CHAPTER I
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
1.1 PROBLEMATIC SITUATION

The student community of Universidad Francisco Gavidia (UFG) enrolled in Intensive Basic English I and II as part of the development of the lab sessions of the English Major of the UFG does not have an up-to-date material to develop their lab practices in an efficient and dynamic way. Therefore, this particular issue leaves profound gaps in the learning process, leaving students without an appropriate didactical support.

This leads the researchers to look for alternatives to help develop the laboratory’s methodological area with the purpose of improving the conditions of those who study the four principal majors of the English Department, motivating them to culminate their studies with the certainty of becoming successful professionals in the field.

In the past five years, it has been noticed that teachers depend too much on the Internet when conducting the lab sessions of the Intensive Basic English I and II classes at UFG.

Teachers follow an organized program to perform their classes. However, it may seem that there is no specific program to follow during the lab sessions. The lack of this guiding feature leaves the teachers no other alternative than to search for the information on their own.

Due to the lack of time that freelance teachers have to prepare their classes and to seek for the adequate material to use during the lab sessions, facilitators tend to ask students to navigate on the internet to find the exercises by themselves. This causes students to waste too much time for they start looking for information that is not specifically related to the English Lab Session.

On the other hand, the coordinator of the English Department provides resources for
the teachers to use, not because it is his obligation to do so, but because he has the initiative of improving the teaching – learning process of the students in the English Major at UFG. In addition, the problem arises when technology advances day by day, making the available didactical resources become obsolete.

It would definitely be easier for teachers and students if there were appropriate material in the formats according to the equipment available at the Computer Lab as well as an accurate manual containing listening and speaking activities to reinforce these skills. It is important to take into consideration that technology advances quickly and it is also relevant to be up-dated to take better advantage of the resources provided by UFG for the teaching-learning process of the students who are to be competent professionals in the English Language Major.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The previous analysis of the current situation of the lab sessions of Intensive Basic English I and II at UFG has brought the researchers to propose the following question:

At what extent would the creation of a manual guide and audio material compilation for the lab sessions of Intensive Basic English I and II at UFG would improve the effectiveness of the resources available to use during the Computer Lab sessions?

1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

It is true that there is in existence, very good material to use in lab sessions at UFG. However, technology is developing so fast that all these excellent resources cannot be utilized because they are in formats that are out-of-date. For example, some video and audio cassettes cannot be used in the lab session because the equipment at the Edificio de Biblioteca y Laboratorios Especializados (EBLE) is far more modern
formats like CDs and DVDs, just to mention a few.

This also affects the teacher’s efficient performance. Even though the facilitators might be excellent in the classroom, not having enough time, limits the teachers preparing effective activities and material for the lab sessions, giving the students a counter productive lab practice performance.

The lack of up-to-date resources not only causes difficulties for the teachers, but also affects the students’ learning process. When the students realize that the teachers do not have a plan or some specific exercises to do at the lab, or that they are improvising, pupils tend to look for other information rather than practicing the language in a meaningful way. This gives them the feeling that they are losing their time during the lab sessions and leaves them idling instead of using this valuable instrument that the university has provided to improve two difficult and important skills that students need to develop, the listening and speaking skills.

Having an adequate material for each one of the levels would help teachers reach the objectives of the course more successfully and shorten the time of preparation for the lab sessions, as well as enhancing students’ language skills.

Since the different skills are difficult to develop when learning any language, specially when taking into consideration that not all of the students get the opportunity to practice them in the classroom, the lab sessions are considered to be very important and useful opportunities to practice these skills because the Computer Laboratory has all the necessary equipment to carry out practical exercises in a more adequate and precise way if students are to be professionals in the language when completing the studies required to obtain the English Major at UFG.

This is why the researchers’ attention has been focused on the development and improvement of the listening and speaking skills of the students enrolled in the English Major at UFG, starting from the lower levels so that they have good basis
from the very beginning of the studies at this university.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION

1.4.1 General Objective

To demonstrate the necessity of creating a manual and audio material for using during the lab sessions of Intensive Basic English I and II in the English Major at UFG.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

To propose a manual and audio material for using during the lab sessions of Intensive Basic English I and II in the English Major at UFG.

To propose activities to be carried out at the lab which can help strengthen the listening skills of the students enrolled in Basic English I and II.

To propose activities to be carried out at the lab or in the classroom which can help strengthen the speaking skills of the students enrolled in Basic English I and II.

1.5 RANGES AND DELIMITATION

1.5.1 Ranges

Since many of the students who come to UFG for the English Major do not have previous knowledge of the language, the researchers consider that the practice in the language lab is of great importance for the freshmen.

Therefore, this investigation will have impact on those enrolled in Intensive Basic
English I and II of the English Major at UFG. This is because these courses are taken during the first year of the four principal majors of the English Department at UFG and they form the basis of the career they are to learn through the next five years of studies.

This investigation does not only affect the student community, but also the teaching staff at UFG. The teachers who instruct these classes are directly affected by this investigation, as the objective of it is to help them reduce the preparation time of the lab sessions and to improve the use of the resources that UFG has provided for the students’ learning process.

At some extent, this investigation will have an effect on the English Language Department of UFG, for it will have an instrument to provide the teachers with, to take advantage of the technology available at the University, producing high standard graduates from the English Major at UFG more efficient and successful.

1.5.2 Delimitation

It is necessary to delimit the investigation because it would not be responsible to study the topic in a broad way. Therefore, the researchers have identify the students enrolled in Intensive Basic English I as the starting point and the students enrolled in Intensive Basic English II as the ending point.

The investigation will take place at UFG campus, specifically in the Computer Lab located in the EBLE building, and the classrooms where the students of the English Major attend their classes.

This investigation will be carried out during the period starting on August 11, 2007 and ending on April, 2008.