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Students of Spanish and the Spanish Preterit and Imperfect Verb
Forms

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Students of Spanish and the Spanish Preterit and Imperfect Verb Forms

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This is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Marvin and Ruth Sherman, who consistently taught the value of education and by example demonstrated the value of honest effort.

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Students of Spanish and the Spanish Preterit and Imperfect Verb Forms

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A questionnaire was administered to a selected group of students of Spanish at The University of Texas. The responses to this questionnaire were studied to determine the students' motivations, attitudes, and cognitive strategies concerning the Spanish preterit and imperfect verb forms. It was found that the students felt that these Spanish verb forms are important in Spanish study and that they are a difficult portion of Spanish study. Also, most of the students surveyed used rule-based cognitive strategies concerning the study of these verb forms, in that a large percentage of the students' strategies are to study their textbook and to memorize grammar rules. Generally, the students felt that the Spanish preterit is less difficult than the Spanish imperfect and that more drills, work sheets, and instructor-supplied examples would be beneficial to their learning processes.

Those students with lower self-reported grades concerning the Spanish preterit and imperfect are more likely to have been informed that the Spanish preterit and imperfect are difficult areas of Spanish study.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine the perceptions, attitudes, and strategies concerning the acquisition of the Spanish preterit and imperfect verb forms of a group of university students of Spanish. The students selected for this study were enrolled in the fourth semester of university level Spanish study.

THE PROBLEM AREA

As with all students of a foreign language, native English-speaking students of Spanish are faced with a large amount to learn, and much of the Spanish syntactic system is quite different from that of English. One of the inherent possible problem areas is a somewhat different alphabet. In addition to the English alphabet, *ch*, *ll*, *ñ*, and *rr* represent single sounds in Spanish and are considered single letters. Also, the written accent may or may not appear on the Spanish vowels: *á*, *é*, *í*, *ó*, and *ú*. In Spanish a somewhat different system of punctuation exists in that inverted question marks (*¿*) and exclamation marks (*¡*) precede questions and exclamations. Spanish often exhibits a sentence word order different from that of English. For example, the Spanish verb is often placed before the subject noun (Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin, 1965). Initially the student may be comforted by the impression that the English and Spanish verb systems are “equivalent” in the sense that the various verb forms appear to convey equivalent senses of time. These same students are often perplexed, however,

when they are later introduced to the fact that the Spanish language contains two verb forms relating to the past, the preterit and imperfect, each conveying different meanings (Ozete, 1988, Garcia & v. Putte, 1998, Stokes, 1985). The native English-speaker is accustomed to only one simple past tense verb form used to express past events, so the existence of two separate, distinct Spanish simple past tense verb forms is understandably a difficult and somewhat surprising concept for many students.

In Spanish, the preterit is used to report events, situations, etc., which begin or end, or both, at some time in the past. The event(s) or situation(s) being described began and/or ended at a specific time in the past that could be related by the observer. For example:

“Ayer comí en casa.”

(Yesterday I ate at home.).

Or, more specifically:

“Ayer comí en casa a las ocho.”

(Yesterday I ate at home at 8:00.).

The Spanish imperfect has a number of uses. It is used to report events, situations, etc., that neither begin nor end at the time to which the speaker is referring. In the imperfect case, what is being reported upon has already begun and is in progress or existence at the time in the past being referenced. The specific beginning and/or ending time is not critical to explain the situation or event. An example is:

“Antes de 1990, vivía en el pueblo.”

(Before 1990 I lived in town.)

The verb *vivía* is the imperfect form of the verb *vivir* (to live). The speaker is relating that at some time before 1990, he/she lived in town, but the exact dates of this residence in town is not crucial to the information being conveyed. In addition, the time spent living in town continued over an unspecified period of time. The English language may or may not have the equivalent verb forms. English does have the forms "used to" and "was ...ing" showing a habitual or ongoing event, which correspond to the Spanish imperfect to some extent. For example, the sentences "I used to eat more red meat." or "I was doing my homework when the phone rang." are standard English sentences. However, in many cases in which Spanish employs the imperfect, English has only the simple past tense form. Some examples of English verbs in this category are "had", "was", and "knew". Examples of their use and the equivalent Spanish constructions include:

"When I was a child, I had a pet."

"*Cuando era niño, tenía una mascota.*"

"I knew the city very well."

"*Conocía la ciudad muy bien.*"

The Spanish verbs "*era*", "*tenía*", and "*conocía*" are imperfect verb forms and correspond to the English verbs "was", "had", and "knew". This fundamental difference in the expression of past events between the two languages clearly has the potential of causing confusion and learning difficulties for the native English-speaking student of Spanish.

Compounding the problem is the fact that the differences between the Spanish preterit/imperfect verb forms are not one of tense, but of aspect. In

linguistic terms, tense is that information contained in a verb which denotes the time at which some action occurs. Tense, then, can place events in relative positions according to the times at which they occurred, or along a timeline. Aspect does not deal with events with respect to a timeline, but with the description of events that compose a given situation. The differences between the perfective aspect and imperfective aspect can be explained by using the point of view of the speaker. “Perfective aspect is equated with an external perspective from which the speaker perceives the event as a self-contained whole. In contrast, imperfective aspect reflects a situation as seen from an internal perspective; the speaker views the situation from within and is unable to distinguish temporal boundaries.” (Blyth, 1997). In other words, the speaker would use the perfective aspect when describing some event that had a definite beginning and/or end in the past. An example would be:

“Yesterday I went to the supermarket.”

The imperfect aspect would be used to describe some past event that had no definite beginning and/or end. An example would be:

“When she was a child, she studied ballet.”

Native speakers of English, like Spanish speakers, employ both the perfective and imperfective aspects, but in English the imperfective can be expressed only by using auxiliaries, modals, and non-finite verb forms, never within a tense form (Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin, 1965). Therefore, to express the imperfective aspect, the English speaker will say, for example:

“When I was a child, I visited my grandparents.”

“I was eating when the telephone rang.”

“Mr. Jones used to be a teacher.”

The three types of information contained in the above phrases “when I was a child”, “I was eating”, and “used to be” are all examples of the imperfect aspect which is expressed in Spanish by the imperfect verb form.

Verb Endings/Irregular Verb Forms

In addition to the very different meanings of the Spanish preterit/imperfect verb forms, students must learn the various roots and endings to form the preterit/imperfect. Although many Spanish verbs are regular, the language also includes a number of irregular verbs. Thus, Spanish language learners typically must memorize a number of irregular verb forms to speak or write in the “past”. In addition, the student must also be able to determine which is correct in a given situation, the preterit or the imperfect.

The formation of the Spanish preterit and the imperfect is usually straightforward. All Spanish verbs infinitive forms end in either *-ar*, *-er*, or *-ir*. The figure below illustrates how the regular preterit verb is formed. The English equivalent is shown on the right.

-ar verb: *hablar* (to talk) stem: *habl*

Singular

<i>hablé</i>	1 st person	talked
<i>hablaste</i>	2 nd person(familiar)	talked
<i>habló</i>	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	talked, talked

Plural

<i>hablamos</i>	1 st person	talked
<i>hablasteis</i>	2 nd person(familiar)	talked
<i>hablaron</i>	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	talked

-er verb: *comer* (to eat) stem: *com*

Singular

comí	1 st person	ate
comiste	2 nd person(familiar)	ate
comió	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	ate,ate

Plural

comimos	1 st person	ate
comisteis	2 nd person(familiar)	ate
comieron	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	ate

-ir verb: *vivir* (to live) stem: *viv*

Singular

viví	1 st person	lived
viviste	2 nd person(familiar)	lived
vivió	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	lived, lived

Plural

vivimos	1 st person	lived
vivisteis	2 nd person(familiar)	lived
vivieron	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	lived

The formation of the imperfect is similar. The figure below illustrates how the regular imperfect verb is formed.

-ar verb: *hablar* (to talk) stem: *habl*

Singular

<i>hablaba</i>	1 st person	talked
<i>hablabas</i>	2 nd person(familiar)	talked
<i>hablaba</i>	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	talked, talked

Plural

<i>hablábamos</i>	1 st person	talked
<i>hablabais</i>	2 nd person(familiar)	talked
<i>hablaban</i>	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	talked

-er verb: *comer* (to eat) stem: *com*

Singular

<i>comía</i>	1 st person	ate
<i>comías</i>	2 nd person(familiar)	ate
<i>comía</i>	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	ate,ate

Plural

<i>comíamos</i>	1 st person	ate
<i>comías</i>	2 nd person(familiar)	ate
<i>comían</i>	2 rd person(formal), 3 rd person	ate

-ir verb: *vivir* (to live) stem: *viv*

Singular

<i>vivía</i>	1 st person	lived
<i>vivías</i>	2 nd person(familiar)	lived

vivía 2rd person(formal), 3rd person lived, lived

Plural

vivíamos 1st person lived

vivíais 2nd person(familiar) lived

vivían 2rd person(formal), 3rd person lived,lived

It can be seen from the above figures that the formation of the Spanish preterit/imperfect verb forms is relatively straightforward in the case of regular Spanish verbs. In fact, the *-er* and *-ir* verbs have the same affixes in the imperfect. Likewise, with the exception of learning the irregular verb stems, the case of the irregular Spanish verb is not particularly onerous to the student. The irregularities found in Spanish verbs are usually found in the individual forms of the verb while the overall conjugation is generally consistent (Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin, 1965). Also, there are relatively few common, frequent verbs of everyday use – about twenty-five or thirty (Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin, 1965).

Which Verb Form to Use?

The issue of which verb form – the preterit or imperfect – should be used in a given situation is a more difficult one, however. (Ozate, 1988, Garcia & v. Patte, 1998) In addition, the wrong choice can result in miscommunication. “In Spanish, the most obvious and persuasive aspect error lies within the choice between the two non-periphrastic past tenses, the preterit and the imperfect.”(Stokes, 1985)

Difficulty

Tran-Thi-Chan (1975) determined the comparative difficulty of 33 different Spanish grammatical categories for native English speakers. She studied 149 high-school students of Spanish in Toronto and determined a hierarchy of difficulty of these 33 items. The choice of preterit/imperfect verb forms was determined to be the second most difficult item of the 33, with an incorrect response rate of 77%. In addition, Tran-Thi-Chan found that students in this study perceived the preterit/imperfect choice as being the fourth most difficult category among the 33 categories that she examined. With respect to the present study, the issue of perception of difficulty of the Spanish preterit/imperfect has not been examined since Tran-Thi-Chan's study. Nor has it been examined in a sample of university language learners.

Teaching the Spanish Preterit/Imperfect

Much has been written concerning instructional methods to improve students' grasp of the Spanish preterit/imperfect both in terms of verb formation and verb choice. The topics of these writings approach the subject from a wide range of perspectives, including memory-assisting devices (Delgado-Jenkins, 1990, Stickels, 1987), understanding verbal aspect (Bull, 1965, Lunn, 1985), content/description focusing (Ozete, 1988), and foreground and background contrast (García, Putte, 1988).

Other researchers, while not addressing the specific issue of the Spanish preterit/imperfect, have recognized the overall difficulty involved in language study, especially in the area of the development of grammatical accuracy. To better understand why this difficulty exists, attempts have been made to examine language students' strategies or the steps they take to increase their language learning. Scholars taking this perspective surmise that if students could be equipped with better language learning strategies, they could achieve higher levels of language proficiency. In fact, a number of researchers have found that there are various kinds of strategies associated with successful language learning. These include metacognitive strategies (Oxford & Crookall, 1989), general learning strategies (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990), communication strategies (Bialystok, 1983), and social strategies (Wenden, 1987).

Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies can include both metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies include the students' knowledge of their own cognitive processes and self control of these processes by means of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. The cognitive category of the learning strategies includes those processes used in learning that require explicit analysis or assimilation of learning materials. Communication strategies are those used by the language learner in order that the learner can remain in a conversation in the target language. Social strategies are those activities (largely voluntary) in which the learner can be exposed to the target language, such as group activities, listening to radio/television, and conversations with native speakers (Rubin, 1981). One of the aims of this dissertation is to examine the role of students' strategies concerning the study of the Spanish preterit/imperfect verb forms. It would seem that all of these types of strategies are relevant in the learning of the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Students could use metacognitive strategies in order to learn when to use the two tenses, cognitive strategies to learn the verb forms, communication strategies when they have conversational difficulties, and social strategies to see how other speakers use these forms. However, to date, no research has focused on the specific strategies students employ with respect to the Spanish preterit/imperfect.

Language Learners' Beliefs

The topic of language students' beliefs concerning second language learning also seems to be related to our understanding of student learning of the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Whether a particular belief is valid or not, the student nonetheless has the belief in question. For example, Horwitz (1988) found that approximately 77% of students of Spanish believed that they could become fluent in Spanish within five years by studying Spanish only one hour per day. With respect to the present study it would seem to be problematic if students have erroneous beliefs about the usage of the Spanish preterit/imperfect. It is possible, for example, for students to develop inappropriate categories for preterit/imperfect use based on the limited number of examples that they encounter in class (Garrett, 1986).

The Present Study

It is important to point out that neither research on language learning strategies nor beliefs about language learning have examined these verb forms, or any specific grammatical topics, for that matter. The above-cited studies examine only the general area of language study, and not specific grammatical topics. In particular, they do not specifically address students' strategies and beliefs concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect verb forms.

Yet the problems exhibited by students of Spanish in the study of the Spanish preterit/imperfect persist. Some of them would seem to be related to inaccurate understanding (beliefs) or ineffective learning strategies. A review of the literature indicates that to date apparently only language instructors' viewpoints concerning instruction of the Spanish preterit/imperfect are known. It would seem to be helpful to Spanish instructors and perhaps to learners themselves to know how students of Spanish view this area of Spanish instruction. For these reasons this study examined students' perceptions concerning the difficulty and importance of the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Other possible influences evaluated were the student's sex, prior Spanish study, whether Spanish is spoken in their home, and which cognitive strategies they employ in studying the Spanish preterit/imperfect. These variables were examined to determine if a particular group of Spanish language learners has more or less realistic beliefs about the Spanish preterit/imperfect or use different strategies to master this important grammatical topic.

Chapter 2

Preterit/Imperfect Literature Review

Introduction

The problems encountered by students of Spanish in the study of the preterit/imperfect have been documented in different manners for a number of decades, but, surprisingly, given the importance of the preterit and imperfect for communication in Spanish, the literature on this topic is sparse. Perhaps even more importantly, little attention has been paid to how students actually approach this grammatical topic. The articles reviewed in this chapter deal with difficulties encountered by students when studying the preterit/imperfect, and proposed methodologies to be used by instructors. These writings concerning the preterit-imperfect distinction approach the topic from a wide range of perspectives, including error analysis, memory-assisting devices, verbal aspect, content/description emphasis, and foreground and background contrast. In addition, the topics of language learning strategies and learner beliefs about language learning will be examined here to shed light on how learners might approach the learning of these categories. It is hypothesized that what learners think about the preterit-imperfect distinction and the specific strategies they employ may influence their learning success. In addition, it is possible that the

variety of beliefs and strategies that students employ may play a role in whether particular instructional strategies are helpful.

Difficulty of the Spanish Preterit/Imperfect

Most relevant to the present study is Tran-Thi-Chan's (1975) study comparing the difficulty of various features of Spanish using error analysis, contrastive analysis, and students' perceptions concerning the difficulty of second-language learning. Tran-Thi-Chan devised a questionnaire and grammar test that was administered to 149 high-school students of Spanish in Toronto, Canada. The grammar test was examined using both error analysis and contrastive analysis techniques, and a hierarchy of difficulty of 33 grammatical structures was determined. In the questionnaire, the students were asked to rate the degree of difficulty of the grammatical structure presented in the test.

The test results showed an incorrect response rate of 77% (second highest of the 33 grammatical structures) for the grammatical structure called "imperfect used in time sequence with preterit". (The highest incorrect response rate was the obligatory use of clause, and the third-ranking incorrect response rate was that for the *qué/cuál* distinction in information questions.) Students' perceptions of the relative difficulty of the various grammatical features did not correspond entirely with the results of the grammar test. The top four areas of difficulty according to the students (1 being most difficult) were: (1) determiner as nominalizer of the possessive (2) long-form possessive adjective after determiner (3) the negative (4) imperfect used in time sequence with preterit. Thus Tran-Thi-Chan's findings support the contention that the Spanish preterit/imperfect is especially difficult for

English-speaking students in terms of their performance. Moreover, the students themselves correctly perceive that this is a difficult area of Spanish language study.

Reasons explaining why this difficulty exists have been proposed, at least on theoretical grounds, by other researchers (Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin, 1965). Their work indicates that the Spanish preterit/imperfect verb construction is the second-most difficult aspect of Spanish study, the Spanish indicative/subjunctive being the most difficult. They formed this opinion by comparing the structure of the English and Spanish languages. In Spanish, when either the preterit or imperfect must be chosen to form a grammatically correct sentence, there is no equivalent choice in English. Also, in Spanish, when either the preterit or imperfect can be chosen to form a grammatically correct sentence but the use of only the preterit or imperfect will correctly convey the desired aspect, there is no equivalent choice in English.

Both the work of Tran-Thi-Chan and Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin reinforce the hypothesis of this study that a greater understanding of students' approaches to the preterit/imperfect is necessary.

Proposed Methodologies for Instruction of the Preterit/Imperfect

Delgado-Jenkins (1990) suggests a method for presenting the use of the imperfect to denote "action in progress when something else interrupts". He advocates drawing an analogy considering a television program in progress (the imperfect) when a weather bulletin appears on the screen running from right to left (the preterit). The Delgado-Jenkins method would seem to appropriately illustrate one particular use of the Spanish imperfect verb form. However, the television program/weather bulletin scheme is not applicable to other situations requiring the imperfect, to express description in past time, to indicate repeated or habitual past action, and to describe mental activity or a state in the past. Clearly more extensive analysis is required to develop a more comprehensive approach to teaching the imperfect. It is also possible that this method would lead students to believe that the imperfect is used in only very limited circumstances (Garrett, 1986).

A proposed teaching device that does reference all the uses of the imperfect verb form is the mnemonic DUWIT (Stickels & Schwartz, 1987). The letter D represents description; U used to; W was, were, +ing; I inside things (mental actions like *saber*, *creer*); and T *tener* and time expressions. Generally, all other situations would require the use of the preterit. Use of memory aids such as those advocated by Delgado-Jenkins and Stickels and Schwartz would require much conscious cognitive effort on the part of the student and perhaps the

activation of cognitive learning strategies. In many conversational situations, however, students do not have sufficient time in which to monitor such a complicated grammatical choice to this extent (Krashen, 1982). It appears that what would be of more value to students would be some different approach that requires less conscious cognitive effort.

Bull (1965) approaches the problem of the Spanish preterit/imperfect in a different, less concrete, manner than the above scholars. He states that the central problem concerning the preterit/imperfect is that the simple English past tense is completely ambiguous, and, therefore, native English speakers are not trained to observe "aspectual" differences when using the imperfect. According to Bull, the Spanish preterit/imperfect problem becomes one of teaching the student to recognize the three aspects of an event. Bull defines aspect as that characteristic of an event that is described as initiative, imperfective, or terminative. He is of the opinion that if students were instructed in this aspectual differentiation, their problems with the Spanish preterit/imperfect would be solved.

Thus, according to Bull, students should be instructed in three contrastive functions of the preterit and the imperfect. The first deals with their relationship to the present. In this context, the present states that an event is now in progress, while the preterit states that an event was completed and ended. The imperfect states that an event was in progress before the present.

The second preterit/imperfect contrast deals with the description of planned actions which precede the time of reporting or observing. Thus the preterit

describes what has started or finished; the imperfect describes what is still in progress and not yet completed.

His final preterit/imperfect contrast comes into play when the event being described has one aspect in the past. There are three possible aspects: initiative, imperfective, and terminative. The imperfect is used to describe the event in progress and the preterit is used to describe either the initiative or terminative aspect.

Ozete (1988) took a different approach to the preterit/imperfect distinction. He recommended that the instructor illustrate the fact that often the preterit/imperfect choice is determined by what the speaker wishes to focus on, or emphasize. In some situations, for example, the speaker could choose to focus either on the content of an utterance or a description.

An example of Ozete's approach could be that of a speaker describing a play or movie. If the speaker wishes to emphasize the more general conditions portrayed in the film or play, the imperfect would be used. For example, "*Vivían en un pueblo chiquito.*" (They lived in a small town.) where *vivían* is the imperfect verb form of the Spanish verb *vivir* (to live). However, if the speaker wishes to emphasize a specific event in the play or film, he could say "*Ella mató a su esposo.*" (She killed her husband.) where *mató* is the preterit verb form of the Spanish verb *matar* (to kill).

Other researchers emphasize the role of the student's first language in learning the preterit/imperfect. García and Putte(1988) contend that students

whose native language does not contain the preterit/imperfect contrast ignore any potentially helpful contextual cues as to the correct verb usage. These students tend to focus on the immediate context, such as the lexical meaning of the verb.

They recommend that the language instructor should attempt to draw students' attention away from the obvious, or foreground, information, and sensitize learners to the fainter cues, those in the background. If the speaker wishes to describe the weather yesterday by saying "It was really cold yesterday.", students should be made aware of the complete situation. For example, the temperature yesterday may be all of the information being conveyed, which would require the preterit to be used: "*Ayer hizo frio.*", where *hizo* is the preterit verb form of the Spanish verb *hacer*. On the other hand, the speaker in talking about the temperature yesterday may wish to provide more information, such as the need to remain indoors, which would require the imperfect: ("*Ayer hacía frio.*"), where *hacía* is the imperfect verb form of the Spanish verb *hacer*. They advocate doing this gradually, beginning with the most obvious examples in which no ambiguities are present. Then the examples should be increased in complexity, so that students are gradually sensitized to the implicit meanings of the verb forms.

It would appear that any objections to the Garcia and Putte approach would be similar to those concerning that of Ozete. Instruction of lower- or intermediate-level students using this approach would require a large amount of instruction

time that is simply not available. It appears that a more appropriate use of this approach would be in upper-level classes.

Language Learning Strategies

The need to devise improved instructional methods for the Spanish preterit and imperfect show that this is generally recognized as an area of difficulty for the student of Spanish. Of course, researchers have noted that, indeed, second language study is difficult for students. In an attempt to better understand why, some have examined language students' learning strategies and beliefs concerning language study.

Much of the early studies concerning language-learning strategies focused on attempting to describe the “good” language learner. By observing students and instructors in language classes, Rubin(1975) identified the following seven characteristics of good language learners:

A good language student...:

1. is a willing and accurate guesser.
2. has a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from communication.
3. tends to not be inhibited and is willing to appear foolish to effect communication.
4. is prepared to attend to form and is looking for patterns in the target language
5. practices.
6. monitors his own and the speech of others.

7. attends to meaning.

Importantly, correlations have been found between the use of various learning strategies by language learners and their success in language learning (Chamot & Kupper, 1989). In general, successful language learners use more, and more effective, learning strategies than do poorer learners (Hosenfeld, 1977). Also, successful language learners are capable of selecting and combining strategies that are effective for the specific task at hand (Vann & Abraham, 1990). It also appears that more successful language learners often combine cognitive strategies, such as translating, analyzing, and taking notes, with metacognitive strategies such as self-evaluating, planning, and organizing (Oxford & Crookall, 1989), an approach suggested earlier in this dissertation for the learning of the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Conversely, poorer language learners have been found to use fewer learning strategies than successful language learners and their strategies are highly restricted as to type (Nyikos, 1987). Often less successful language learners are not aware of what, if any, strategies they do employ (Nyikos, 1987). If, however, the less successful language learner is aware of his/her learning strategies used, he/she may not be combining and utilizing them in an effective manner (Lavine & Oxford, 1990).

Another study of the “good” language learner was done by Stern(1975). Stern identified the following 10 learning strategies of good language students:

1. A personal learning style or positive

learning strategies.

2. An active approach to the learning process.
3. A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers.
4. Technical know-how about how to study a language.
5. Strategies of experimentation and planning in trying to develop the target language into an ordered system, and readiness to revise this system progressively.
6. Constantly searching for meaning.
7. Willingness to practice.
8. Willingness to use the target language in real communication.
9. Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to target language use.
10. Developing the target language more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it.

In a study using 1,200 university-level language students as subjects (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989), the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, or SILL (Oxford, 1986), was employed. This study attempted to determine what language learning strategies university students employ. The strategies studied included formal rule-related practice, functional practice, independent, general study, and conversational input elicitation. Secondly, variables possibly influencing the use of these strategies were examined. These possible influences include motivation,

proficiency, course status (required vs. elective), years of study, sex, and major. Their study indicated that motivation, sex, and years of study strongly affect students' choice of language learning strategies. They also found that the standard academic methods of teaching and testing act to limit the motivation of most language students to attempt creative communicatively oriented strategies.

Oxford (1990) defined six language learning strategies categories and classified them into two types: direct strategies and indirect strategies. The direct learning strategies are composed of memory, cognitive, and compensation categories. The indirect learning strategies do not directly involve the target language, but do play a part in language learning. The indirect learning strategies are metacognitive, affective, and social categories.

In a later study Hsiao and Oxford (2002) studied 517 college English-as-a-foreign-language students and concluded that the six language learning strategies outlined above are generally valid, but that perhaps other approaches to strategy classification should be considered. Such approaches might include considering different strategies for learning a language and using this language, making certain that the language skills are apparent in each strategy item, and others.

Language learning strategies have been examined from various perspectives. One of these is that of determining how learner strategies relate to psychological type (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990). In this study, the researchers studied a group of 27 adult language learners, whose ages ranged from 25 to 52 years. An attempt was made to determine if a correlation exists between successful language

learning and whether the student was extroverted or introverted, sensing or intuitive, thinker or feeler, and judger or perceiver as classified by the Myers-Briggs personality inventory. They concluded that, at least for the students in their study, introverts, intuitives, “feelers”, and “perceivers” possess some language learning advantage in the FSI (Foreign Language Institute) setting.

A study (Lee, Cadierno, Glass, & VanPatten, 1997) of language students’ processing strategies was performed to determine the effects of lexical and grammatical cues on students’ processing of past temporal reference. The researchers studied students enrolled in three different semester-level Spanish classes. Half of the students listened to a narrative which contained cues to past temporal reference, such as adverbs, and grammatical cues, such as verb inflections. The other one-half of the students listened to a narrative which contained no adverbs relating to time, but did contain the same verb inflections as the first narrative. The students were instructed to listen to the content of the narratives and were told that their comprehension would be assessed afterward.

After hearing the narrative, in order to determine what they actually processed, students were first asked to write all that they remembered from the passage and to include both general and specific information. Secondly, the students were asked to indicate whether specific information from the narrative was presented in the present, past, or future tense.

The first semester students performed poorly in remembering the use of the past tense in the narrative, although they performed better in identifying specific

past references in the second portion of the assessment. The more advanced students were more able to detect grammatical cues such as verb inflections, but this information alone did not materially help them in describing the narrative. The advanced group of students who listened to the narrative with both grammatical cues and lexical cues processed better the information contained in the narrative.

To determine if there is a relationship between student metacognitive awareness of language learning strategies and student achievement, various language student groups were given a Metacognitive Awareness Raising (MAR) session and their achievement compared to a control group (Feyten, Flaitz, & La Roca, 1999). The researchers studied middle school, high school, and university language students. Students from each of these academic levels were divided into three groups.

One group received a Metacognitive Awareness Raising (MAR) session in which the students were shown evidence that successful language learners use learning strategies to their advantage. The students were then given a list of language learning strategies identified by researchers as being commonly used by successful language learners. In the session, the students were divided into subgroups of four or five and each subgroup was asked to write down which strategies they were already using. A representative from each subgroup then went to each of the other subgroups, exchanging their findings. Each subgroup

then deliberated and presented which of the strategies they considered most effective.

A second group of students received a Cognitive Awareness Raising (CAR) session in which the students were told of the benefits of studying a foreign language, but received no information concerning learning strategies.

The third group of students was used as a control group and received no information concerning learners' strategies. This group received a survey intended as a placebo dealing with various myths about language learning.

Student achievement was measured by their final exam scores. The middle school results were consistent with the researchers' hypothesis in that the students with MAR training performed at a higher level than those receiving CAR training and the control group. Also, those receiving CAR training performed at a higher level than the control group.

However, contrary to the researchers' hypothesis, the performance of the high school and university student groups showed no statistically significant differences compared to the control groups. The researchers offer as a possible explanation the younger age of these students. The middle school students were studying a foreign language for the first time, and were perhaps more open to language learning and learning strategies than the older students. Another possible explanation is that those delivering the sessions were not as effective as others could have been.

Since it has been shown that language students employ various learning strategies, it seems natural to attempt to examine the factors that might influence the choice of these strategies. One obvious area is that of students' beliefs. If a student believes that a specific portion of language study is particularly difficult, for example, their strategy concerning the study of that portion might be expected to be different from their strategy concerning a portion of the language that they consider to be less difficult.

Students' Beliefs about Language Learning

Various studies have been performed concerning student beliefs with respect to language learning. One such study used 241 university students as subjects (Horwitz, 1988). The instrument used was the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz, 1983). Three language-learning groups, German, French, and Spanish, were used for comparison. Students were polled as to their beliefs concerning the difficulty of language learning, whether some select people have a special aptitude for language study, their opinion as to the optimum approach to language study, and their expectations concerning obtaining fluency in a second language. The study found a similarity of beliefs among the different target language groups; the findings did not reveal statistically significant differences in beliefs. However, the responses indicated several small differences in beliefs between the groups. For instance, some 96% of the students of Spanish believed that some languages are easier to learn than others, while 86% of the students of French and 88% of the students of German agreed with the concept. Horwitz contends that such differences among groups could result from measurement error, differences in populations, the special nature of learning the target language, or the instructional content of specific classes. Horwitz argued that knowledge of learner beliefs may be useful to educators so that they can better understand how learners approach language learning. A better

understanding of learner beliefs may identify some misconceptions about language learning which may lead learners to use less effective strategies.

A later review by Horwitz of various BALLI studies attempted to determine if there exist differences and similarities concerning language learning beliefs between cultural groups (Horwitz, 1999). Horwitz reviewed results obtained from the BALLI by various researchers. In these studies, the language students' nationalities included American, Korean, Taiwanese, Turkish, and Turkish-Cypriot. The target languages included French, Spanish, German, Japanese, and English. Horwitz's review of these studies did not reveal any clear-cut differences concerning language learning beliefs between these different cultural groups. However, some of these studies do show that within a group, considerable differences in language learning beliefs do exist. Horwitz postulates that perhaps that these within-group differences could be due to age, stage of life, language learning context, learning styles, educational experiences, and outside influences.

In another study of student beliefs concerning language learning, 34 adult language learners were interviewed (Wenden, 1986). Wenden found that the interviewees held a mixture of beliefs. One of these was that the student felt that, in order to facilitate language learning, he/she should attempt to use the second language as often as possible in social situations, while not being concerned about making mistakes. A differing common belief is that the learner should learn the language step by step by concentrating on the grammar and vocabulary. Holders of this belief feel that attempting to use the language for communication is

secondary. A third belief concerning language learning is that personality and aptitude are very important. Factors such as self-concept, feelings, preferred method of learning, personality, and social role are strong influences on language learning.

Another researcher studied a group of 4th semester university students of French to determine whether they believed grammar instruction and practice or extensive reading was more beneficial in language instruction (Dupuy, 1997). This group of 49 students read short stories, poems, tales, short novels, songs, and newspaper and magazine articles that they then discussed in groups during class meetings. These readings were selected by the instructor, based on student interests and level of competence in the target language. The students were also asked to read self-selected readings. A small amount of class time, less than 10%, was used for grammar instruction and practice.

At the end of the semester, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire, indicating whether they found grammar instruction and practice or extensive reading more pleasurable and beneficial to language acquisition. The results were overwhelmingly in favor of extensive reading. Some 82% of the students thought that a combination of assigned readings and self-selected readings were more beneficial for language acquisition, while 0% were in favor of grammar instruction and practice. The general consensus among the students was that they believed the study of grammar to be tedious, boring, and easily

forgotten, while reading was fun, interesting, and beneficial to language acquisition.

Summary

The various student strategies and student beliefs studies described above have attempted to examine the study of a second language in general rather than with regard to specific target language structures. To date, no study has examined the relationship of student beliefs about language learning or language learning strategies to any specific grammatical topic and specifically not to the learning of the Spanish preterit/imperfect or to similar grammatical distinctions in any language. The literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that general language learning beliefs and strategies have a role in successful language learning, but their role in the learning of specific grammatical topics has remained unexplored. Given the importance of the preterit/imperfect for successful oral and written communication in Spanish, it is unfortunate that to date, no studies have examined the specific strategies students employ to learn these structures or their beliefs about them. This study will be the first where the perspectives of learning strategies and beliefs are applied to the learning of this specific grammatical topic.

Chapter 3

Method

A 30-item student questionnaire was administered to Spanish 312K students at The University of Texas at Austin in the spring semester, 1995. Also included was a six-item demographical section. At The University of Texas, the normal sequence of Spanish classes for students with little or no prior Spanish ability was (and still is) Spanish 506, Spanish 507, Spanish 312K, and Spanish 312L. The Spanish 312K level was chosen for this study because beyond this level, more emphasis is placed on various readings in the language, compared to specific language instruction, and it was felt that students at this level would have had adequate experience with the Spanish preterit/imperfect to have developed some thoughts and approaches to this topic. In the spring 1995 semester there were 33 sections of Spanish 312K. Each section enrolled approximately 20 students. The questionnaire was first administered on a pilot basis to two sections to eliminate problem areas or items that might be unclear to the students. No changes were made to the questionnaire as a result of the pilot test. An attempt was made to administer the questionnaire to all the 31 remaining sections. However, due to time constraints of some instructors, 16 sections completed the questionnaires. The total number of participants in the study group was 317, of which 142 were male and 175 female. The men ranged in age from 18 to 40, with an average age

of 19.92 years. The women ranged in age from 17 to 52, with an average age of 20.01 years. Included in the group were three students majoring in Spanish. The questionnaires were completed during regular class time.

The Questionnaire

Various research papers were studied in an attempt to obtain the necessary background to formulate a questionnaire from which meaningful results could possibly be obtained. Horwitz(1988) was particularly useful, in which The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory(BALLI) was administered to a group of first semester language students. After various revisions, the questionnaire was reviewed by an expert in learning strategies and beliefs concerning language learning. The questionnaire that was administered is shown in Appendix A. As mentioned earlier, no changes to the questionnaire were made based on the pilot test given to two sections of Spanish 312K.

Demographic Issues

At the beginning of the questionnaire are six items(1 – 6) used to determine demographic information concerning the student. These included the student's age, sex, major area of study, years of Spanish study before college (if any), years of another foreign language study before college (if any), and whether the student had prior exposure to the Spanish language due to having Spanish-speaking family members. The demographic items are shown below.

1. sex: M_____ F_____
2. age: _____
3. major: _____
4. Before college, I studied Spanish for _____
years.
5. Before college, I studied another foreign language
for _____ years.
Which language?_____
6. Members of my family speak Spanish, so I have had
extensive exposure to the Spanish language.
yes_____ no_____

The 20 questions following the demographic section were formulated to determine the students' motivations, cognitive strategies, achievement, and perceived difficulty, all concerning the Spanish preterit and imperfect verb forms. The student was asked to respond to questions 1-20 by choosing from: 5) strongly agree 4) agree 3) are neutral 2) disagree 1) strongly disagree. Each question required a response concerning both the preterit and imperfect.

Also included were more general questions relating to the Spanish preterit and imperfect and to Spanish study, questions 21 through 30. These questions dealt with the students' self-reported grades in the Spanish preterit/imperfect, prior language study in another language, time spent studying Spanish each week, their opinion as to the difficulty of Spanish, and some general questions regarding the study of the Spanish preterit/imperfect.

Motivation Issues

It was considered important to examine students' motivation relative to the Spanish preterit/imperfect because it was felt that without motivation they would be unlikely to use strategies. Questions related to motivation are numbers 1, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 18 as shown below.

1. I want to learn to use correctly the Spanish (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.
(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____
6. Learning the correct use of the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect is important to me so that I will make a good grade in this course.
(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____
8. Mastery of the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect in Spanish study is important.
(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____
12. To correctly express myself in Spanish, I need to learn the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.
(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____
14. Learning the correct use of the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect is important to me so

that I can communicate with Spanish-speaking people.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

15. The (a) preterit, (b) imperfect is regularly used by Spanish speakers to communicate.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

16. If necessary, I will spend a lot of time and effort in order to learn the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

18. I resent having to spend so much time and/or effort studying the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

Cognitive Strategies Issues

As a major focus of this study, the students' cognitive strategies concerning preterit/imperfect acquisition were also addressed: do they study the textbook, ask the instructor questions, spend a lot of time practicing the preterit/imperfect, and/or memorize the grammar rules concerning the preterit/imperfect. Questions related to cognitive strategies are numbers 2, 4, 7, 10, and 16 as shown below.

2. My method of studying the (a)preterit, (b) imperfect

is to study the textbook.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

4. I ask my instructor questions concerning the

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

7. I try to memorize the grammar rules concerning

the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

10. I spend a lot of time practicing the

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect. (a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

16. If necessary, I will spend a lot of time and effort

in order to learn the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

Achievement Issues

The students' achievement concerning the preterit/imperfect was addressed by asking if they thought that they use the Spanish preterit/imperfect correctly while speaking Spanish, whether they thought that they use the Spanish preterit/imperfect correctly while writing Spanish, whether they find it difficult to understand the preterit/imperfect, whether they understand the various situations in which the preterit/imperfect should be used, and whether they understand the grammar rules concerning the preterit/imperfect.

Another aspect of students' achievement was obtained by asking their self-reported grades on a scale from A to F concerning both the Spanish preterit and imperfect.

Achievement related questions are 3, 5, 9, 13, 19, 21, and 22 as shown below.

3. I think that I use the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect correctly while speaking Spanish.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

5. I think that I use the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect correctly while writing Spanish.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

9. I find it difficult to understand the Spanish

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

13. I understand the various situations in which
the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect should be used.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

19. I understand the grammar rules concerning the
(a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

21. With respect to the preterit, my grades are:

A____ A-B____ B____ B-C____ C____ C-D____

D____ D-F____ F____ _____

22. With respect to the imperfect, my grades are:

A____ A-B____ B____ B-C____ C____ C-D____

D____ D-F____ F____ _____

Difficulty Issues

Difficulty-related issues were examined by asking the students whether anyone had ever informed them that the Spanish preterit/imperfect is difficult to master, whether their instructor had informed them that the preterit/imperfect is easy to master, and whether they agreed that the preterit/imperfect is “a snap”. Difficulty related questions are 11, 17, and 20 as shown below.

11. Someone has informed me that the Spanish

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect is difficult to master.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

17. My instructor (present or past) has informed me that

the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect is easy to master.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

20. What's all the fuss about? The

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect is a snap.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

General Topics

Also included in the questionnaire were questions not directly related to the above topics. These included the students' prior language study in another language, their perceived difficulty of Spanish, time spent studying Spanish, and more general questions concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect. These are questions 23 through 30 in the questionnaire and are shown below.

23. I have studied the preterit in another language.

yes _____ no _____

24. I have studied the imperfect in another language.

yes _____ no _____

25. I study Spanish for _____ hours each week.

26. I think that Spanish is easy. (check one)

5) strongly agree 4) agree 3) are neutral

2) disagree 1) strongly disagree

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____

27. In a given situation, if I am unsure as to which is correct, the preterit or imperfect, I:

28. Do you have any further thoughts concerning the study and learning of the Spanish preterit and imperfect you would like to mention here?

29. Please list the following Spanish verb forms in their order of difficulty (1. easy... 4.

difficult): present tense, imperfect, future,

preterit. _____

30. Do you have any reasons for choosing this order?

Analysis of Questionnaire Responses

The questionnaire results were entered into tabular form using the Microsoft EXCEL program on a personal computer. Arithmetical averages of the responses to the six demographic items and to question 1 through question 20 was then determined using various Microsoft EXCEL functions. The percentage of students reporting each grade (A, A- B, ...F) concerning the Spanish preterit and imperfect was calculated using EXCEL functions. These averages and percentages were then put into graphical form using the EXCEL program.

Chapter 4

Results

Organization/Method

This study has attempted to determine whether students' demographic characteristics influence their perceptions, beliefs, and achievement concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Secondly, an attempt has been made to determine students' motivation, cognitive strategy, and perceived difficulty concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect.

The following sections address first the students' responses as related to the demographic portion of the questionnaire. Secondly, the students' responses to questions relating to the study of the Spanish preterit and imperfect verb forms are examined. The responses to this second portion of the questionnaire are grouped into the following categories: motivation, cognitive strategies, achievement, and difficulty. Thirdly, some more general questions relating to the Spanish preterit/imperfect and Spanish study are included.

Arithmetic averages of the responses to the questionnaire were calculated. Twenty questions (1 - 20) elicited both a preterit and an imperfect response, and six questions (21 - 26) elicited a single response.

These averages are shown in graphical form in Figure 1 through Figure 34. Figure 1 through Figure 6 show the average responses to questions 1 through 20, where each question elicited two responses, one concerning the preterit and a second concerning the imperfect. Figure 7 through Figure 12 show the average responses to questions 21 through 26, where each question elicited one response. Figure 13 through Figure 18 show the average responses to questions related to motivation, cognitive strategy, achievement, and difficulty. Figure 13 through Figure 18 show the two responses to each question, one relating to the preterit, and the second relating to the imperfect. Figure 19 through Figure 26 show the average student responses to the motivation related questions 1, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 18 as related to the students' self-reported grades concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Figure 27 through Figure 31 show the average student responses to the cognitive strategy related questions 2, 4, 7, 10, and 16 as related to the students' self-reported grades concerning the preterit/imperfect. Figure 32 through Figure 34 show the average student responses to the difficulty related questions 11, 17, and 20 as related to the students' self-reported grades concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect.

The numerical averages of these responses are shown on the vertical axis (Y-axis). In Figure 1 through Figure 6, Figure 13 through Figure 18, and Figure 19 through Figure 34 the left bar (blue) corresponds to the numerical average of the preterit related response and the right bar (red) corresponds to the numerical average of the imperfect related response. Figure 7 through Figure 12 show the

average responses to questions 21 through 26, which required only a single response. The bars in Figure 7 through Figure 12 are shown in black. The height of each bar (Y-axis) shows the arithmetic average numerical value.

For the purpose of this study, to associate numerical values with self-reported letter grades, a grade of A was given the value 1, A-B the value 2, B the value 3, B-C the value 4, C the value 5, C-D the value 6, D the value 7, D-F the value 8, and F the value 9. There were only three students with self-reported grades of D or below, so their responses are probably not statistically relevant.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic characteristics concerning the student included sex, Spanish spoken in the home, no Spanish spoken in the home, previous Spanish study, and no previous Spanish study. The graphical results related to these demographic characteristics are shown in Figure 1 through Figure 12.

An examination of Figures 1 and 2 shows that the averages of male and female responses follow the same general pattern for the first 20 questions of the questionnaire. No important differences are apparent in their responses concerning the preterit and imperfect.

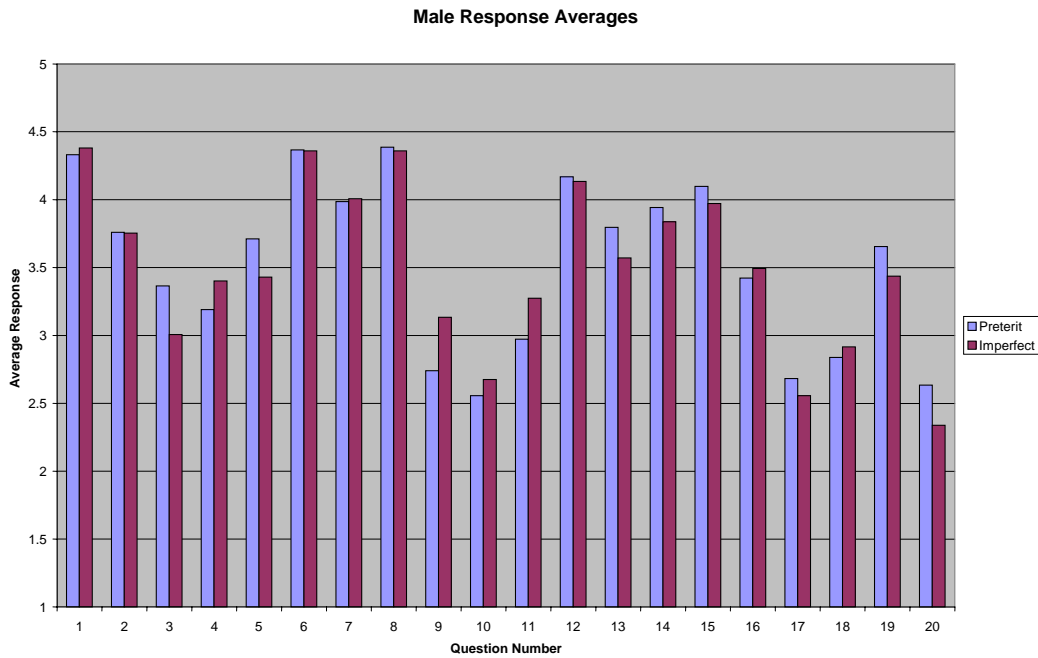


Figure 1

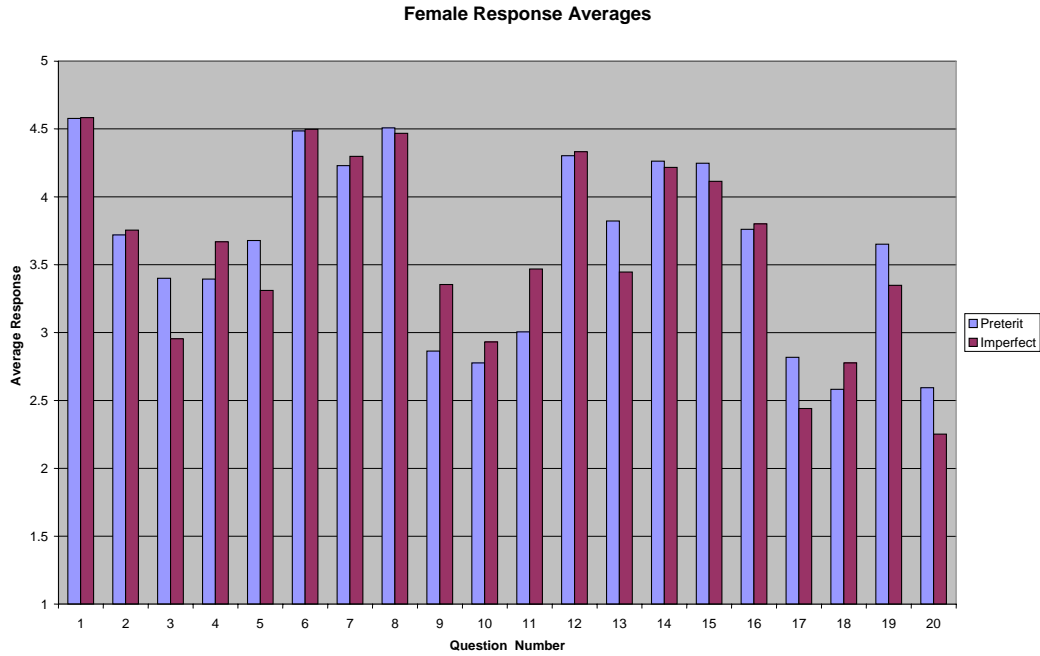


Figure 2

Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the Spanish-spoken-in-the-home and no Spanish-spoken-in-the-home average responses to questions 1 through 20, respectively. The average responses follow the same general pattern for the first 20 questions of the questionnaire. Again, there do not appear to be major differences in their responses concerning the preterit and imperfect.

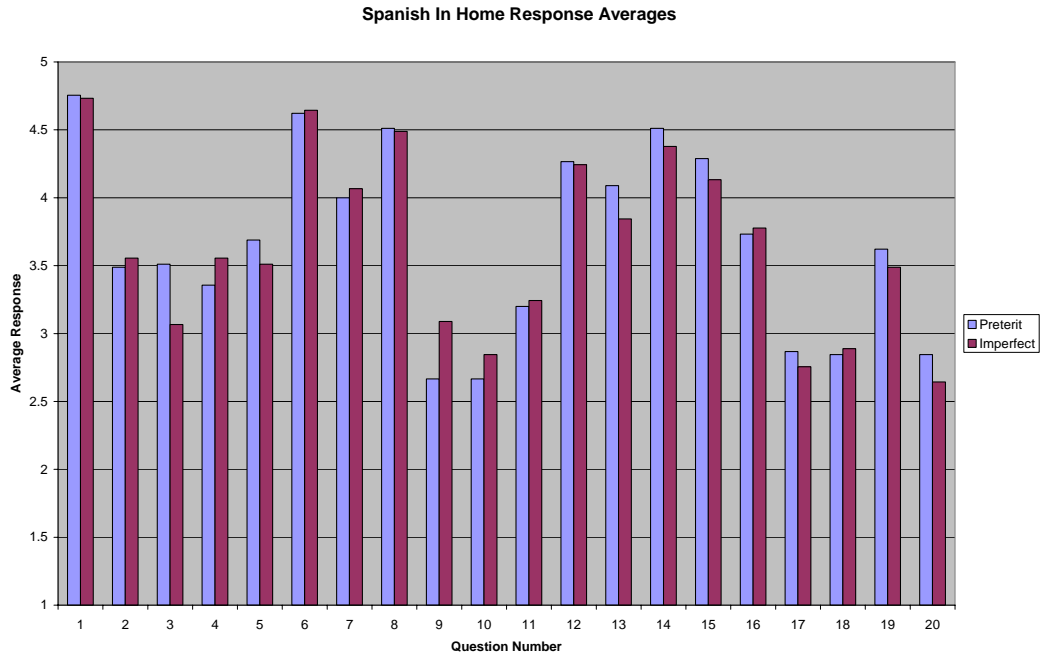


Figure 3

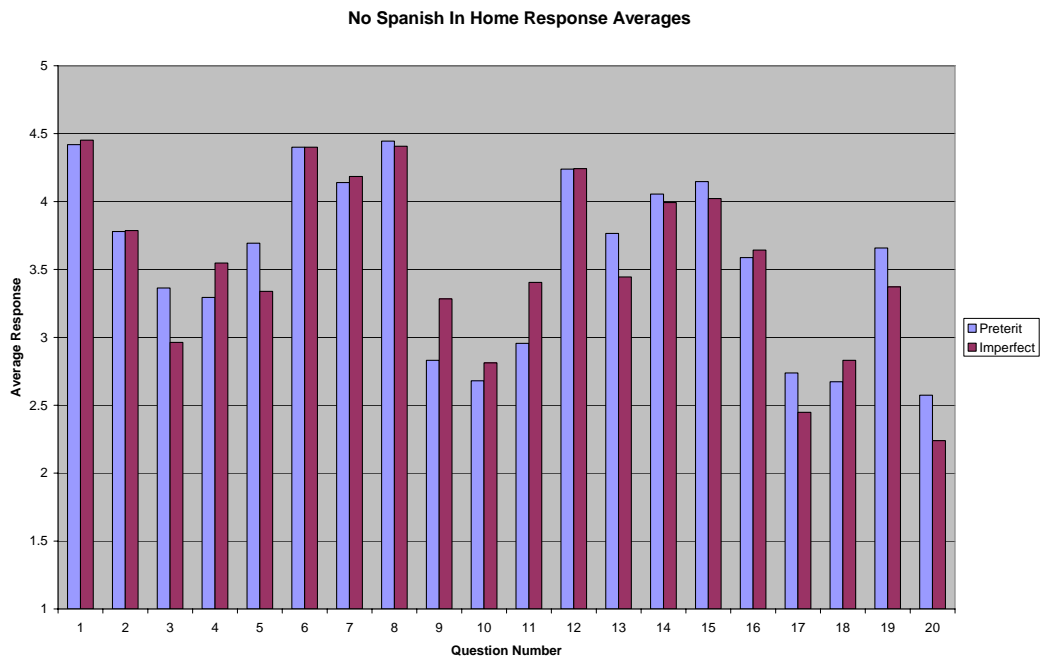


Figure 4

Previous Spanish study and no previous Spanish study average responses are shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6. Again, there do not appear to be major differences in student responses to the questionnaire.

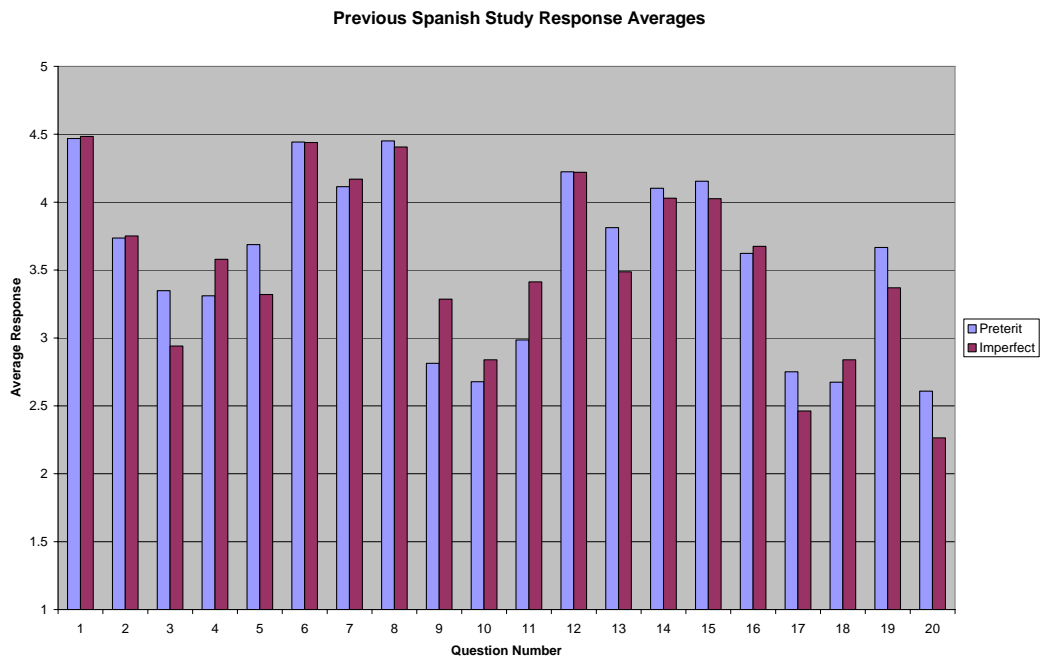


Figure 5

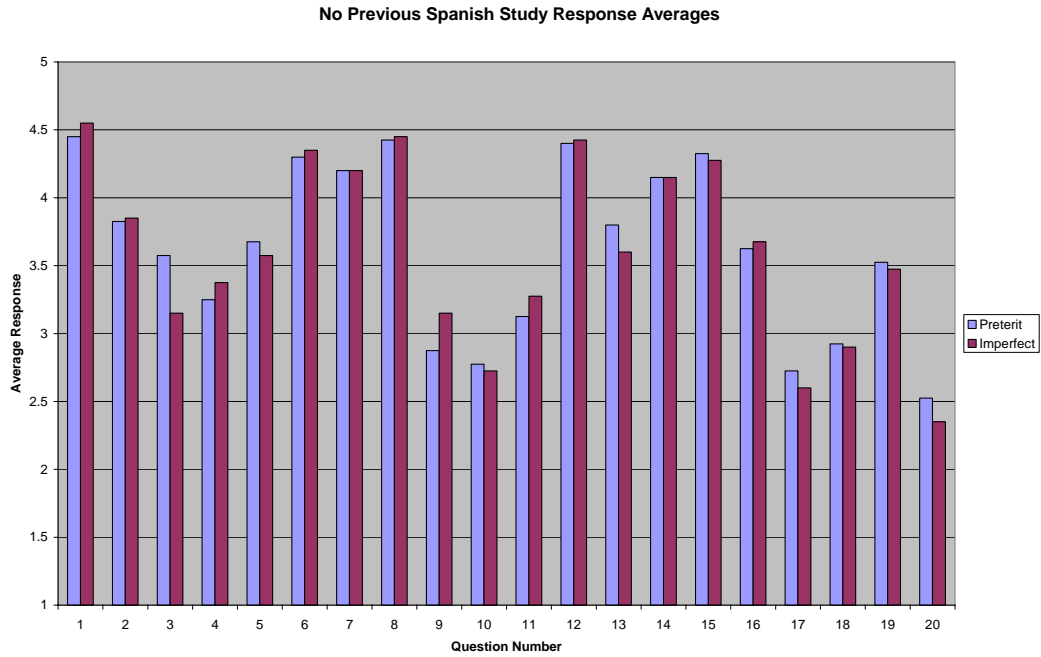


Figure 6

Shown in Figures 7 through 12 are the demographic related average responses to questions 21 through 26. These questions elicited a single response, rather than both a preterit and imperfect response.

A comparison of Figure 7 and Figure 8 shows no clear differences between the average male and female responses to questions 21 through 26.

Male Response Averages

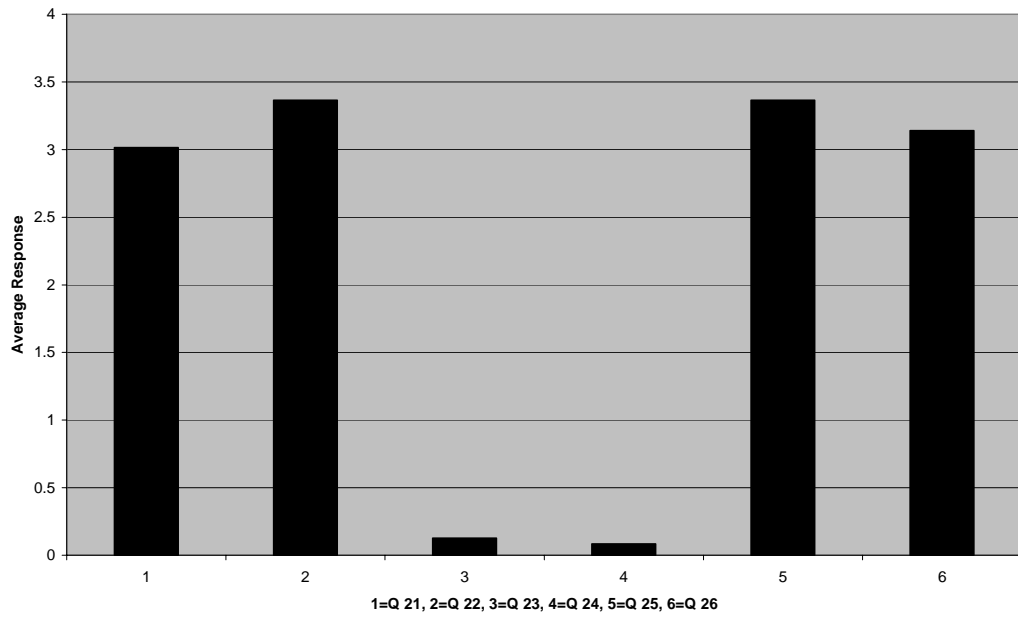


Figure 7

Female Average Responses

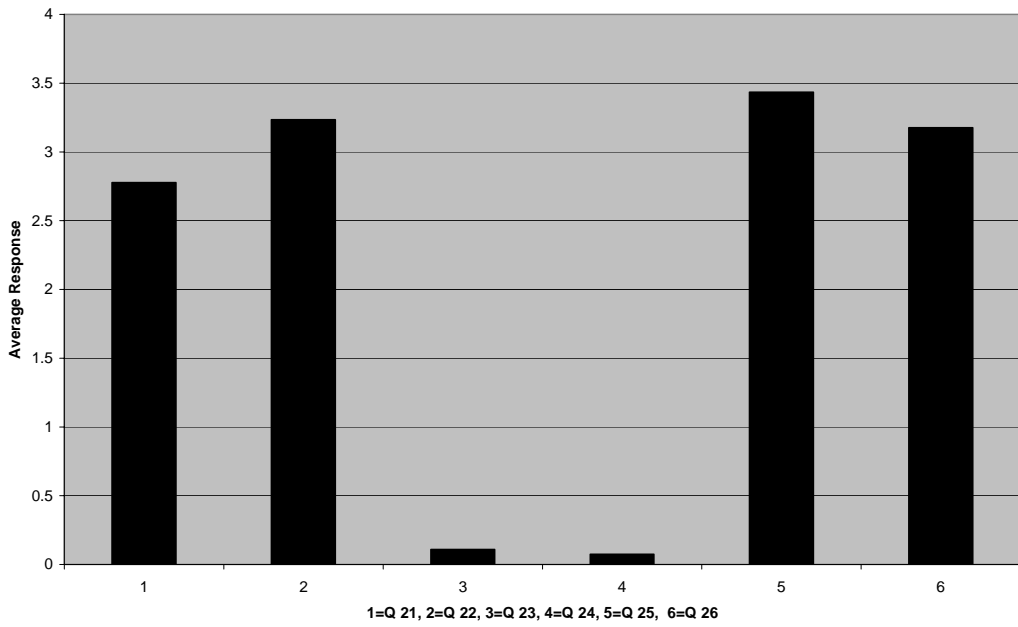


Figure 8

Figure 9 shows the average responses to questions 21 through 26 from those students who come from a Spanish-speaking home, and Figure 10 from those students who come from a non-Spanish-speaking home. Comparison of Figures 9 and 10 shows that those students from a Spanish-speaking home have higher self-reported grades in both the Spanish preterit and imperfect, study Spanish fewer hours each week, and more strongly feel that Spanish study is easy than those students from a non-Spanish-speaking home. The average self-reported preterit and imperfect grades for the Spanish-spoken-in-the-home students are 3.2 and 3.5. The average self-reported preterit and imperfect grades for the no-Spanish-spoken-in-the-home students are 2.9 and 3.25, (where 1 = A, 2 = A – B, 3 = B, 4 = B – C, 5 = C, 6 = C – D, 7 = D, 8 = D – F, and 9 = F). In contrast, those from a Spanish-spoken-in-the-home background have a higher average numerical response of 3.5 and those from a no-Spanish-spoken-in-the-home background a response of 3.2 to question 26 (I think that Spanish is easy.).

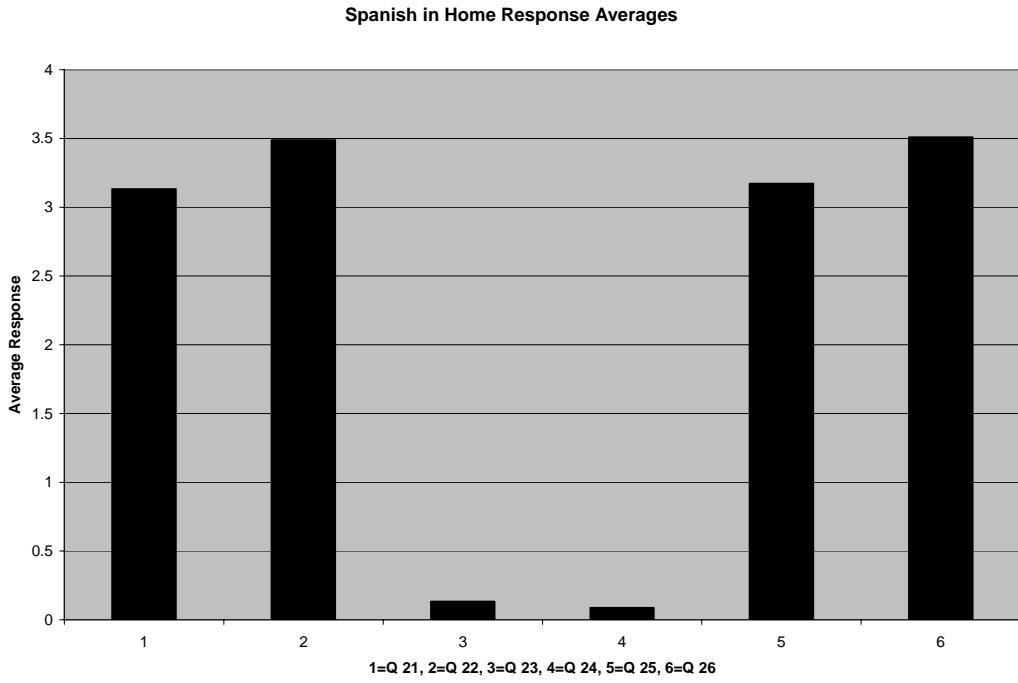


Figure 9

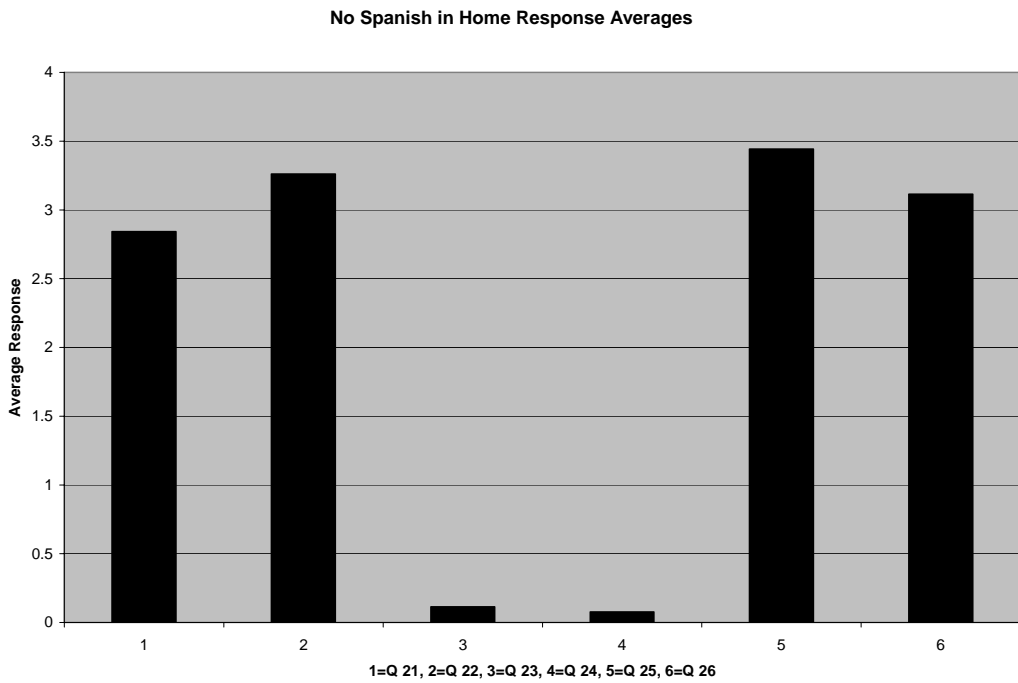


Figure 10

Figure 11 shows the average responses to questions 21 through 26 from those students who have had previous Spanish study, and Figure 12 from those with no previous Spanish study. Examination of Figure 11 and Figure 12 shows a similarity to that of the Spanish-spoken-in-the-home/no Spanish-spoken-in-the-home contrast. Those students with previous Spanish study report higher self-reported grades in both the preterit and imperfect and study Spanish fewer hours each week than those students with no previous Spanish study. However, this group of students differs from the Spanish-spoken-in-the-home/no-Spanish-spoken-in-the-home group in that the students reporting previous Spanish study and those reporting no previous Spanish study agree in their assessment of the difficulty of Spanish study, the average numerical responses being almost identical at 3.2.

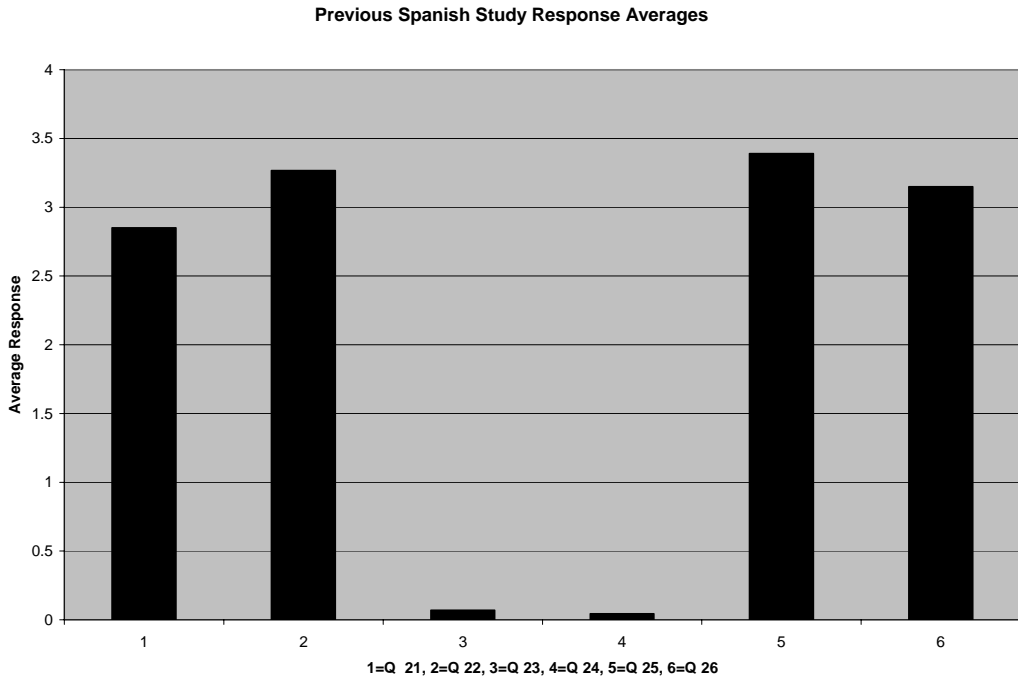


Figure 11

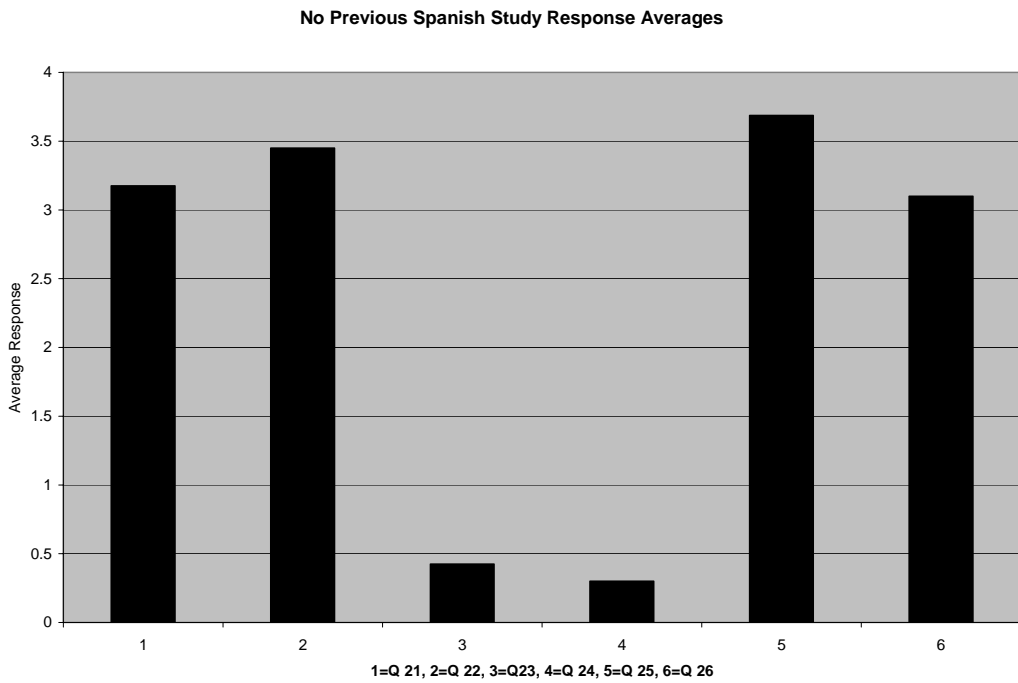


Figure 12

Based on the small number of differences among the various groups such as male/female, Spanish-spoken-in-the-home/no-Spanish-spoken-in-the-home, it was decided to report the strategy and belief findings for the group as a whole.

The following sections address the learners' beliefs and cognitive strategies concerning the study of the Spanish preterit and imperfect. The questionnaire items are grouped into the following four categories: motivation, cognitive strategy, achievement, and difficulty.

Analysis of Motivation Related Issues

The responses to motivation related questions are shown in graphical form in Figure 13. These items sampled students' feelings about the importance of the preterit and imperfect in learning Spanish. Questions 1, 6, 8, 14, 16, and 18 refer to students' general perceptions of the importance of the preterit and imperfect, while questions 12 and 15 concern the importance of the preterit and imperfect in successful oral communication.

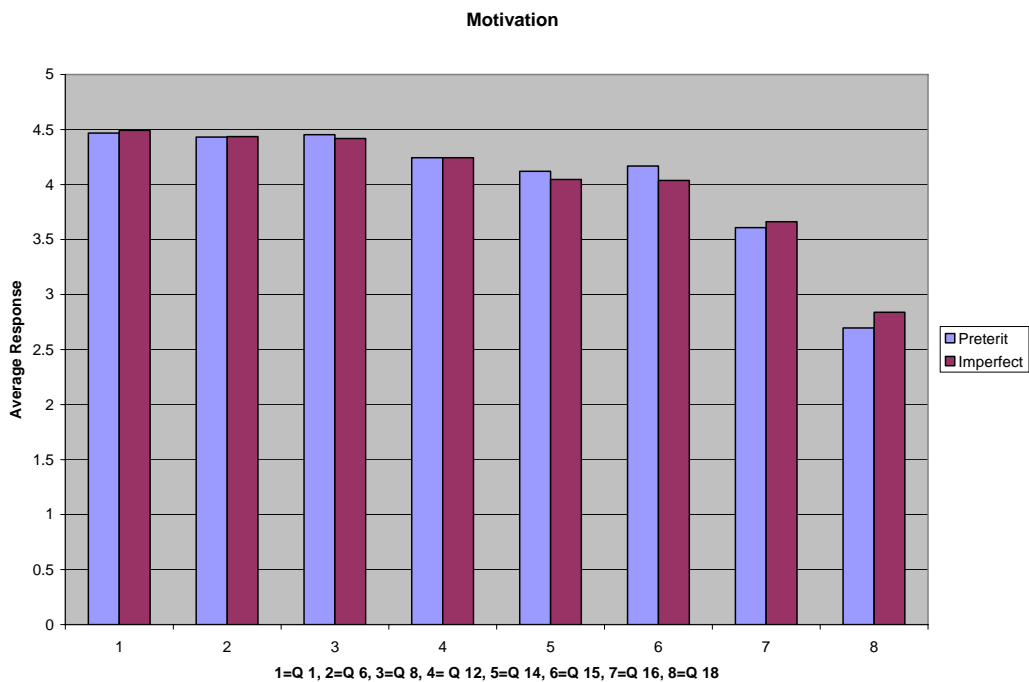


Figure 13

The students felt strongly that learning the preterit and imperfect was important. Some 90% of the students indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they wanted to learn to use the Spanish preterit correctly, and 91% the

Spanish imperfect (question 1). Likewise, 89% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that learning both the Spanish preterit and imperfect was important to them so that they would make a good grade in the course (question 6). Similarly, 90% either strongly agreed or agreed that mastery of the preterit in Spanish study is important, and 89% the imperfect (question 8). Student responses to question 14 were not as affirmative as the above, but still very strong. Some 74% of the students felt that learning the correct use of the Spanish preterit was important so that that they could communicate with Spanish-speaking people, and 70% indicated the same for the Spanish imperfect. The students showed some reluctance to spending a lot of time studying the Spanish preterit and imperfect, but not to a large degree. Some 56% either strongly agreed or agreed that they would spend a lot of time studying the preterit, and 58% the imperfect (question 16). The student responses to questions 16 and 18 showed similar results, in that 65% of the students were neutral or disagreed with the possibility that they resented spending so much time/effort studying the Spanish preterit, and 61% the Spanish imperfect (question 18). With such strong responses to questions 1, 6, 8, 14, 16, and 18, it appears that the students felt that the study and mastery of the Spanish preterit and imperfect are important and merit the time and effort required in their study.

With respect to the importance of the preterit and imperfect in communicating in Spanish, some 84% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that in order to correctly express themselves in Spanish, they needed to

learn the preterit, and 85% the imperfect (question 12). Approximately 78% of the students felt that the preterit is regularly used by Spanish speakers to communicate, and 69% the imperfect (question 15). The student responses to question 12 and 15 indicate that students believe that the Spanish preterit and imperfect are important to communication in Spanish.

Motivation/Self-Reported Grades

Responses to the motivation related questions as related to the students' self-reported grades are shown in Figure 14 through Figure 21. Examination of Figures 14, 15, and 16 show that regardless of self-reported grades, students show little variation in their responses to questions 1, 6, and 8. The average responses are clustered around 4.5, or midway between agree and strongly agree.

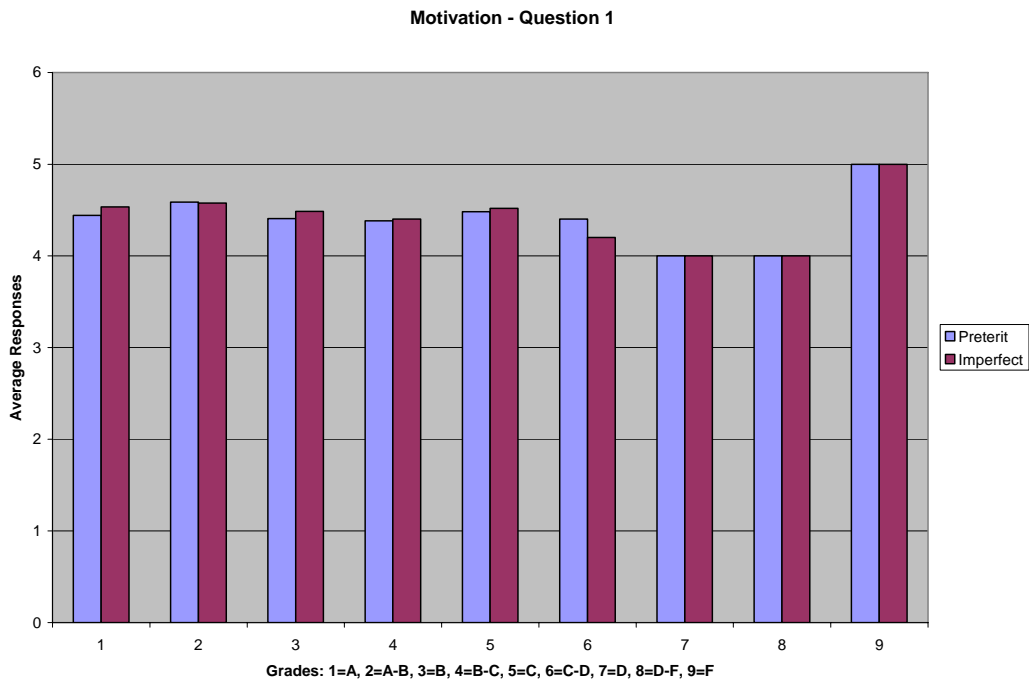


Figure 14

Motivation - Question 6

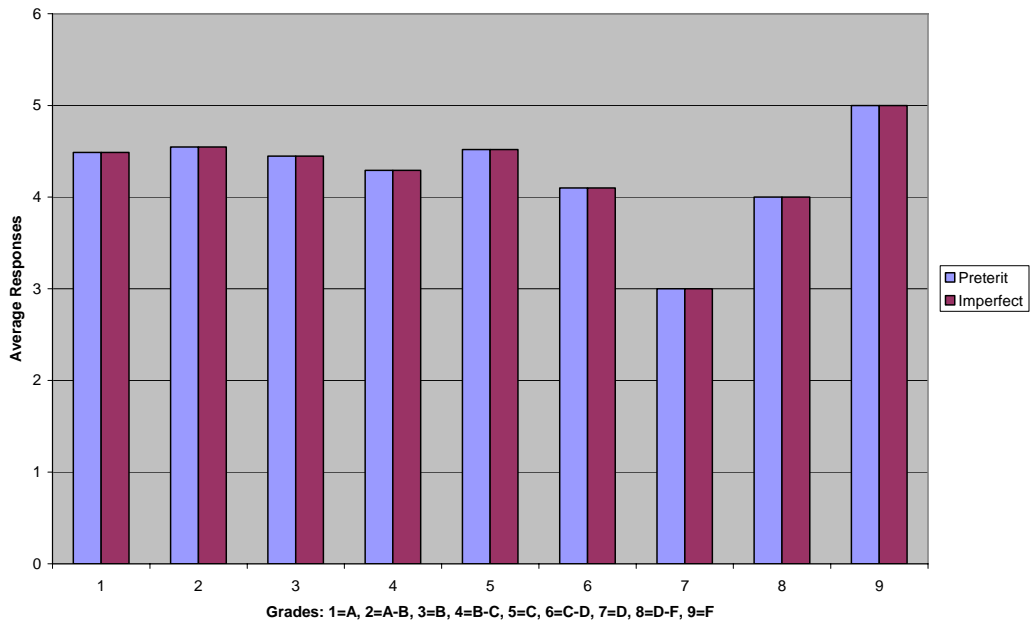


Figure 15

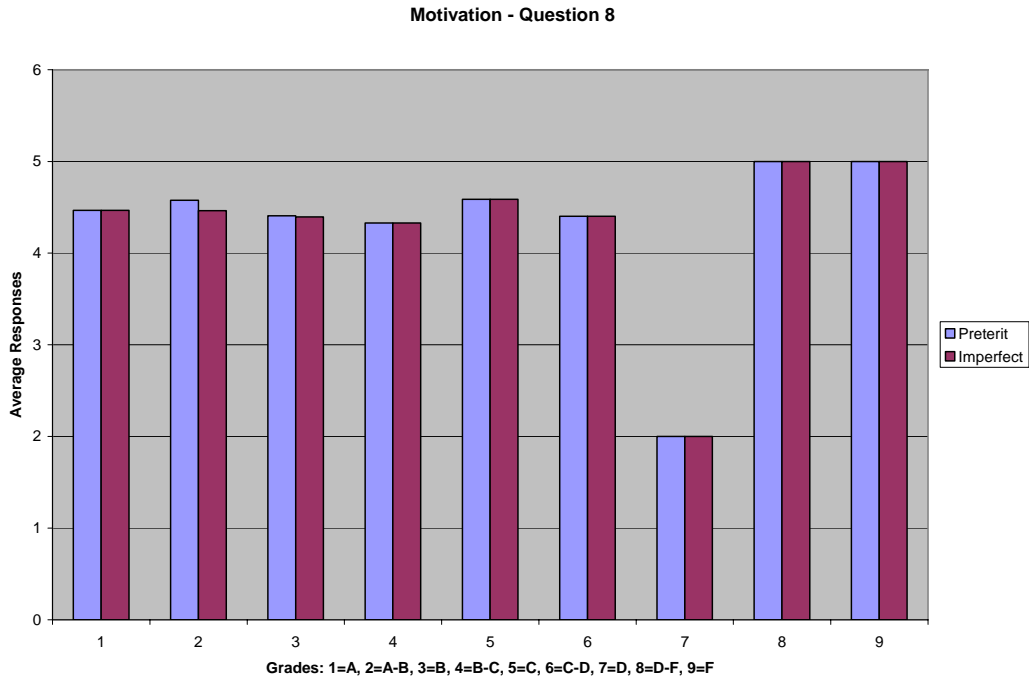


Figure 16

The responses to question 12 as shown in Figure 17 show more variation, in that the average responses of those students with a self-reported grade of C or higher is approximately 4.25, while the response of those students with a grade of C-D is approximately 3.75.

Motivation - Question 12

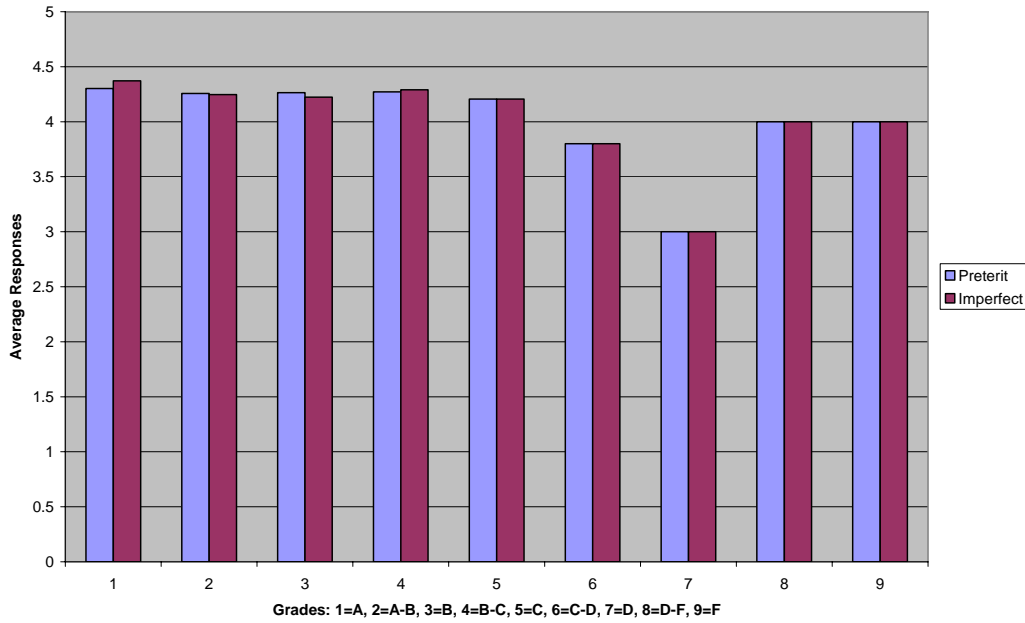


Figure 17

The responses to question 14 as shown in Figure 18 show a trend, in that the average response of those students reporting a grade of A is 4.3. As students reporting lower grades are examined, the average response decreases until the C-D students average response is 3.2.

Motivation - Question 14

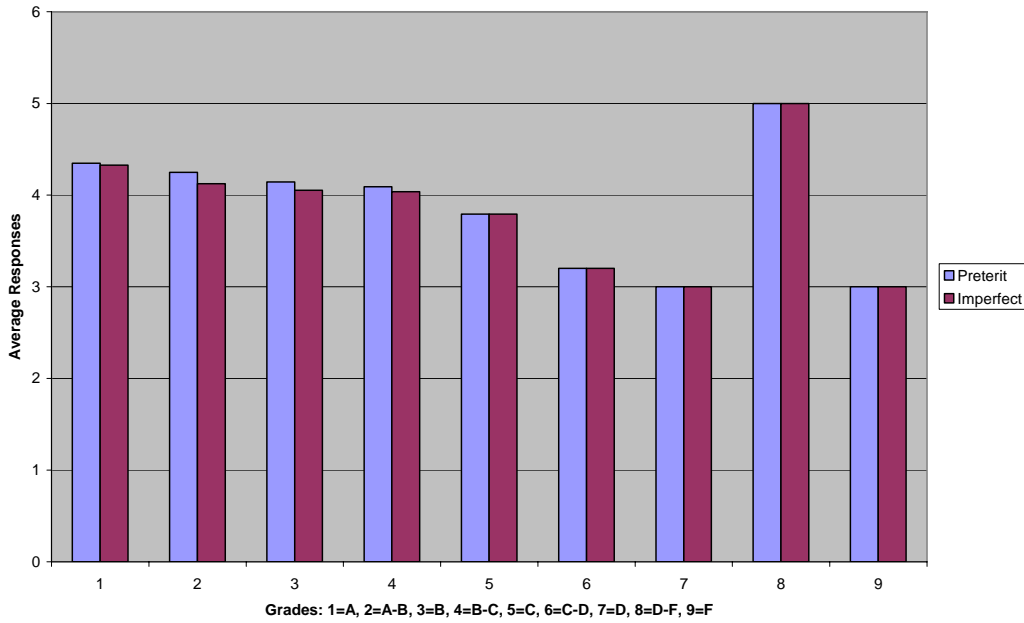


Figure 18

The average student responses to question 15 as shown in Figure 19 show a similar trend, although not as pronounced. The average of the A students' response is approximately 4.3, and students with lower grades tend to have somewhat lower average responses, until the C-D students show an average response of 3.9.

Motivation - Question 15

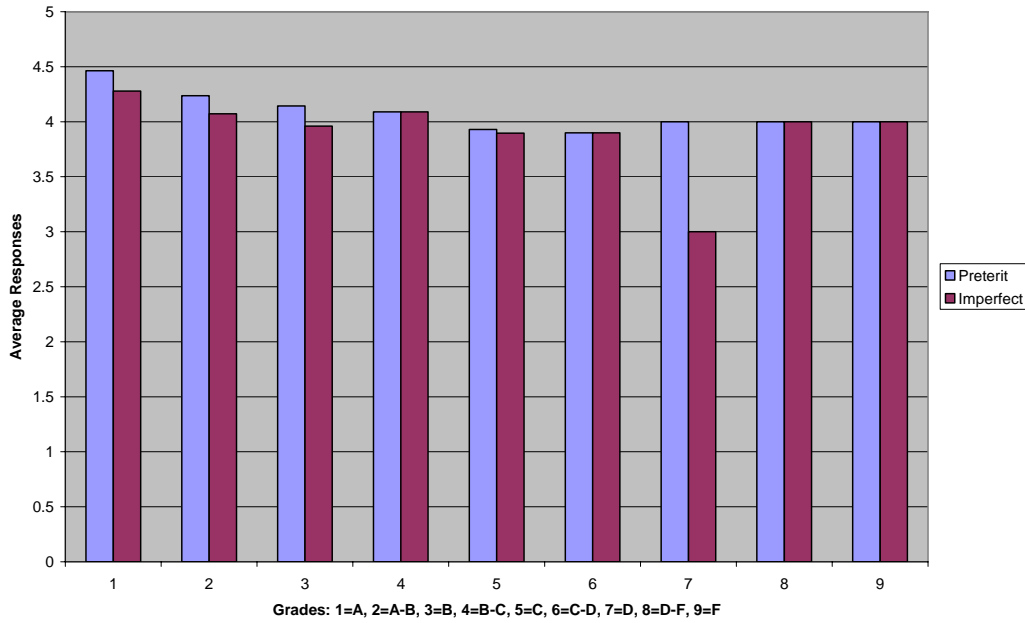


Figure 19

The average student responses to question 16 as shown in Figure 20 are different from all of the above. The students reporting a grade of B show an average response of approximately 3.8, while the students with both higher and lower grades show a lower average response, with the extremes being an average response of 3.5 from the A students and 3.1 from the C-D students.

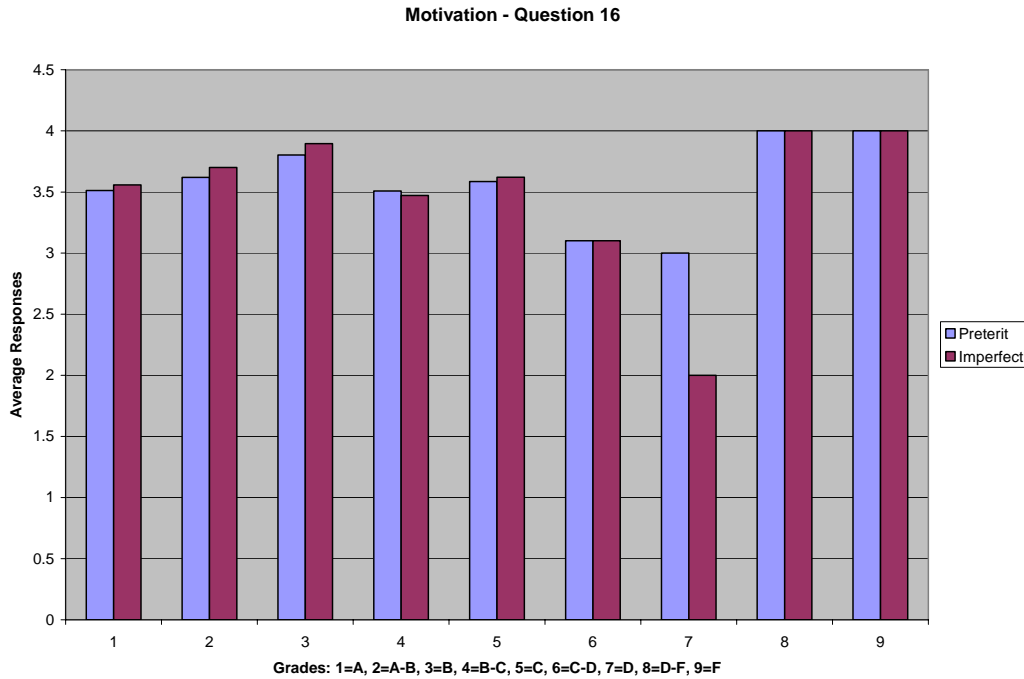


Figure 20

Figure 21 shows the strongest response variation to the motivation related questions. The average of the responses to question 18 from the A group of students is approximately 2.2, with average responses trending higher as students with lower reported grades are examined, as C-D students' average response is approximately 4.2. This indicates that students with lower self-reported grades more strongly resent spending time and effort studying the preterit/imperfect than do those students with higher self-reported grades.

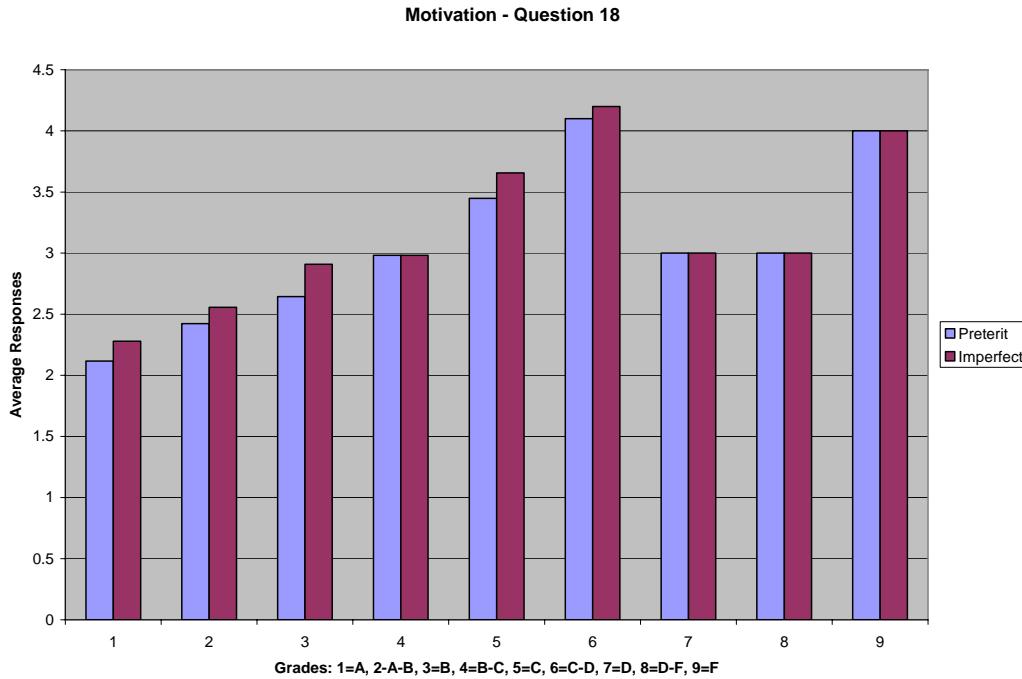


Figure 21

The results shown above indicate that the students felt that the Spanish preterit and imperfect are important in the students' activities concerning their study. The students also felt that the preterit and imperfect are important in communication in Spanish. While they may feel that the preterit/imperfect is important, there is a marked tendency for students with lower self-reported grades to resent having to spend so much time and/or effort studying the preterit/imperfect. Also, as compared to students with higher grades, those students reporting lower grades tend to feel that learning the preterit/imperfect is of less importance in communicating with Spanish-speaking people.

Analysis of Cognitive Strategy Related Issues

The responses to questions 2, 4, 7, 10, and 16 are shown in graphical form in Figure 22.

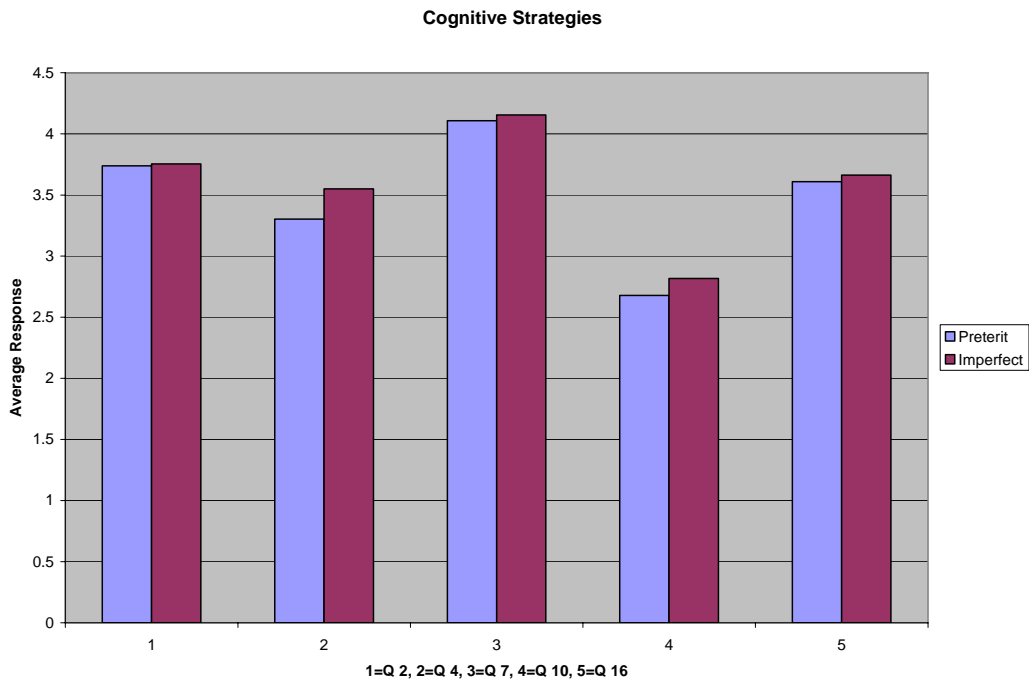


Figure 22

Some 68% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that their method of studying the Spanish preterit was to study the textbook, and 67% said the same for the imperfect (question 2). There was a larger difference between the preterit and imperfect responses to question 4. Approximately 43% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they asked their instructor questions concerning the

preterit, some 56% concerning the imperfect. Memorization played an important role in the students' cognitive strategies concerning the preterit and imperfect. Some 82% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they tried to memorize the grammar rules concerning the preterit, 84% concerning the imperfect (question 7). There was a difference in the preterit and imperfect responses to question 10. Approximately 19% either strongly agreed or agreed that they spent a lot of time practicing the Spanish preterit, 25% the imperfect (question 10). Some 56% either strongly agreed or agreed that they would spend a lot of time studying the preterit, and 58% the imperfect (question 16).

The students thus reported almost identical preterit and imperfect responses to the cognitive strategies related questions 2, 7, and 16. Some differences were apparent between the preterit and imperfect responses to questions 4 and 10.

Cognitive Strategies/Self-Reported Grades

Responses to the cognitive strategies related questions as related to the students' self-reported grades are shown in Figure 23 through Figure 27. Examination of Figure 23 shows that regardless of self-reported grades, the average students' response to question 2 is approximately the same.

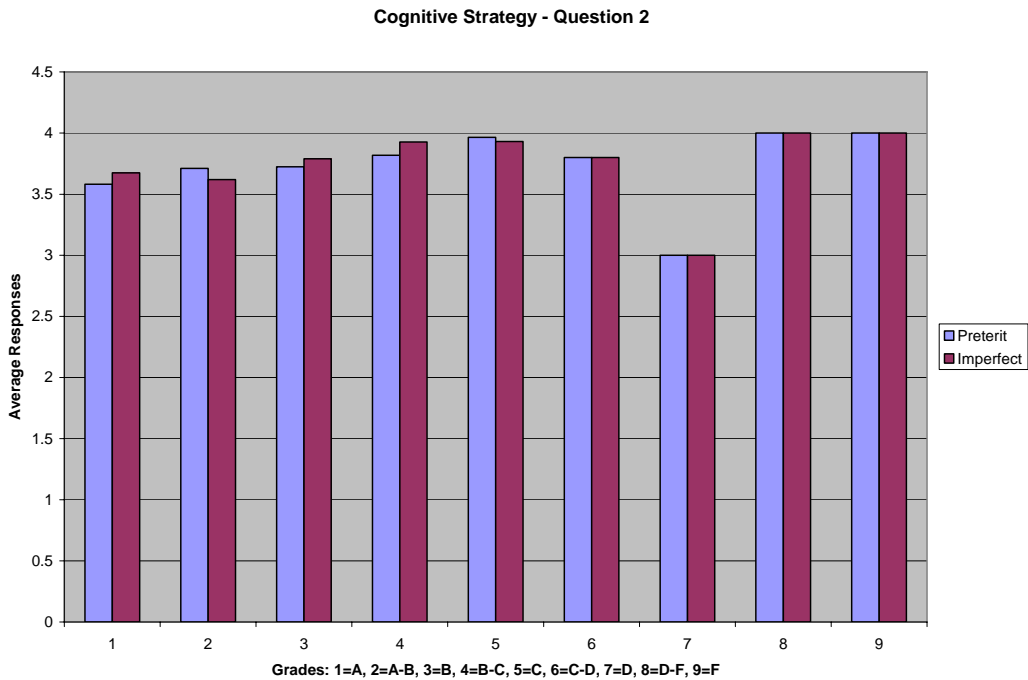


Figure 23

The students' average responses to question 4 as related to self-reported grades are shown in Figure 24. There is a contrast between the responses of those students whose self-reported grades are above C-D and those with a grade of C-D.

The average response of the C-D students indicates that these students are less likely to ask the instructor questions concerning the preterit/imperfect.

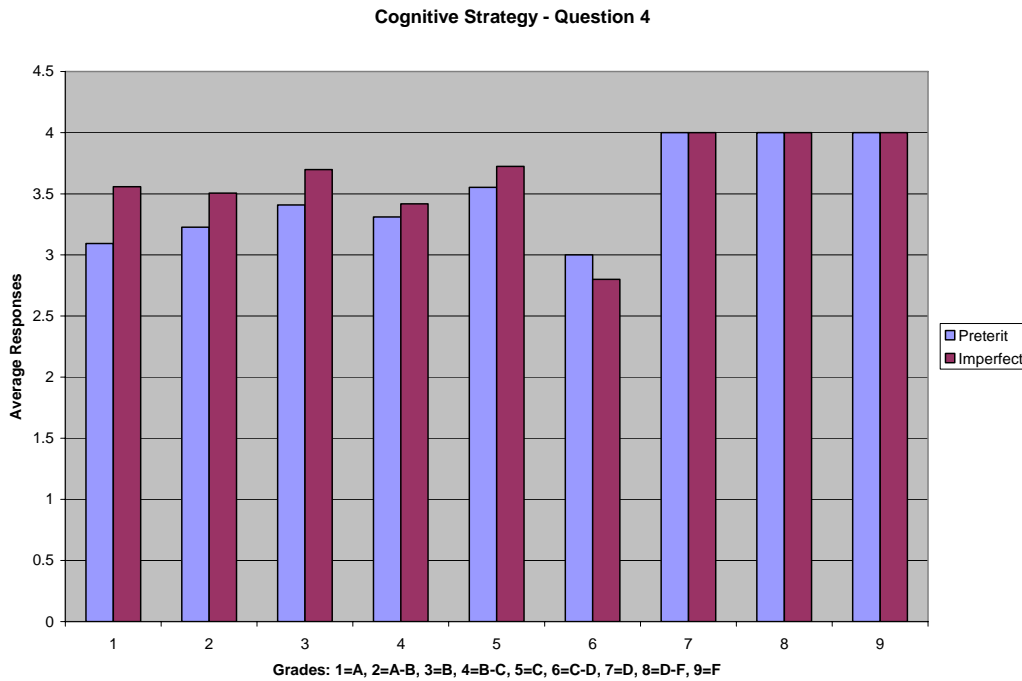


Figure 24

Examination of Figure 25 shows that regardless of self-reported grades, the average students' response to question 7 is approximately the same.

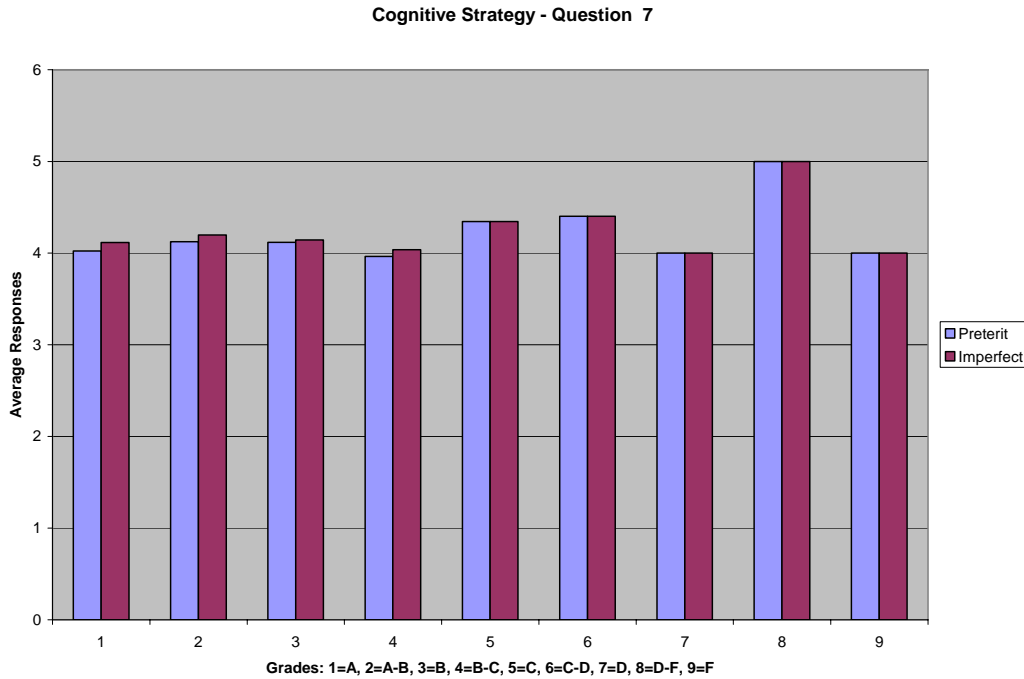


Figure 25

The students' average responses to question 10 as related to self-reported grades are shown in Figure 26. Examination of Figure 26 indicates that both the A group of students and the A-B group of students spend less time practicing the preterit/imperfect than the B students. Similarly, both B-C and C-D students spend less time practicing the preterit/imperfect than the B students. Curiously, the average response indicates that the C students feel that they spend approximately an equal amount of time studying the preterit/imperfect as do the B students. A pattern of responses similar to that of Figure 26 is shown in Figure 27. The B students are those students most willing to spend a lot of time studying the

preterit/imperfect, and the C-D students are those least willing to spend a lot of time on this activity.

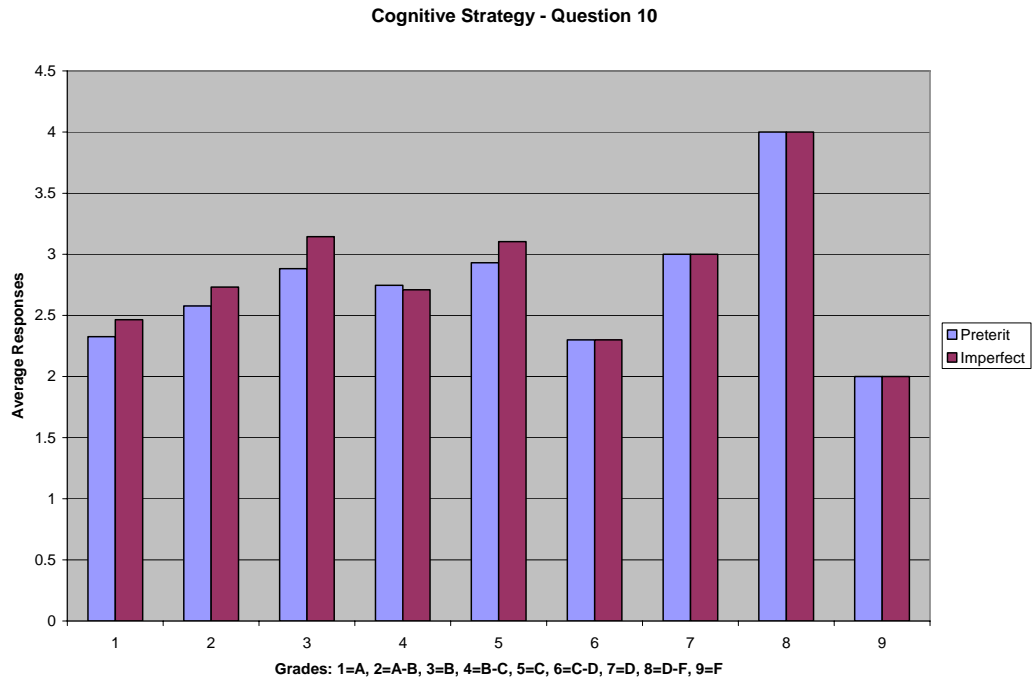


Figure 26

Cognitive Strategy - Question 16

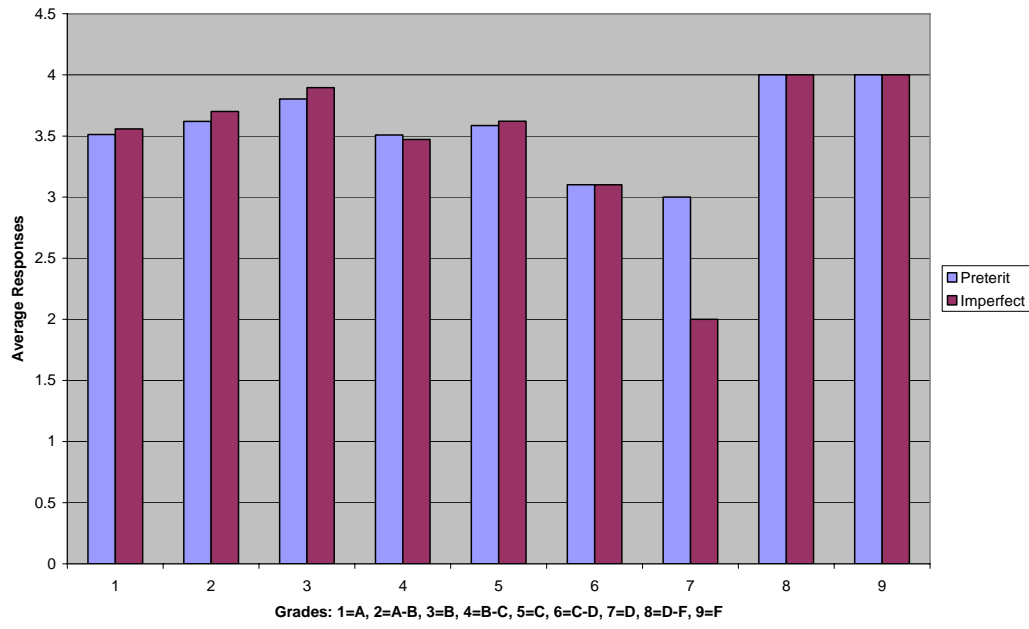


Figure 27

Analysis of Achievement Related Issues

The achievement related questions from the questionnaire are 3, 5, 9, 13, and 19. The responses to these questions are shown in graphical form in Figure 28. Some 50% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they thought that they used the Spanish preterit correctly while speaking Spanish, but only 29% felt that they were correct when using the imperfect (question 3). Approximately 69% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they used the Spanish preterit correctly while writing Spanish, but only 49% were confident that they used the imperfect correctly when writing Spanish (question 5). Some 22% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that the Spanish preterit is difficult to understand, 46% the imperfect (question 9). Approximately 77% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they understood the situations in which the preterit should be used, 60% the imperfect (question 13). Some 66% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they thought that they understood the grammar rules concerning the Spanish preterit, 51% the imperfect (question 19).

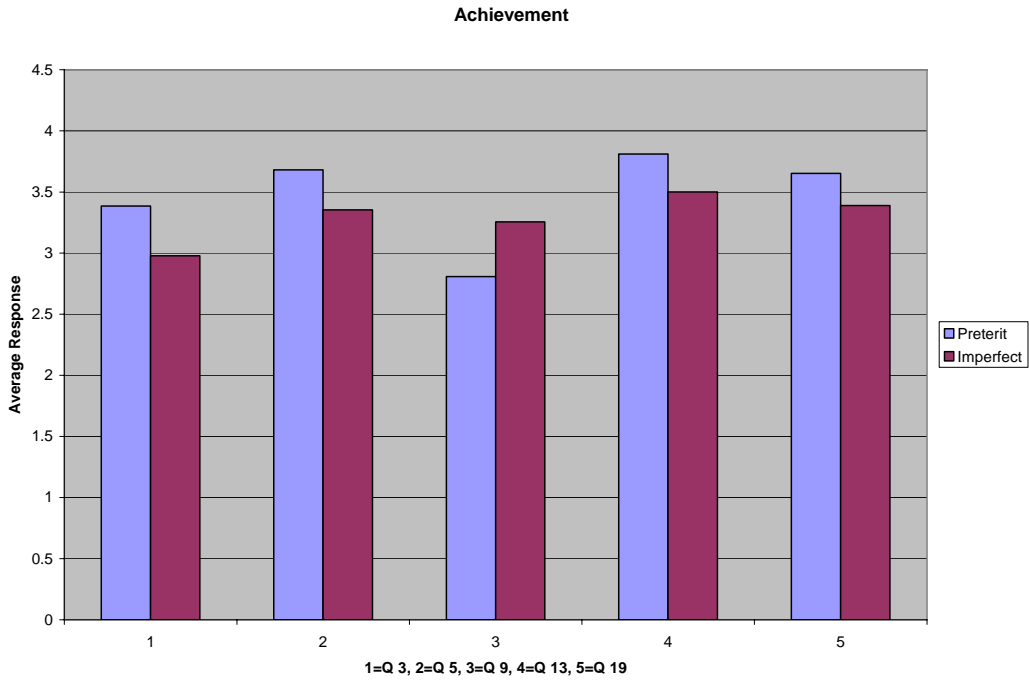


Figure 28

Achievement/Self Reported Grades Analysis

Student achievement expressed by self-reported grades is addressed in questions 21 and 22. The responses to these questions are shown in graphical form in Figure 29. Approximately 44% of the students reported a grade of either A or A – B concerning the Spanish preterit, 34% a grade of either A or A – B concerning the imperfect (questions 21 and 22).



Figure 29

Achievement Summary

These achievement related study results are shown below in tabular form.

	<u>Preterit</u>	<u>Imperfect</u>
	% strongly agrees or agrees	
Spoken correctly? Question 3	50	39
Written correctly? Question 5	69	49
Difficult? Question 9	22	46
Understand Situations? Question 13	77	60
Understand Rules? Question 19	66	51
Self-Reported Grades (A, A-B) Question 21, Question 22	44	34

These data are consistent, in that all reported student achievement factors concerning the preterit are higher than those reported for the imperfect. Also, the students reported that they found the Spanish preterit less difficult to understand than the imperfect. Collaborating this are higher self-reported grades in the Spanish preterit than in the imperfect.

Analysis of Difficulty Related Issues

The difficulty related questions from the questionnaire are 11, 17, 20, and 29. The averages of the students' responses to questions 11, 17, and 20 are shown in graphical form in Figure 30. Some 35% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that someone had informed them that the Spanish preterit is difficult to master, 52% for the imperfect (question 11). Approximately 27% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that their instructor had informed them that the Spanish preterit is easy to master, 17% the imperfect (question 17). The average of the students' responses to question 20 showed that they were approximately midway between neutral and disagreeing that the preterit/imperfect is a snap.

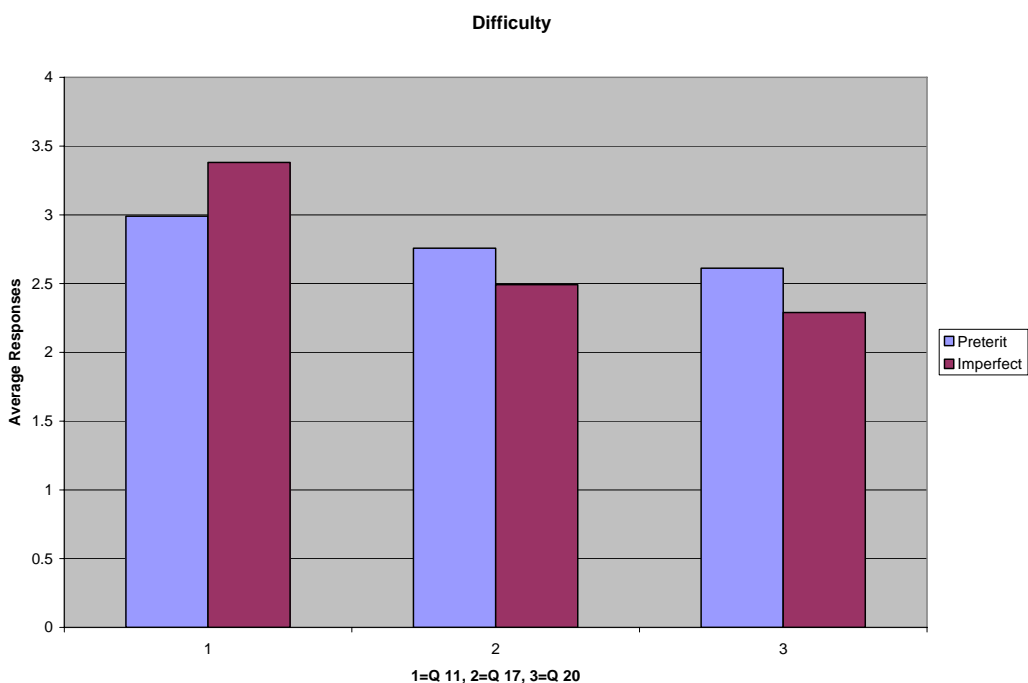


Figure 30

A more detailed examination of the students' responses to question 20 can be seen in Figure 31. Some 25% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that the Spanish preterit is a snap, 14% the imperfect. Approximately 24% of the students were neutral as to whether the preterit is a snap and 26% neutral concerning the imperfect. Some 50% of the students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the preterit is a snap, while approximately 60% of the students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the imperfect is a snap.

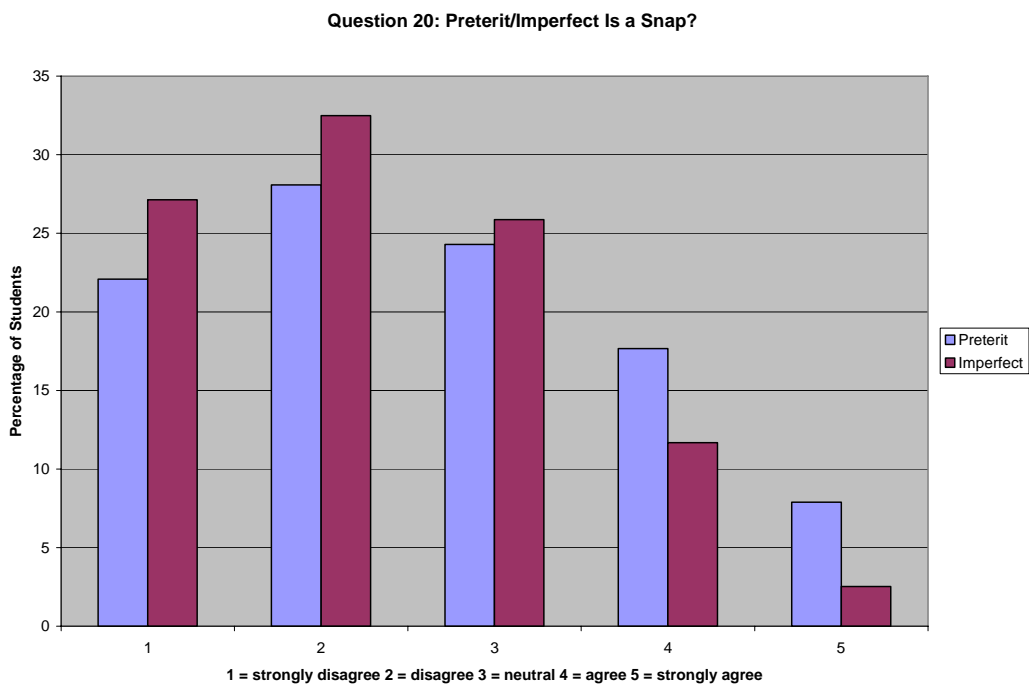


Figure 31

The student responses to question 29 seemed to collaborate that they felt that the Spanish preterit/imperfect was difficult. Of the four verb tenses to be rated as to difficulty, some 27% reported that they thought the preterit was the most difficult, and 47% thought that it was the second in difficulty. Approximately 56% felt that the imperfect was the most difficult verb tense of the four and 34% thought that it was second in difficulty.

Difficulty/Self-Reported Grades

Responses to the difficulty related questions as related to the students' self-reported grades are shown in Figure 32 through Figure 34. The students' average responses to question 11 are shown in Figure 32. A comparison of average students' responses from different grade levels indicates that the C-D students are those most likely to have been told that the preterit/imperfect is difficult to master, and the A students the least likely.

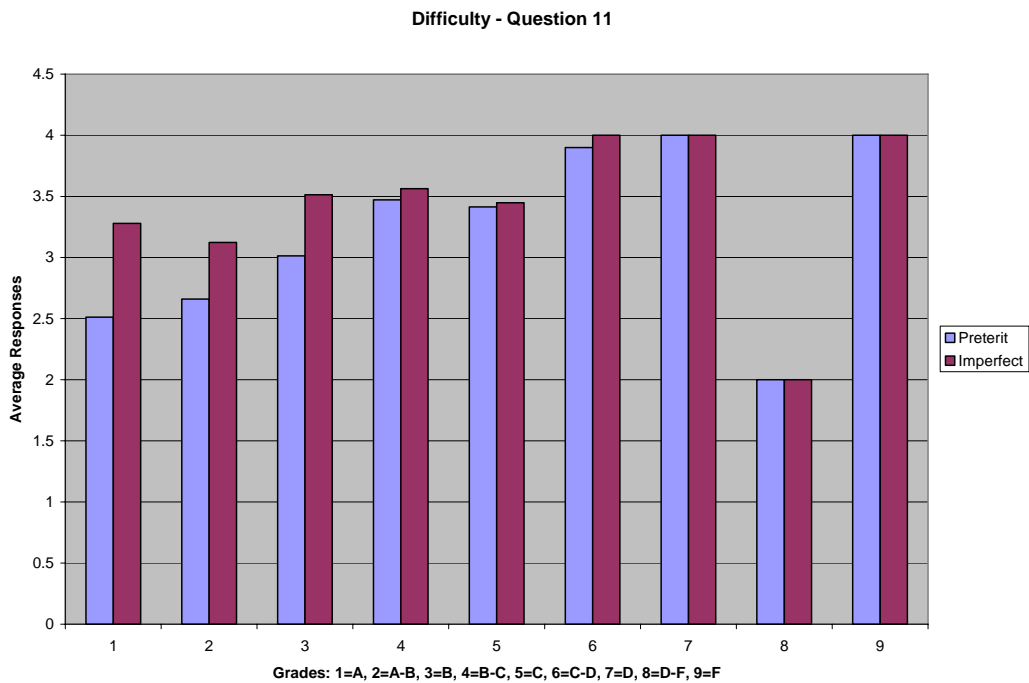


Figure 32

The students' average responses to question 17 are shown in Figure 33.

Examination of Figure 33 indicates that as one compares the responses from the different grade levels, the A and A-B students exhibit an approximately equal opinion that their instructor has informed them that the preterit/imperfect is easy to master. The B, B-C, and C grade levels feel progressively less strongly concerning this issue. Strangely, the C-D students reverse this trend, showing approximately the same agreement level as the B-C student group.

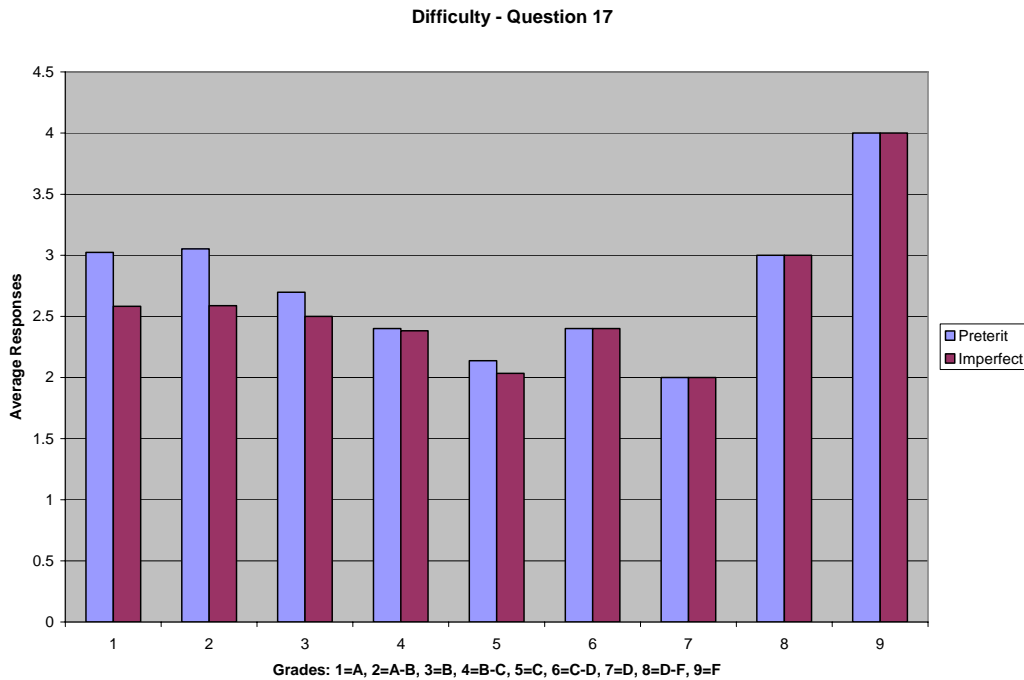


Figure 33

The students' average responses to question 20 are shown in Figure 34. A comparison of average students' responses from different grade levels strongly indicates that the higher grade level students are more in agreement that the

preterit/imperfect is a snap than those of lower grade levels. The only exception is the B-C grade level group, which is less in agreement than those from the C and C-D student groups.

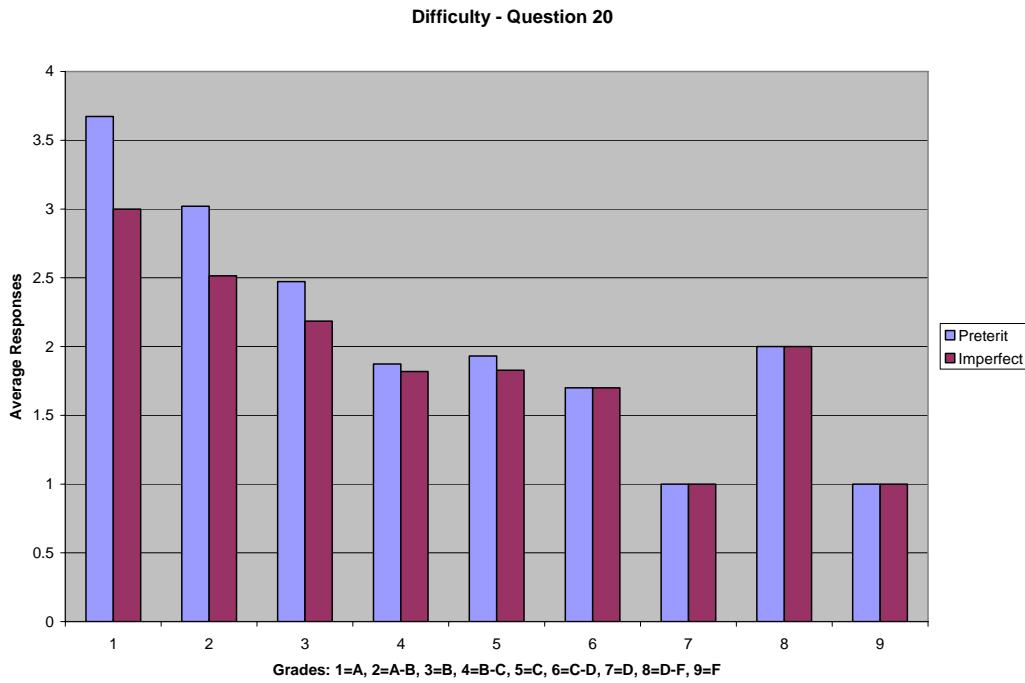


Figure 34

Other Issues Related to the Spanish Preterit/Imperfect and General Spanish Study

The final portion of the questionnaire includes more general questions related to the Spanish preterit/imperfect and to Spanish study. These are questions 27, 28, 29, and 30.

The responses to question 27 were varied, in that some 30% of the students replied that if they were unsure as to whether the preterit or imperfect was correct, they chose to use the preterit, 14% the imperfect, 7% tried to remember textbook examples, 7% tried to remember grammar rules, 14% simply guessed as to the correct form, and 9% tried to detect contextual clues. The remaining 19% of the responses were widely varied, some containing no response, some reporting that they simply thought about the situation, some relying on sound, and some translating to English to attempt to make a decision as to which verb form was correct.

The predominant student responses to question 28 showed that students believed that more practice with the Spanish preterit/imperfect is needed. Some 20% of the students' suggestions involved more practice during class time, worksheets, drills, and the instructor providing more examples of the preterit/imperfect. The remaining 80% of the students' responses were widely varied, including no response, advocating teaching the preterit/imperfect as a combined topic, and more emphasis on the background aspect of the imperfect.

Student responses to question 29 were very clear-cut. Of the four verb tenses offered as possible choices, some 26% of the students felt that the Spanish preterit is the most difficult, while 54% of the students considered the imperfect to be the most difficult. Some 46% of the students considered the preterit to be the second-most difficult of the group, and 33% felt that the imperfect is the second-most difficult.

The student responses to question 30 were less clear-cut. Some 23% of the students simply did not respond. Of those who did respond, some 25% did so in a vague manner. This portion of the students felt that the preterit/imperfect is indeed difficult, but gave various general opinions as to why. Some simply replied that the preterit/imperfect is difficult with no further elaboration. Others felt that they didn't understand when to employ the preterit versus the imperfect. The next largest group of students that responded to question 30 in a like manner is the 8% who felt that the preterit irregular verb forms were particularly difficult. The remaining responses to question 30 were highly varied, so that no pattern in the responses was readily apparent.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

This study has attempted to determine students' motivation, cognitive strategy, achievement, and perceived difficulty concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Also, students' demographic characteristics were examined to determine their influence on the students' perceptions, beliefs, and achievement concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect was examined.

Theoretical Implications

Demographic Issues

The students' demographic issues considered in this study included sex, Spanish spoken in the home, no Spanish spoken in the home, previous Spanish study, and no previous Spanish study.

The male and female student responses to the questionnaire were virtually identical. It appears that the student's sex plays no role in their cognitive strategies, motivation, and beliefs concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect.

The student responses from the two groups Spanish-spoken-in-the-home and no-Spanish-spoken-in-the-home are virtually identical in most areas. There are some differences, however. Those students from a Spanish-spoken-in-the-home background report higher grades in the Spanish preterit/imperfect, study Spanish fewer hours each week, and more strongly feel that Spanish study is easy than those students from a no-Spanish-spoken-in-the-home background.

A comparison of student responses from those who have had previous Spanish study and those who have not had previous Spanish study shows a similarity to the results from the Spanish-spoken-in-the-home and no-Spanish-spoken-in-the-home groups. Those students who have had previous Spanish study report higher grades in the Spanish preterit/imperfect and study Spanish fewer hours each week. However, in contrast to the Spanish-spoken-in-the-home and

no-Spanish-spoken-in-the-home groups, the students reporting previous Spanish study and those reporting no previous Spanish study agree in their assessment of the difficulty of Spanish study.

Motivation Issues

While many of the students felt that the Spanish preterit/imperfect is a difficult part of learning Spanish, this study also indicates that they felt that this is a topic of importance. There was a strong affirmative response among the students in such areas as wanting to learn to use the Spanish preterit/imperfect correctly, learning the preterit/imperfect is important to them so that they can earn a good grade in the course, and mastery of the preterit/imperfect is important in Spanish study. The students also indicated that they considered learning the preterit/imperfect important so that they can communicate with Spanish speaking people and that they are not averse to spending a lot of time studying the preterit/imperfect. It appears that they are motivated to devote the necessary time and effort to master this area of Spanish study.

When a comparison of student average responses of different grade levels is performed, a strong tendency is noted, as students of higher grade groups tend to believe more strongly that learning the preterit/imperfect is important in aiding communicating with Spanish-speaking people. Similarly, students of higher grade groups tend to agree more strongly that the preterit/imperfect is regularly used by

Spanish speakers to communicate than do those from lower grade groups. Perhaps the most pronounced result to come from the student self-reported grade groups analysis is that of student resentment concerning the preterit/imperfect. It appears that students from the lower grade groups much more strongly resent having to spend so much time studying the preterit/imperfect than do the students from the higher grade groups. This appears to agree with Stern's (1975) contention that a "good" language learner has a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

Cognitive Strategies Issues

The results of this survey show that most of the cognitive strategies used by the students concerning the preterit/imperfect are rule-based. Some 68% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that their method of studying the Spanish preterit was to study the textbook, and 67% the imperfect. Memorization played an important role in the students' cognitive strategies concerning the preterit and imperfect. Some 82% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that they tried to memorize the grammar rules concerning the preterit, 84% concerning the imperfect. Therefore the results of this survey show agreement with the results of Oxford and Nyikos (1989) which indicated that formal rule-related practice strategies were the dominant strategies used by university language students.

In comparing the cognitive strategy responses of different student grade groups, the students of the C-D grade group indicated that they less frequently asked their instructor questions concerning the preterit/imperfect than did the students of the higher grade groups. Similarly, the students of the C-D grade group indicated that they spent less time studying the preterit/imperfect than did the students of the higher grade groups. In the same vein, the students of the C-D grade group indicated that they would less willingly spend a lot of time studying the preterit/imperfect than did the students of the higher grade groups.

One cognitive strategy item was question 10 asking the students to give their degrees of agreement on whether they spent a lot of time on practicing the preterit/imperfect. The student responses give partial collaboration to Stern (1975) in that the B self-reported grades group of students reported that they were neutral in spending a lot of time in practicing the preterit/imperfect. However, the A and A-B self-reported grades groups of students spent less time in studying the preterit/imperfect than the A group of students.

Difficulty Issues

There was strong agreement among the students concerning the difficulty of the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Some 22% of the students in this study either strongly agreed or agreed that the Spanish preterit is difficult, and 46% either strongly agreed or agreed that the imperfect is difficult. This appears to indicate

that students view this area of Spanish study to be difficult, which agrees with the findings of Tran-Thi-Chan (1975).

The majority of past studies concerning students' acquisition of the Spanish preterit/imperfect have been done from the instructor's or linguist's point of view and concluding that the preterit/imperfect is difficult for students. This study indicates that students are in agreement with the researchers and linguists such as Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin (1965). The Spanish preterit/imperfect is seen as a difficult area of Spanish study, both to researchers, linguists, and students.

When a comparison of student average responses of different grade levels is performed, a strong tendency is noted, as students of lower grade groups tend to agree more strongly that someone has informed them that the preterit/imperfect is difficult to master than those students of the higher grade groups. Similarly, the students of lower grade groups disagree more strongly that their instructor has informed them that the preterit/imperfect is easy to master than do those students of higher grade groups. There is a large difference of opinion between students of the various grade groups concerning the idea that the preterit/imperfect is a snap. The A group of students tends to agree, while the lower grade groups are less and less in agreement as lower grade groups are examined, with the C-D grade group average response between disagree and strongly disagree.

Achievement Issues

All reported student achievement factors concerning the preterit are higher than those reported for the imperfect. Also, the students reported that they found the Spanish preterit less difficult to understand than the imperfect. Corroborating this are higher self-reported grades in the Spanish preterit than in the imperfect. This difference in achievement between the preterit and imperfect can perhaps be explained by the structure of class syllabi. The preterit is more complex in its morphology and often more instruction time is devoted to it than to the imperfect (Finnemann, 1987). This lack of instruction concerning the imperfect could cause the student to believe that the imperfect is more difficult than the preterit.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study appear to show that the Spanish preterit/imperfect is a difficult area of study for students. Most instructors are probably aware of this difficulty. However, if the fact that this difficulty exists were emphasized to instructors, perhaps they could more effectively approach this area of Spanish instruction.

When responses from students from different self-reported grade groups are compared, a clear trend is evident in the responses to the difficulty related question 17 as shown in Figure 33 on page 92. Those students with lower self-reported grades are less positive in reporting that their instructor has informed them that the preterit/imperfect is easy to master. Instructors should be cognizant of the fact that students from different grade levels perhaps have different ideas and attitudes concerning Spanish study. It could bolster students' confidence and therefore their learning if their instructor could inform them that while the preterit/imperfect is a difficult topic, it is by no means impossible to learn. If an instructor emphasizes to students that the preterit/imperfect is a difficult area, some students could form the opinion that this is a topic impossible to learn, and therefore become discouraged and devote little effort toward its study.

Another indication that students from different self-reported grade groups have different attitudes is shown by the responses to the motivation related question 18 as shown in Figure 21 on page 76. Those students from the lower

self-reported grade groups exhibit a marked higher level of resentment toward spending time and effort in studying the preterit/imperfect than do those students from higher self-reported grade levels. Instructors need to be aware that in a typical Spanish class, the students probably hold a range of attitudes toward language learning that even include some levels of resentment.

The predominant student responses to question 28 from the questionnaire showed that students believed that more practice with the Spanish preterit/imperfect is needed. Some 20% of the students' suggestions concerning assistance with the Spanish preterit/imperfect advocated more practice during class time, worksheets, drills, and the instructor providing more examples of the preterit/imperfect. Perhaps even in a communicative instructional environment, more worksheet type materials are needed. If the instructor could add more of these types of preterit/imperfect practice to an already crowded schedule, perhaps students could gain more proficiency with these Spanish verb forms.

Most of the students reported higher grades concerning the preterit than the imperfect. This is probably due to the fact that in most syllabi, the preterit is presented first, then the imperfect, and finally a contrast between the two. Also, more class time is typically devoted to the preterit. Perhaps class syllabi should be examined to determine whether sufficient instruction time is being devoted to the study of the imperfect and its contrast to the preterit.

Limitations of Study

The students' self-reported grades concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect were used in this study as one indication of the students' achievement. No attempt was made to determine if these self-reported grades did in fact represent the students' actual performance concerning these verb forms. Perhaps further information could be gained if an unbiased evaluation could be made of the students' grasp of these verb forms.

Another issue related to the students' self-reported grades is that they are based on the results of discrete tasks (exams). These results may not necessarily portray the students' true proficiency with these verb forms. A possible area for future study could be to measure the student's performance in a communicative situation in which these verb forms are used. This communicative level of performance could then be combined with students' questionnaire responses to perhaps gain further information.

An influence on the results of this study is the scholastic level of the students surveyed. The group studied was composed of only second-year students. Perhaps the results would be different if a different scholastic level group, or a group composed of varying scholastic levels, were studied.

This study was done by using a questionnaire, with a questionnaire's inherent limitations. It was left to the student to answer all of the questions. An assumption basic to the study is that the students answered the questions in an

honest and sincere manner. Also, the instructor had the freedom to determine how much time the students had to complete the questionnaire. If the students felt rushed to complete the questionnaire or were unable to answer all of the questions because of a time limitation, obviously the results are affected.

The students' responses studied were from students in a major select university. If students from a different type of college or university were surveyed, perhaps the results would be different.

Implications for Further Study

Some of the students surveyed in this study studied Spanish in High School, while others did not. Perhaps more could be learned if these two groups could be studied separately concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Those who studied Spanish in High School could have acquired beliefs and perceptions concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect prior to entering university study.

The group studied was composed of only second-year students. Perhaps more could be learned if, in addition, a lower-level group were studied, and the results from the two groups compared. The student beliefs and perceptions concerning the Spanish preterit/imperfect could change as the student progresses from basic to more advanced levels of Spanish study. It would also be interesting to examine students' beliefs, motivations, and strategies concerning other grammatical topics

in Spanish to determine if students' beliefs, motivations, and strategies vary by grammatical topic.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. sex: M_____ F_____ 2. age: _____ 3. major: _____

4. Before college, I studied Spanish for _____ years.

5. Before college, I studied another foreign language for
_____ years.

Which language? _____

6. Members of my family speak Spanish, so I have had
extensive exposure to the Spanish language.

yes _____ no _____

For items 1-20, indicate your response first with respect to the preterit and then with respect to the imperfect in the two columns at the right. For each statement, please indicate whether you: 5) strongly agree 4) agree 3) are neutral 2) disagree 1) strongly disagree.

Response

Response

1. I want to learn to use correctly the
Spanish (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

2. My method of studying the (a)preterit, (b) imperfect
is to study the textbook.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

3. I think that I use the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect

correctly while speaking Spanish.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

4. I ask my instructor questions concerning the

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

5. I think that I use the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect

correctly while writing Spanish.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

6. Learning the correct use of the

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect is important to me

so that I will make a good grade in this course.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

7. I try to memorize the grammar rules concerning

the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

8. Mastery of the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect in

Spanish study is important.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

9. I find it difficult to understand the Spanish

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

10. I spend a lot of time practicing the

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a) preterit _____ (b) imperfect _____

5) strongly agree 4) agree 3) are neutral 2) disagree 1) strongly disagree

Response

Response

11. Someone has informed me that the Spanish

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect is difficult to master.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

12. To correctly express myself in Spanish, I need

to learn the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

13. I understand the various situations in which

the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect should be used.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

14. Learning the correct use of the

(a) preterit, (b) imperfect is important to me so

that I can communicate with Spanish-speaking people.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

15. The (a) preterit, (b) imperfect is regularly

used by Spanish speakers to communicate.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

16. If necessary, I will spend a lot of time and effort

in order to learn the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

17. My instructor(present or past) has informed me that

the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect is easy to master.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

18. I resent having to spend so much time and/or
effort studying the (a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

19. I understand the grammar rules concerning the
(a) preterit, (b) imperfect.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

20. What's all the fuss about? The
(a) preterit, (b) imperfect is a snap.

(a)preterit____(b)imperfect_____

21. With respect to the preterit, my grades are:

A____ A-B____ B____ B-C____ C____ C-D____
D____ D-F____ F____

22. With respect to the imperfect, my grades are:

A____ A-B____ B____ B-C____ C____ C-D____
D____ D-F____ F____

23. I have studied the preterit in another language.
yes_____no_____

24. I have studied the imperfect in another language.
yes_____no_____

25. I study Spanish for _____ hours each week.

26. I think that Spanish is easy. (check one)

5) strongly agree 4) agree 3) are neutral

2) disagree 1) strongly disagree

5____ 4____ 3____ 2____1____

27. In a given situation, if I am unsure as to which is correct,
the preterit or imperfect, I:

28. Do you have any further thoughts concerning the study and
learning of the Spanish preterit and imperfect you would like to
mention here?

29. Please list the following Spanish verb forms in their order
of difficulty

(1. easy... 4. difficult): present tense, imperfect, future,
preterit.

30. Do you have any reasons for choosing this order?

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