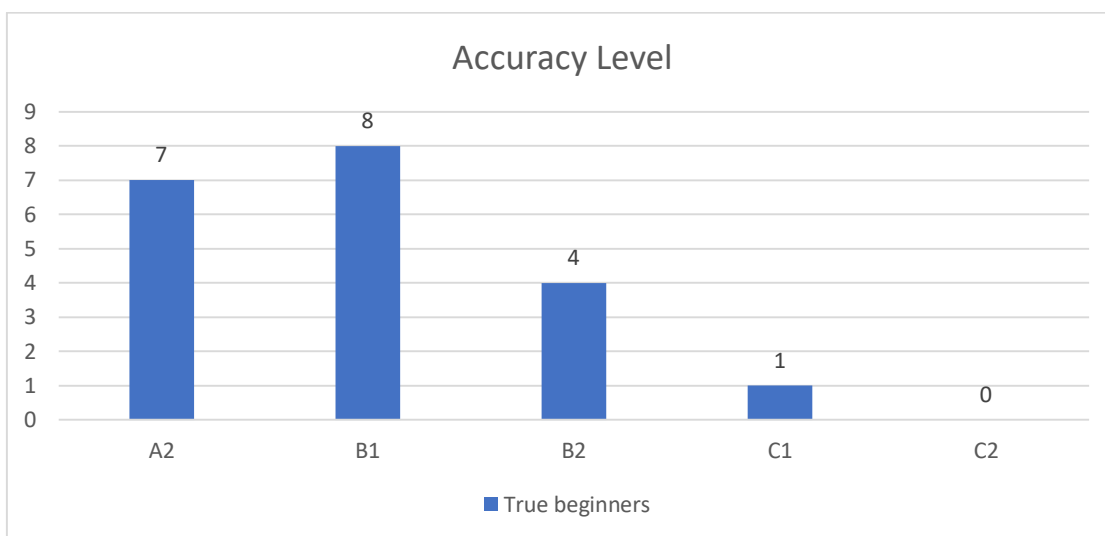
Based on the results, true beginners have a different variety of accuracy levels. The accuracy level can be affected by different factors in a positive or negative way. As the graphic shows, seven students out of twenty have an A2 level, which is a very basic level. In the case of intermediate students, twelve of them are divided in levels B1, and B2. Finally, based on the results, one student has an advanced accuracy C1 level.

Accuracy false beginners

FALSE BEGINNERS	
Accuracy level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	2
B1	2
B2	13
C1	3
C2	0
Total	20

In the case of false beginners, it can be noticed that students have a higher accuracy levels. For example, only two students out of twenty have an A2 level, which is considered a basic level. Furthermore, fifteen students have an intermediate level divided in two levels B1, and B2. On the other hand, based on the results, in the case of the false beginners group, three students have a C1 level.

Accuracy result comparison
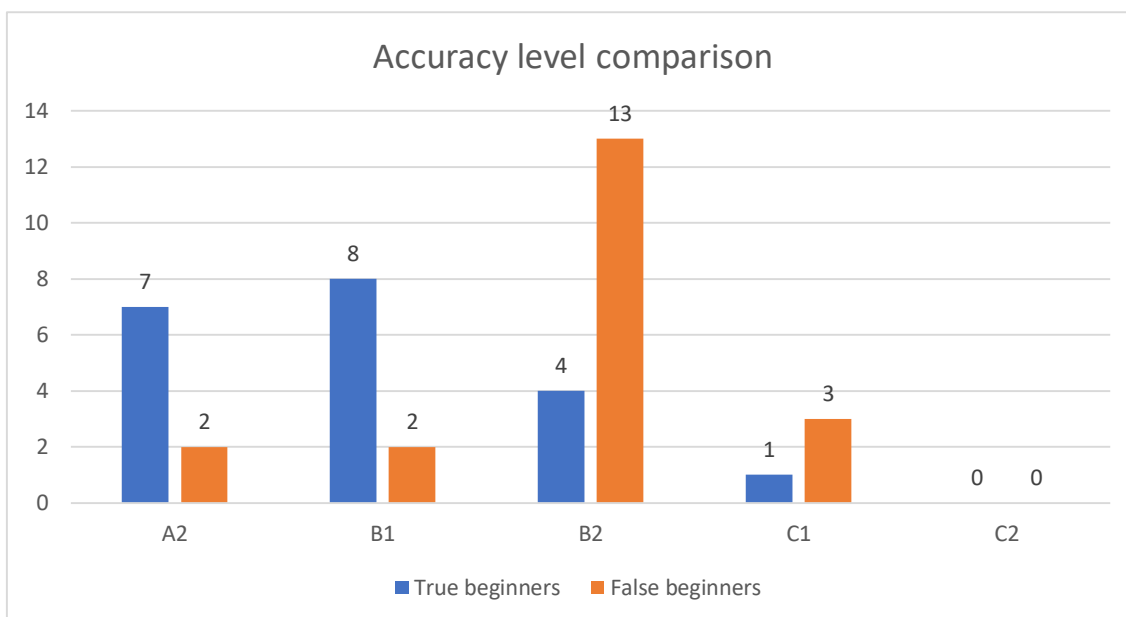
In relation to accuracy we will include the differences found regarding to grammatical and linguistic competences. The bar graph shows the relationship that exists between the two groups of students. In the first column, there are seven true beginners and two false beginners who used simple grammatical structures.

The only issue found is described as having problems with the organization of patterns into sentences. True beginners always tried to give answers using the most common grammatical structures learned in classes; this became their strength while taking the oral interview. Moreover, the researcher could notice the use of self-correction in each of the groups; this was their helping hand in their oral proficiency.

According to the result, the use of advanced grammatical structures was presented only in one true beginner in the C1 level, and it was presented in three false beginners in C1 level.

Fluency true beginners

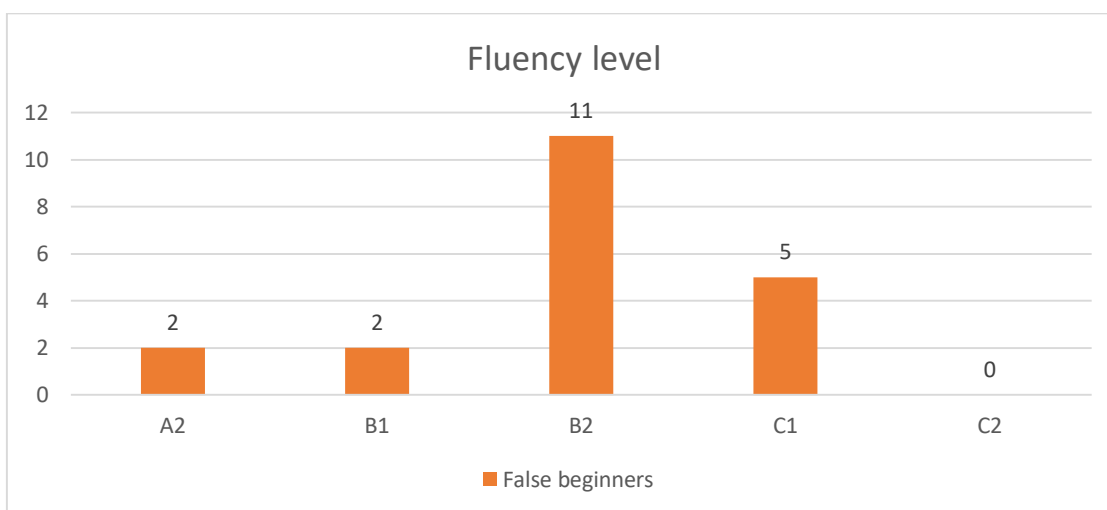| TRUE BEGINNERS	
Fluency level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	4
B1	4
B2	10
C1	2
C2	0
Total	20
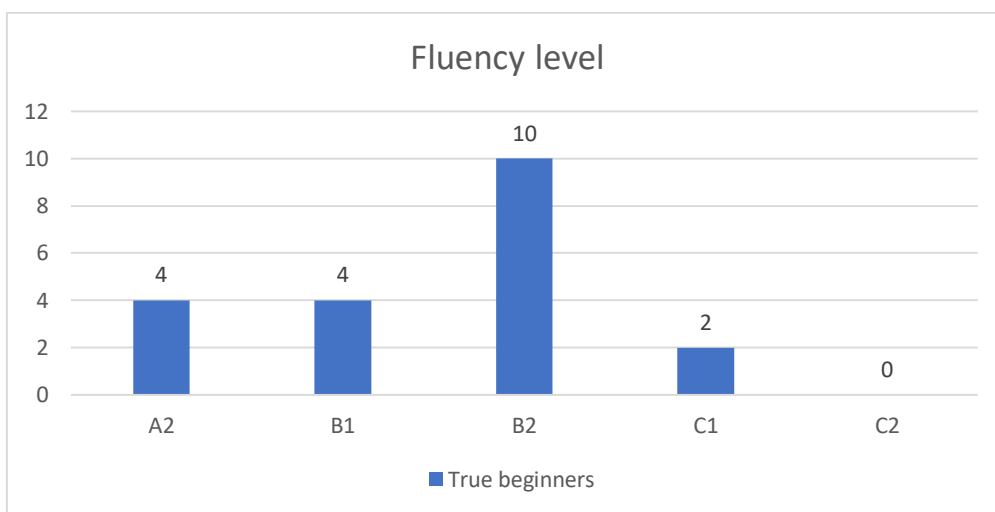
Many people think that being fluent means being a proficient speaker, mainly because if we think we can speak with no pauses or even faster, we are good English speakers. This is not the case; actually, this involves the ability to make pauses when necessary, the correct intonation, and the flow of the conversation.

Fluency level is an important factor that students must take into consideration. As the graphic shows, four students out of twenty have an A2 level, which is a very basic level. This level needs to high up very fast. In the case of intermediate levels, fourteen students are divided in levels B1, and B2. Finally, based on the results, only two students reach C1 level.
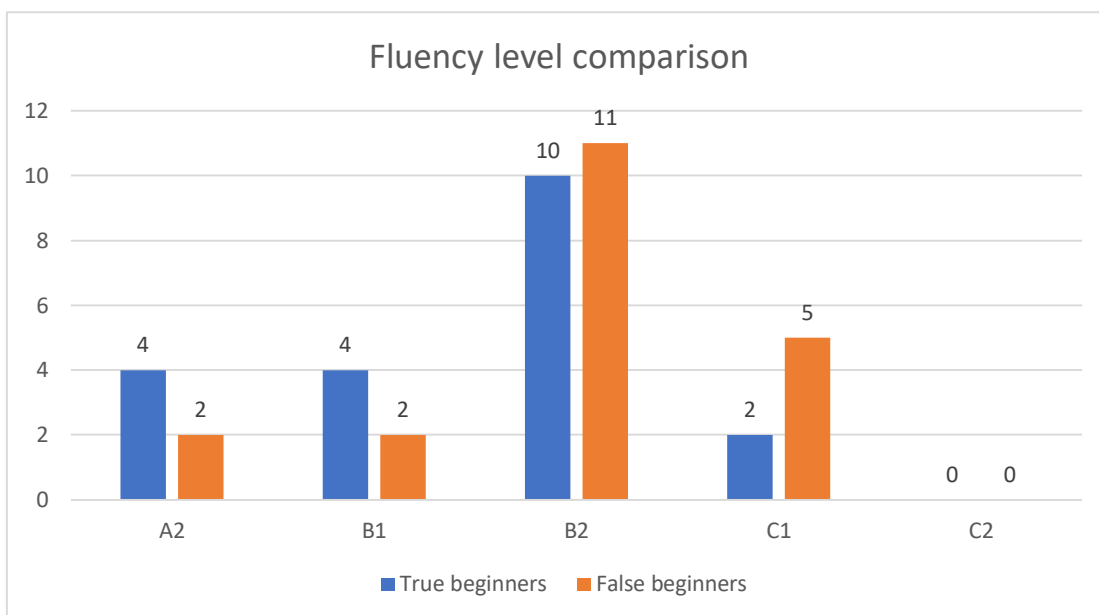
Fluency false beginners

FALSE BEGINNERS	
Fluency level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	2
B1	2
B2	11
C1	5
C2	0
Total	20

False beginner had higher level of fluency in comparison to Range or Accuracy. They were able to maintain the flow of the conversations and topics been asked. There were around two of the participants who did not transmit the message in a clear way. It was difficult for the interviewer to understand the ideas they gave because of the use of words and its pronunciation. The rest of them were able to make appropriate intonation of function words and content words, they maintained pauses when necessary even though they hesitated a bit when searching for patterns and expression. The results show that falsest beginners are between B2 and C1, the graph indicates that eleven of them reach Level B2, and five of them level C1.

Fluency result comparison


Fluency level comparison

True and false beginners had some similarities and differences on their fluency levels. First, it can be noticed that most of the students reached a B2 level, ten students from the group of false beginners and eleven from the group of true beginners. However, it is necessary to mention that true beginners have more students placed in the A2 level. According to the results on the C1 level, false beginners are better in the fluency aspect; we can observe in the graph that they have five students in these level, and true beginners only two.

Regarding to their performance, true beginners have more problems to retrieve or process the words than false beginners. Furthermore, true beginners found it more difficult to maintain the flow of the conversation than false beginners did, given that they made to unnecessary pauses. False beginners were more capable of connecting ideas. Therefore, true beginners had more problems on fluency than false beginners.

Interaction true beginners

TRUE BEGINNERS	
Interaction level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	5
B1	4
B2	10
C1	1
C2	0
Total	20
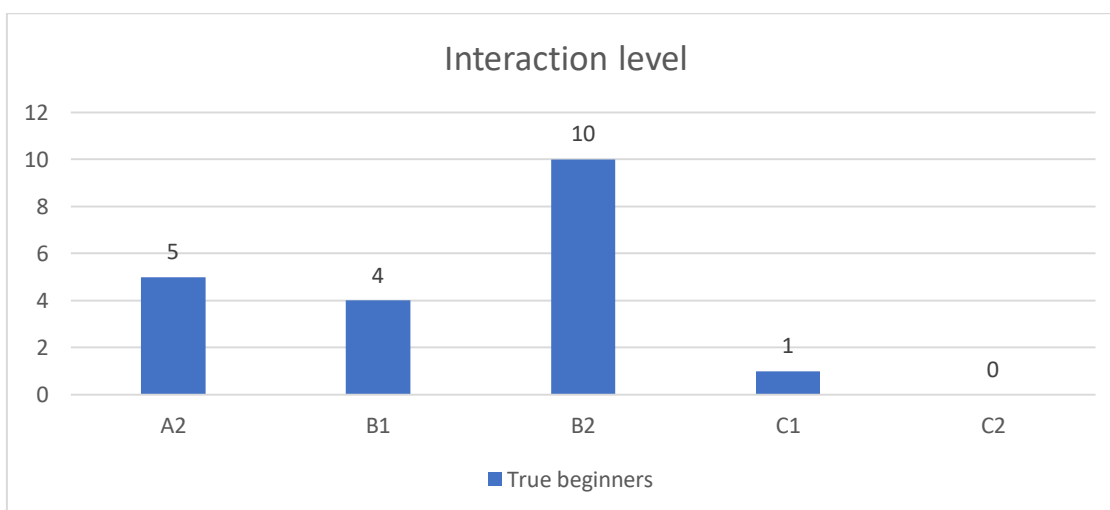
Based on the results, true beginners have a different variety of interaction levels. As the graphic shows, five students out of twenty have an A2 level, which is a very basic level. In the case of intermediate students, fourteen of them are divided in levels B1, and B2. Finally, based on the results, only one student reached C1 level.
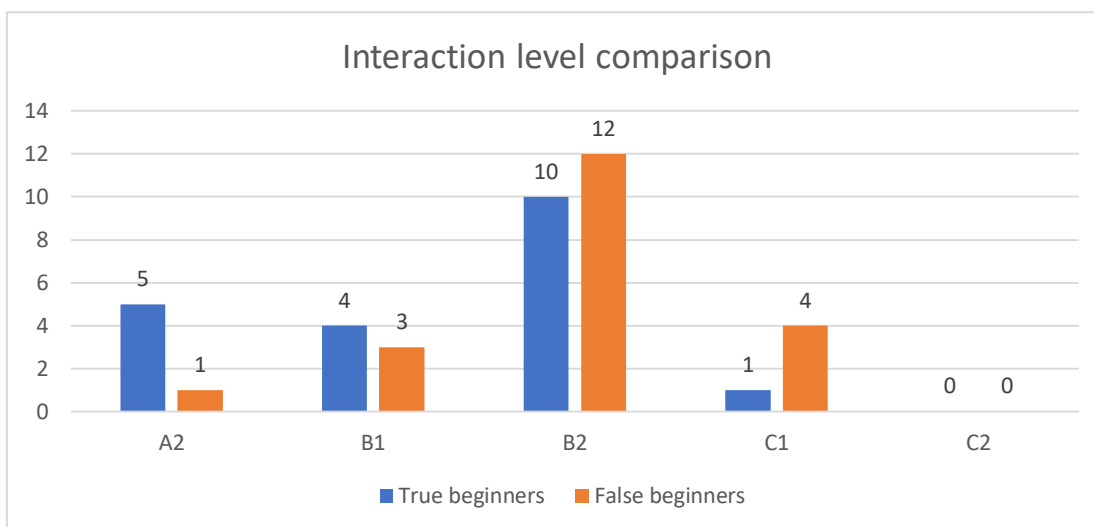
Interaction false beginners

FALSE BEGINNERS	
Interaction level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	1
B1	3
B2	12
C1	4
C2	0
Total	20
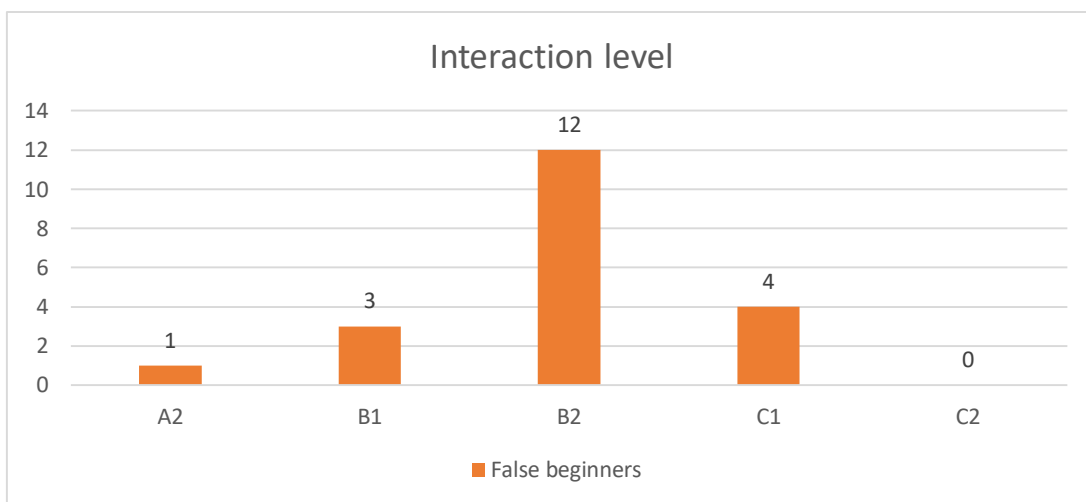
Even though this group of students had previous English background knowledge, there were some students, who looked like waiting for the time to speak but they still gave short answers.

This was a difficulty for the researcher because the students did not give a complete explanation for the question been asked and it was necessary to ask more questions out of the repertoire. The other 19 students developed the social contexts with accuracy, being able to talk about family, academic and general topics. They answered politely to the questions made by the interviewer because the topics were familiar for them.

Interaction result comparison

The interaction level is strength for the true beginner. It can be said that they are good at maintaining a conversation going on, and made use of social markers, polite conversations and turn taking. The results for false beginners are better; first, there is only one student on the A2 level and unfortunately the true beginner's category has five of them. The difficulty for them was to explain clearly their points and the interviewer had to ask them extra questions in order to make them speak. Regarding the B2 level, false beginners have more students in this level than true beginners; however, the difference is not too big it is only one student. Finally, four false beginners were able to reach a C1 level in the interaction, and only one true beginner.

Besides, false beginners showed confidence when speaking, while true beginners lacked of it. Something that is important to mention is that the majority of true and false beginners did not make their contributions as informative as it was expected. Thus, true beginners' strength was the ability to keep a conversation going politely and taking turns when needed, on the other hand false beginners were confident when speaking.

Coherence true beginners

TRUE BEGINNERS	
Coherence level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	4
B1	4
B2	9
C1	3
C2	0
Total	20
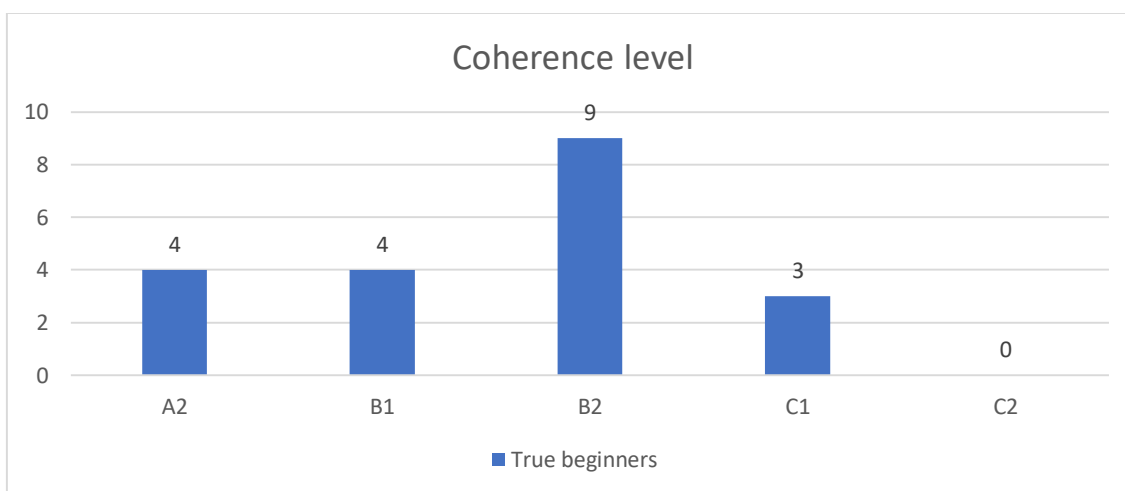
Coherence has to do with the relation between sentences or units; the results show that the majority of students reached a B2 level, as it has been the predominant level in their results. On the other hand, there is a positive aspect, which is that at least three students reached a C1 level and they are able to use cohesive devices to make the discourse clear and cohesive. However, some students have a lower level A2 because they only link sentences by using simple connections such as "like and but". Coherence belongs to the pragmatic competence, which is represented by the discourse competence. Students are supposed to produce a sequence of sentences in order to have coherent stretches of language. True beginners have problems in the thematic development; they just talked without taking care of the order of their ideas.
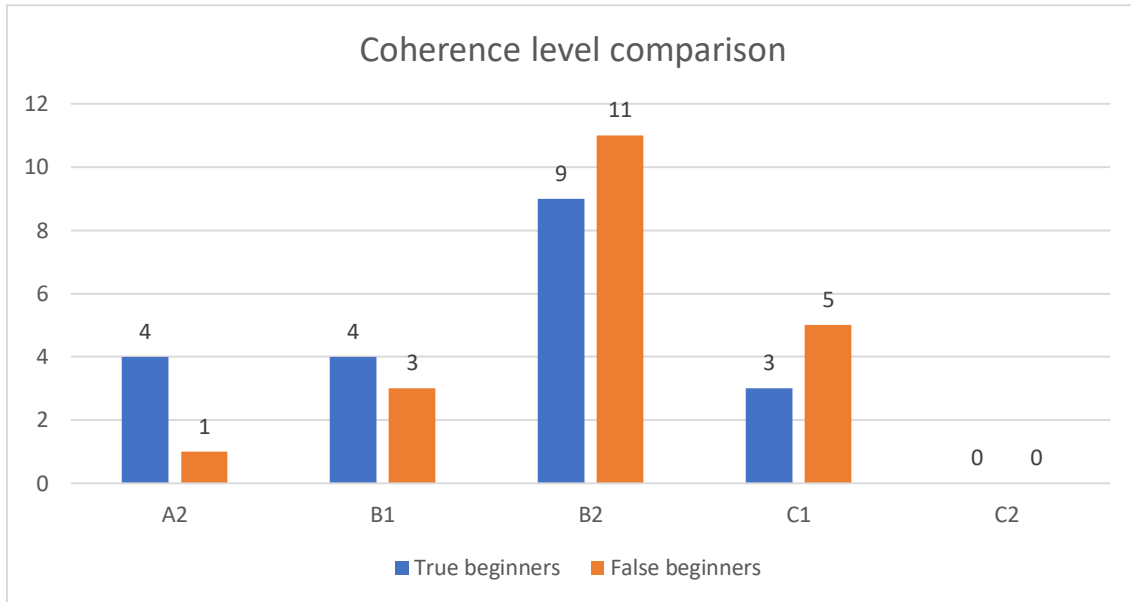
Coherence false beginners

FALSE BEGINNERS	
Coherence level	Frequency (numbers of students)
A2	1
B1	3
B2	11
C1	5
C2	0
Total	20
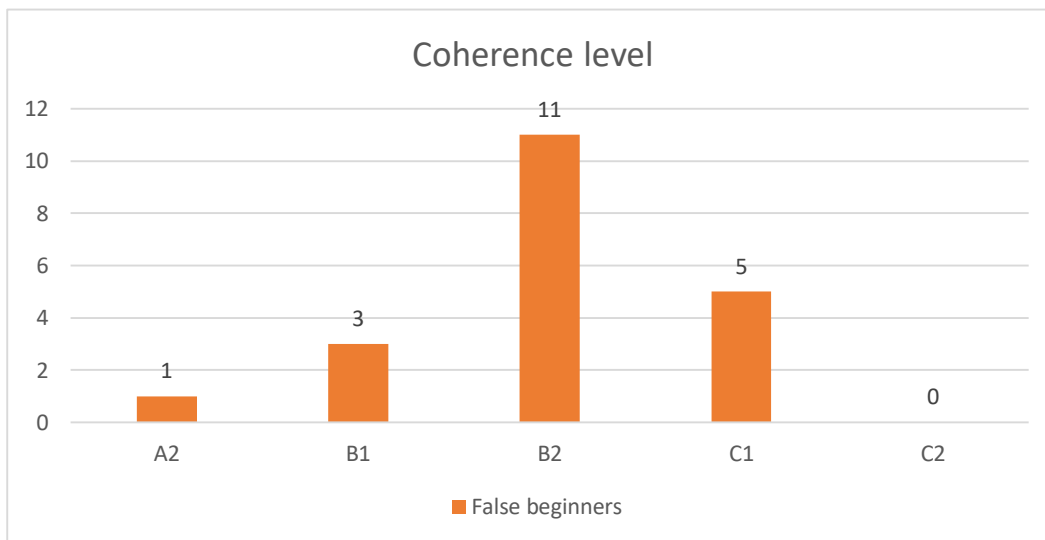
The students gave answers which were formulated by using some coherent devices; this means, they tried to structure their answers in a logical way. Some of them accomplished with this part of the interview.

First, one student is on basic level. Second, fourteen of twenty are in intermediate level, three in B1 and eleven in B2. Finally, according to the result, five of twenty students reached C1 level.

Coherence result comparison

Coherence is an aspect in which true and false beginners got different results. Four true beginners and one false beginner reach an A2 level. False beginners have more students placed on the B1 and B2 level; also, five false beginners reached level C1 level against three true beginners.

True beginners were able to link a series of short discrete simple elements. On the other side, false beginners made use of some cohesive devices to make their discourse clear. True beginners did not order their sentences according to the topic. To sum up, it can be said that coherence is one of the aspects in which true beginners have a lot to improve.

From 40 students divided into two different groups (true and false beginners) we got the following results accordingly.

True beginners

TRUE BEGINNERS	
Category	**Students**
A1	2
A2	3
B1	7
B2	7
C1	1
C2	0
Total	20
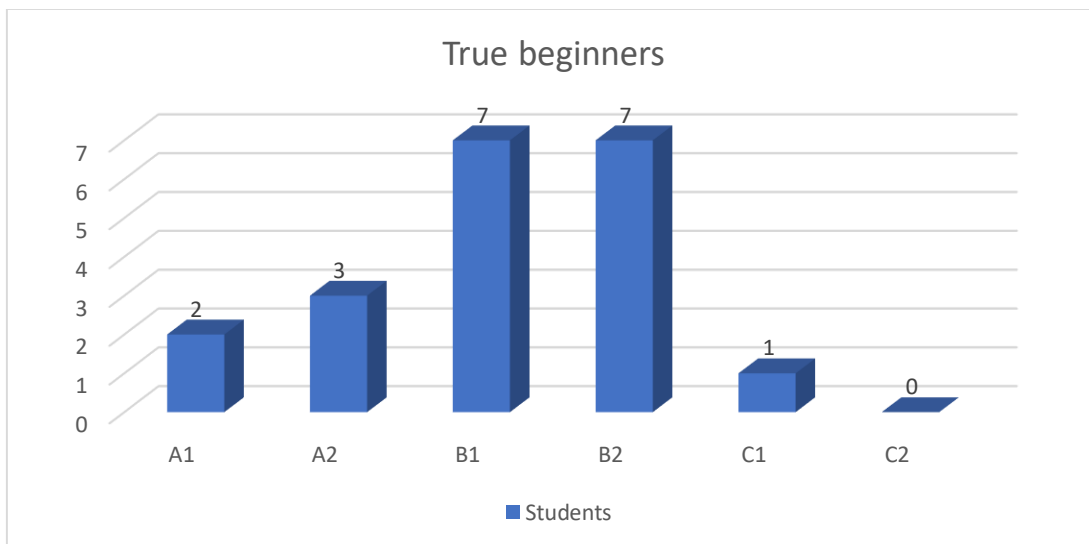
The most notable areas on this graphic is that only four students have reached a C2 level of oral proficiency which is the highest level, while the majority got on B1 with seven students out of 20. The rest of the areas B2 C1, C2 obtained no more than three students.

False Beginners

FALSE BEGINNERS	
Category	**Students**
A1	0
A2	2
B1	6
B2	8
C1	4
C2	0
Total	20
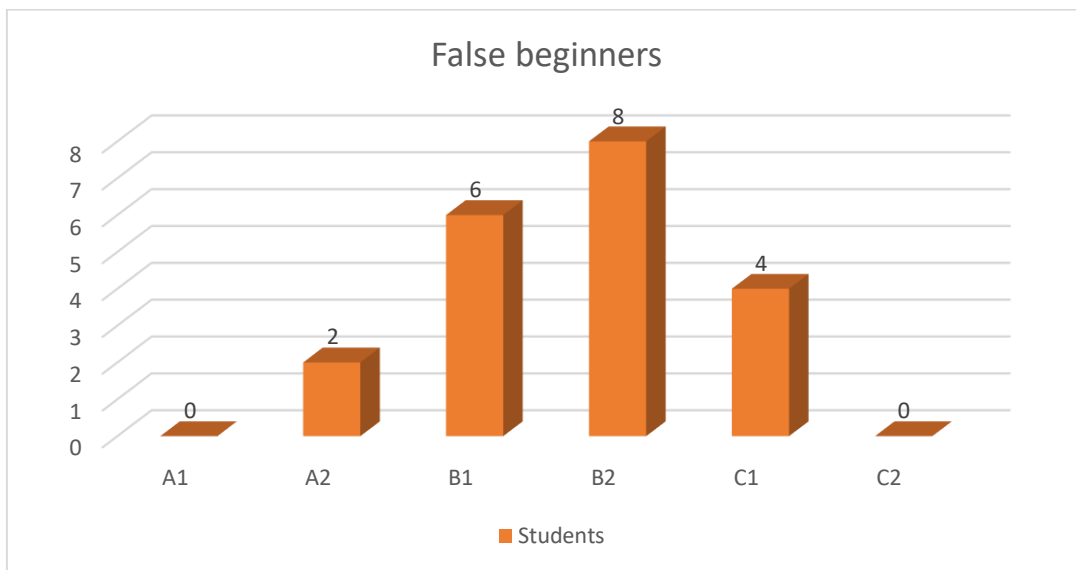
As we can see on this group, the leading area reached a B2 level with seven students out of 20, and four students reached the highest proficiency level C2.

The comparison scenario with both groups of students
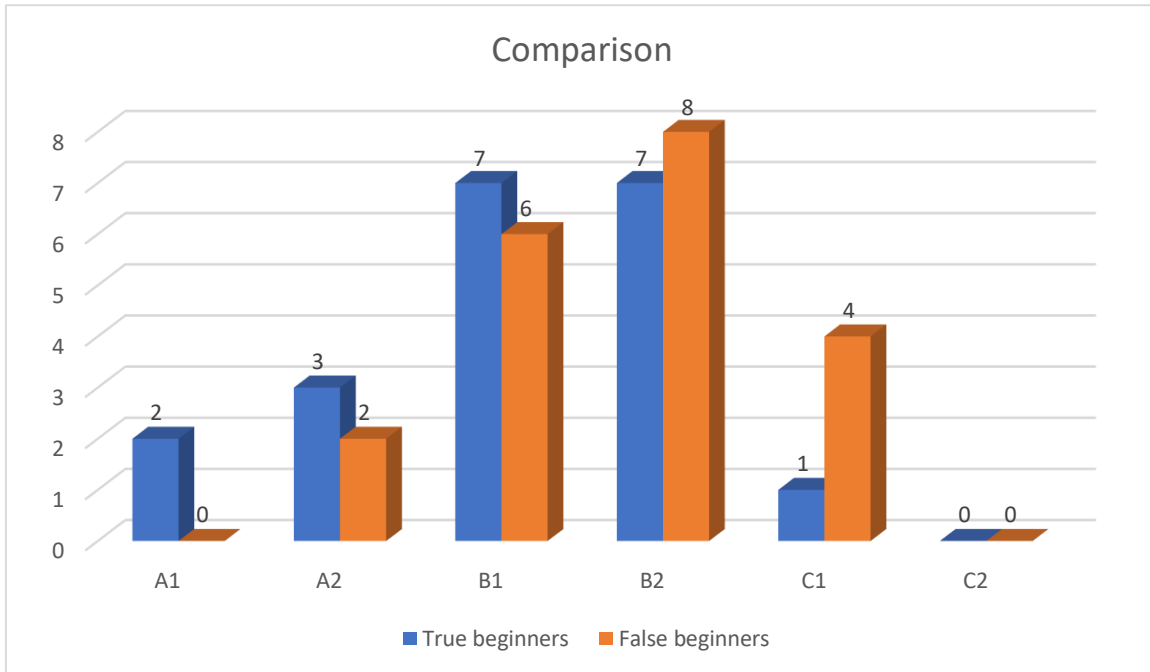
First, A1 and A2 level showed how true beginners went over the other group (false beginners) which is the lowest level of proficiency.

Second, true beginners on B1 level got placed one student out of the total higher than false beginners while on B2 level is opposite.

Third, it states how the two groups evaluated got the same score of students on each level. C1 got one false beginner and four true false beginners accordingly. Whereas C2 got same, score all the way round.

In summary, false beginners and true beginners go head to head in the lowest levels while in the higher level false beginners showed a higher performance.

3.7.3 Placement test analysis

From 40 students divided into two different groups (true and false beginners) researchers got
the following results accordingly.

True beginners

TRUE BEGINNERS	
Category	Students
C2	0
C1	0
B2	5
B1	9
A2	1
A1	1
Did not take the test	4
Total	20
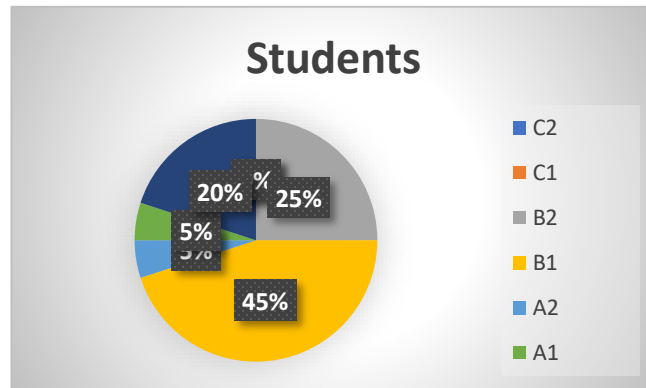
False beginners

FALSE BEGINNERS	
Category	Students
C2	0
C1	0
B2	9
B1	3
A2	0
A1	0
Did not take the test	8
Total	20
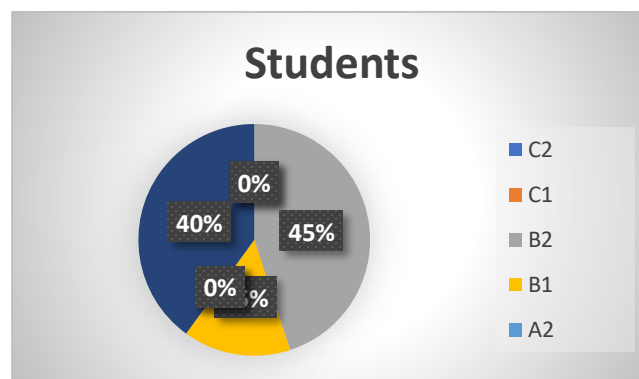
The comparison scenario with both group of students

Comparison
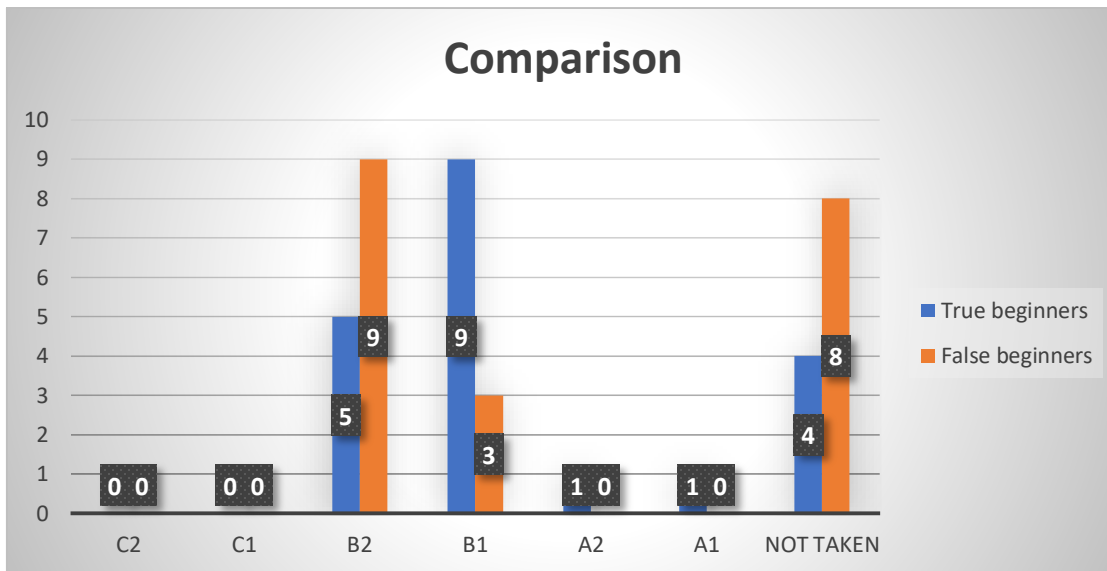
Based on the results taken from the placement test, it is shown that from a sample of 20 students, half of them are true beginners, and the other half are false beginners. In the results as the graph above shows, the students that were classified as false beginners have reached better results. Nine students reached a B2 level based on the Common European Framework of Reference and any student got less than B1. On the other hand, only five true beginners reached B2, and two of them reached A1 and A2, which is somehow the same pattern already showed in the oral interviews.

The results also show that twelve students did not take the test, (4 true beginners and 8 false beginners).

3.9 Conclusions

The relationship between English background knowledge an oral proficiency has a big influence in students´ performance because it can have a positive or negative impact in the level reached by them. Based on the results obtained by the sample in this study, it can be observed that students have a variety of results in the communicative language competence provided by the CEFR which are range, accuracy, fluency, interaction and coherence.

One of the purposes of this investigation was to find out to what extent the English background knowledge would affect the oral proficiency level reached by students when finishing their Intensive English courses; indeed, the results showed that this was an issue for many of them, especially for those with not English background knowledge. Not in all aspects evaluated, but mainly in those elements comprised in the CEFR rubric such as range, accuracy and interaction.

After obtaining the results from the interview, the researcher could notice the need of new requirements for the newcomer students at the FLD. This was because based on the researchers' experiences the oral proficiency performed by the false beginner was up to the expectations of an oral interview. While some true beginners hesitated and misunderstood some parts of the interview making it hard to be carried out.

It is essential to mention the strengths and weaknesses of true and false beginners regarding to the communicative language competences in accordance to what the results of the research have shown. First, the linguistic competence, which is made up of a set of sub competences such as lexical, grammatical, phonological competence and so on, appears to be the major strength of false beginners above all. These students are able to communicate clear messages using an average grammar. Their pronunciation is good and they do not have much trouble with fluency. On the other side, true beginners showed certain level of weakness in this area, they have serious troubles when processing or retrieving the words, in pronunciation and they have basic grammar mistakes.

The sociolinguistic competence is a strength that both true and false beginners have. Even though they do not use expressions of folk wisdom, they know the levels of formality, turn taking conventions and so on very well. However, they have a weakness in this competence, which is that not all the students make their contributions as informative as required and they do not provide sufficient evidence of what they say, in other words they lack of arguments to support ideas.

True beginners are the weakest group in the pragmatic competence because they do not manage the discourse sub competence; they are not able to organize their ideas. These students do not have a good thematic development. However, true beginners have strength in the functional competence because they know when to use descriptions, narrations or commentary. On the other hand, false beginners have a little more control on discourse and thematic development, but it is just a little difference so that it cannot be stated that pragmatic competence is their strength.

Evidently, false beginners reached better results than true beginners, despite this, the difference is not big taking into account that true beginners did not take any course before starting the major; the difference expected regarding to their communicative language competences performance can be called not to live up to expectations.

To sum up, the research has showed that there exists a positive relationship between students' English background knowledge and their oral proficiency and that these students have different strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, there exists a need of establishing new requirements to register students in the English teaching major in order to reach higher levels of proficiency and there is a need of increasing the guided teaching hours that students receive in their Intensive English courses.

3.9.1 Suggestions

Based on the results taken by this study, many observations and recommendations can be done in order to improve the results. For example, these following recommendations can be done for students, teachers and authorities of the University.

Students:

- ✓ Students should take into account that speaking too fast does not make them fluent speakers; it is important for them to try to speak at a normal speed but connecting their ideas in a natural way making every word understandable.

- ✓ Students should not private their selves to speak only in those environments created by the teacher in the classroom, they should go beyond and talk among partners about reality and leave out their critical thinking.

- ✓ English learners should be careful when someone asks them something; they should provide the necessary information not too much, neither too little. In addition, they have to be relevant and try not to get out of the way.

Teachers:

- ✓ Teachers should be aware about students´ English background knowledge in order to get an idea about which possible topics or even grammar points should be more focus on, for students to improve and reach a better level.

- ✓ Teachers should try to help students a little bit more to improve in their vocabulary about different topics such as politics, weather, religion and news because there is a remarkable difficulty while talking about them.

- ✓ It should be a good idea if teachers can have a class in a while, in which they take the time to teach students how to improve the sense relation between sentences and units (coherence). This will be very beneficial for students because they will start

improving their answers and going straight to the point while giving answers, instead of going around repeatedly.

Authorities:

✓ It is also advised that the authorities of the University take into account the establishment of new requirements such as the implementation of an English placement test in order to find out, at least the students who have basic knowledge before starting the university studies. This does not pretend to get into controversy neither the future students not the university policy but to make a contribution to better English oral proficiency results.

✓ It is recommended that the coordinator of the English programs take into account the guidelines descriptions; in this case, the CEFR in order to prepare students in different topics, programs, the use of different books and other recognized rubrics so that students may succeed and get better results at the end on their English course.

✓ It is really considered to increase the amount of time that students are faced to the English environment during the major of their English courses. As it is stated on the degree of this major, the intensive English is required to be taught in eight hours per week for sixteen weeks. It is definitely recommended to increase this amount of hours since both true and false beginners would reinforce areas of the content where they show weak performance.

CHAPTER IV: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Short Questionnaire

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

Universidad de El Salvador
Hacia la libertad por la cultura

Topic: "The relationship between students' English background knowledge and their oral proficiency level in Readings and Conversation I course of the Bachelor of Arts in English with Emphasis in Teaching in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador semester II, 2017"

Objective: To identify the previous English knowledge of students from the Bachelor of Arts in English with Emphasis in Teaching in the Foreign Language Department.

Student´s name: _____

Major: _____**Semester:** _____

Instructions: Mark with an **"X" (when applicable)** in the blank space according to your own criteria.

1. When was your first contact learning English?

   ☐ Elementary School   ☐ High School   ☐ University

2. Where did you study the High School?

   ☐ National School ☐ Private School   ☐ City   ☐ Rural

   2.1 How many hours did you study English during the week? _____

   2.2 Did you perform any oral activities during the class?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

   2.3 What types of oral activities did you perform?

☐Role-play   ☐Presentations   ☐Conversations   ☐Oral exams

2.4 How often did you perform oral activities?

☐Every day   ☐ Once a week   ☐ Once a month

3. Did you study any English course before starting this major?

     ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If your answer was YES.

3.1 How long did you study English?   _____

3.4 Were you able to conclude with the whole English course?   _____

3.5 What level of English did you reach?   _____

4. If you didn't learn English before starting the University, do you think that if you had learned English before starting the University, your oral performance would have been better? Yes_____ No_____

B. Explain why?

    _____

    _____

5. If you learned English before starting the University, do you think that it helped you in your oral performance at the University? Yes_____ No_____

B. Explain why?

    _____

    _____

Oral interview

CAMBRIDGE ESOL'S MAIN SUITE EXAMS (2009) ORAL PLACEMENT TEST (COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFRENCE FOR LANGUAGES)

Focus in oral proficiency, CEFR takes some parameters and rubrics to determine the level of students. Some of the following guides are examples that can be useful to determine those levels by using a rubric to check the abilities and proficiency that students can reach.

A good oral placement test should start with introductory questions such as **What is your name? How do you spell your surname? Where are you from? Did you learn English? For how many years?**

According to the different scales that CEFR provides us, we can also get a guide to some possible questions or activities that a student can perform according to the level, example:

A1 - Starter

1 What do you do? Do you work or are you a student?

2. Where you work or study

3. Tell me about your family.

4. What do you do in your free time? (Do you play soccer or any sports?)

5 What do you do every day? What time do you get up / start work?

6. Talk about your daily routine

7. Tell me about the town where you live. Talk about a place you know

A2 - Elementary

1. Tell me about something you can do well. (Can you swim? Can you cook?)

Say what you can do

2. How often do you usually see your friends? (What do you do together?) Say what you do in your free time

4. Where do you live? Tell me about your home.

5. What are you going to do at the weekend? Talk about hopes and plans

6. Have you been to an English-speaking country? Tell me about your visit. (OR tell me about an interesting place you have been to.)

7. Talk about trips and past events

8. Talk about personal experiences

B1 Pre-intermediate

1. Tell me about something that you did with your friends/family recently. Why did you enjoy it? Describe past events

2. Tell me about the weather in your country. Which is your favorite season and why do you like it?

3. Imagine that I am a visitor to your country. What advice would you give me?

Make recommendations and advice

4. Can you tell me about an object that is special for you? Why is it special?

5. Where do you live – in a house or an apartment? What's it like? Talk about homes and housing

B1-B2 Intermediate

1 What sort of television programmers do you like? Talk about TV and radio

2 How do you keep in touch with your friends and family (by phone/email)? How do you think communication might change in the future?

3. Tell me about the last film you saw at the cinema (or the last book you read). Would you're commend it?

4. Think about an interesting person you have met. What is he/she like? Describe personality

5. Have you ever been on a journey where something went wrong? Talk about unexpected travel situations

B2- Upper Intermediate

1. Tell me about something you are good at. Talk about things you're good at

2. Can you tell me about a famous landmark/person in your country? What doyou know about it/them?

3. What do you use the internet for? Do you think it will ever replace books and newspapers? Why / why not?   Justify your point of view

4. If an English person wanted to learn your language, how should they do this and why? Make and justify recommendations

5. Where do you see yourself in five years' time? Talk about the future and describe personal hopes and expectations.

C1- Advanced

1. How has the way you learn English changed over the years? Describe experiences of language learning

2. Do you think life for children today is easier or harder than it was for your parents / for you? Make comparisons and talk about changes

3. Describe an advert you have seen. How effective do you think it is? Talk about advertising and marketing

4. What image do other people have of your country, its food and its people? Do you think it is accurate?

5. Are you concerned about climate change? What evidence of it is there in your country?
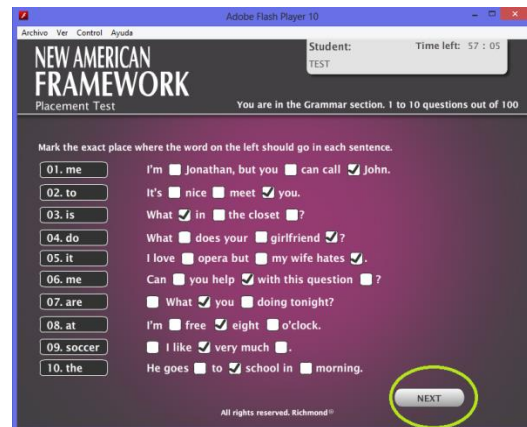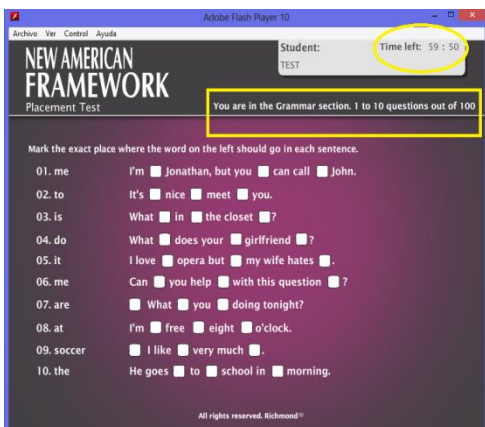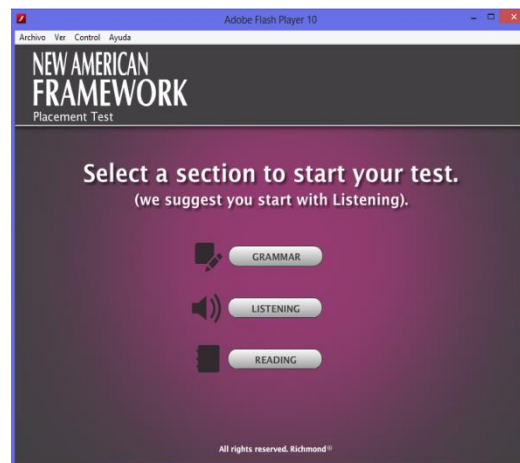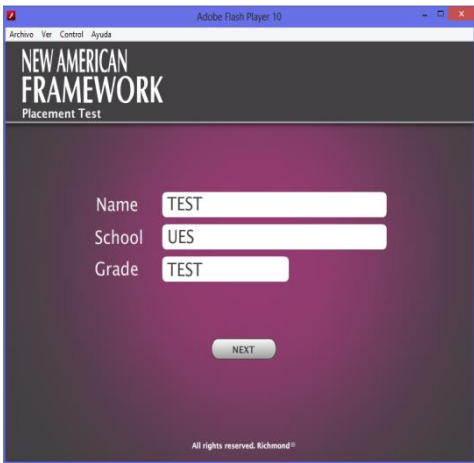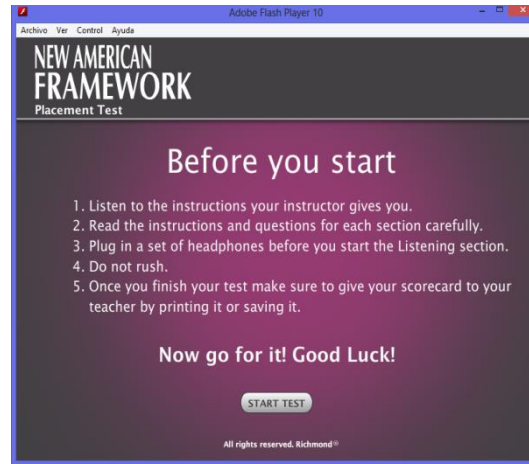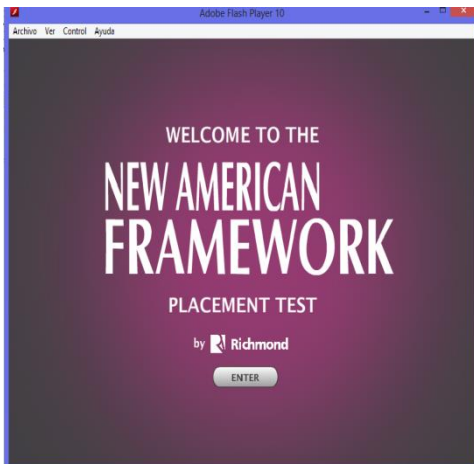
The following rubric is an example of a guide in order to evaluate and determine the level reached by students and it has a description of each of them.
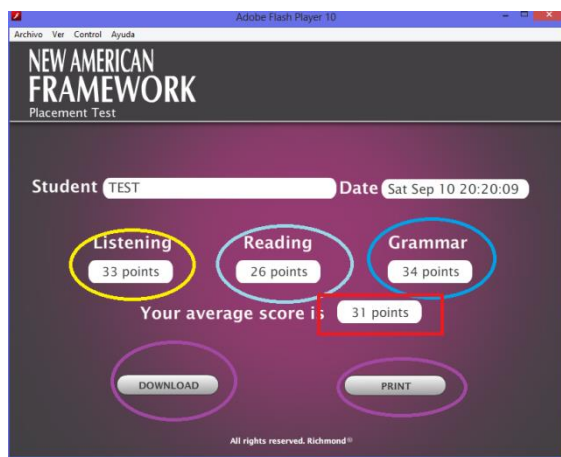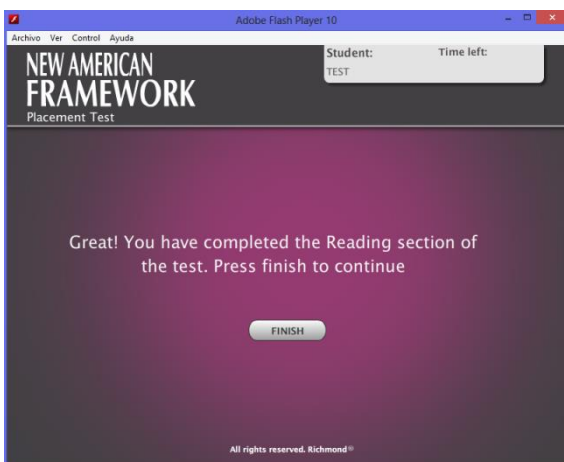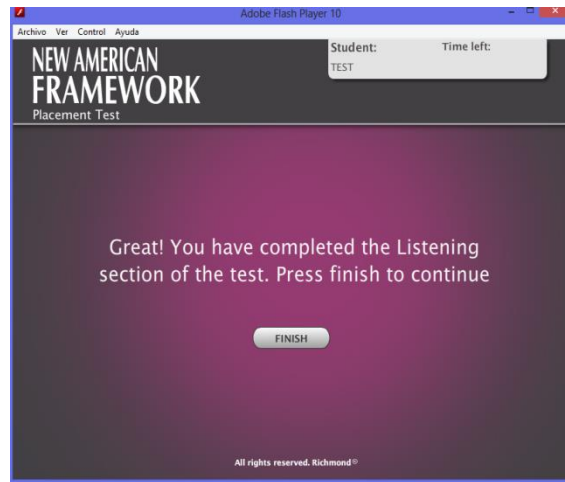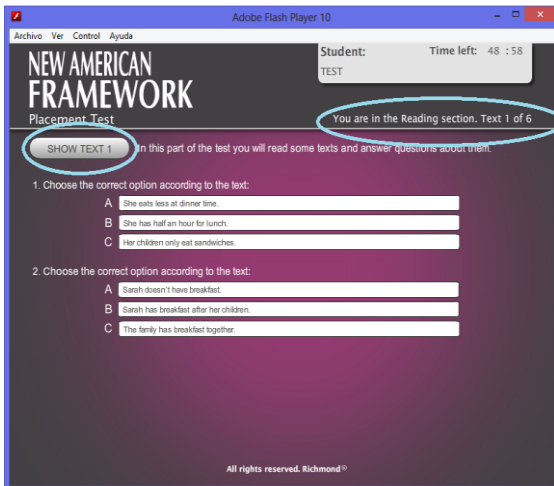
Table 5.5: ORAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA GRID (CEF Table 3)

	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turntaking, referencing, allusion making etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1+					
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2+					
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he or she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a long contribution.
B1+					
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
A2+					
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can ask and answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connections like "and", "but" and "because".
A1+					
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then".
Below A1					

Placement test

You have completed the Grammar section of the test. Press finish to continue

FINISH

NEW AMERICAN FRAMEWORK
Placement Test

Student: TEST Time left: 50 : 46

You are in the Listening section. Audio 1 of 6

In this part of the test you will listen to some excerpts and answer questions about them.

Conversation 1

1. How old is Linda?
   - A Fifty.
   - B Between fifty and sixty.
   - C Sixty.

2. Indicate the correct answer:
   - A Alex knows Linda's age.
   - B He knows it is Linda's birthday today, but not her age.
   - C He doesn't know Linda's age.

NEXT

NEW AMERICAN FRAMEWORK
Placement Test

Student: TEST Time left: 48 : 58

You are in the Reading section. Text 1 of 6

SHOW TEXT 1 In this part of the test you will read some texts and answer questions about them.

1. Choose the correct option according to the text:
   - A She eats less at dinner time.
   - B She has half an hour for lunch.
   - C Her children only eat sandwiches.

2. Choose the correct option according to the text:
   - A Sarah doesn't have breakfast.
   - B Sarah has breakfast after her children.
   - C The family has breakfast together.

NEW AMERICAN FRAMEWORK
Placement Test

Student: TEST Time left:

Great! You have completed the Listening section of the test. Press finish to continue

FINISH

NEW AMERICAN FRAMEWORK
Placement Test

Student: TEST Time left:

Great! You have completed the Reading section of the test. Press finish to continue

FINISH

NEW AMERICAN FRAMEWORK
Placement Test

Student TEST Date Sat Sep 10 20:20:09

Listening 33 points
Reading 26 points
Grammar 34 points

Your average score is 31 points

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Score Sheet

NEW AMERICAN FRAMEWORK
Placement Test

Name:	TEST
School:	UES
Grade:	TEST
Date:	Sat Sep 10 20:20:09 GMT-0600 2016

Scores

Grammar: 34 points
Reading: 26 points
Listening: 33 points

Average: 31 points

Recommended text books for this student level are:

New American Framework	NAF 2
Scholastic	Level 2
CEF	A2

Comments:

_____

_____

_____

Timetable

Activities	Months (weekly)															
	August				September				October				November			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Theory Revision			▓													
Methodology Design			▓	▓												
Data collection					▓	▓										
Data analysis							▓	▓								
Revision of the Whole Study									▓	▓						
Writing the research report											▓	▓	▓			
Research report submission													▓			
Presentation of the research report														▓		